The BRITISH IN INDIA

An outstanding contribution towards the question of complete independence for India

P. J. GRIFFITHS, C.I.E.

Leader of the European Group in the Indian Legislative Assembly

THE BRITISH IN INDIA

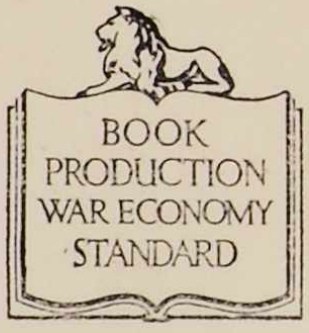
By

P. J. GRIFFITHS, C.I.E.

Leader of the European Group in the Indian Legislative Assembly

ROBERT HALE LIMITED
18 Bedford Square London W.C.1

First published 1946



THIS BOOK IS PRODUCED IN
COMPLETE CONFORMITY WITH THE
AUTHORIZED ECONOMY STANDARDS

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY
NORTHUMBERLAND PRESS LIMITED
GATESHEAD ON TYNE

CONTENTS

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The following explanations of political terms will assist the reader to a fuller appreciation of the conditions and problems prevailing in India at the present time.

(*a*) *The Congress*

The term "Congress" is misleading, particularly to visitors from America, who are apt to assume that it means the Parliament of India. It is, in fact, merely the name of the most important Indian political party. This party, which has Mr. Gandhi as its unofficial Leader, is essentially the party of the educated Hindu, and the professional classes form its spearhead while a number of Hindu industrial magnates are closely connected with it.

(*b*) *The Moslem League*

This body, with Mr. Jinnah as its head, is the main political organization of the Moslems in India. Not all Moslems belong to it by any means and, indeed, in the Moslem Province of the North-West Frontier the Congress Party is predominant. The Moslem League does, nevertheless, in a considerable measure, represent the views and aspirations of the Moslems of India as a whole.

(*c*) *Provincial Autonomy*

British India, i.e. India other than the territories ruled by Indian Princes, is divided into eleven Provinces and several special areas known as Chief Commissionerships. Each Province has a Governor, a Legislature and all the apparatus of a modern State. Until recent years the Provincial Governments were merely subordinate governments of the Government of India. Under the Government of India Act of 1935, however, India was to become a Federation. The Provinces were to have complete autonomy with regard to a great many matters, while a limited number of matters were to be the concern of the Federal Government. For political reasons, those portions of the Act which related to the Central Government were not put into operation, but the parts of the Act which relate to the Provinces came into force in 1937, and from that time onwards the Provinces have enjoyed Provincial Autonomy.

(*d*) *Indian Legislative Assembly*

The Parliamentary machinery of the Central Govern-

ment consists of two Houses—an Upper House known as the Council of State, and a Lower House known as the Indian Legislative Assembly. About three-quarters of the Members of the Indian Legislative Assembly are elected, the others being nominated by the Government of India, while in the Council of State there is a slight elected majority. The Assembly is the more influential body of the two.

(*e*) *Minorities*

Communal divisions play a very large part in Indian politics, and it has been found necessary to give special protection to minority communities who, by reason of their educational backwardness or the fewness of their numbers, are unable to take care of their own interests in the Legislatures. The Governors of Provinces have special responsibility for protecting the interests of these minority communities. At one time the Moslems were regarded as the most important minority community, but they now claim to be not a minority but a separate nation.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

INDIA in 1945 is a land of much journeying to and fro, of crowded railway carriages, of stations thronged with passengers hopefully waiting for much-delayed trains and of railway staffs not slow to profit from the needs of the travelling public. Every main station is a small-scale model of India at war. There are soldiers bound for supposedly unknown destinations—young subalterns fresh from England, ready to condemn the whole country because they have been charged fabulous prices for oranges or soda-water at the Bombay Terminus—or Indian veterans, proud of their race and their military prowess, confident of victory and of the part that they will play in a free India. For these latter men know that India will decide her own destiny in the post-war world. Airmen, too, in their now familiar blue, promenade proudly up and down the platform, not wholly unconscious of the fascination which the air and all concerned in flying, exercise over the fair sex.

In contrast with these martial figures are the men of business, stimulated by war to unusual activity; Indian merchants hastening to Delhi or Calcutta to clinch a contract, or British business magnates from Clive Street,[1] anxious to combine patriotism with profit by selling some essential commodity to the Department of Supply. Politicians, and those who deal in words rather

[1] The British business centre in Calcutta.

than money, talk loftily of the conflict of interests or views between Indian and British business men, but careful eavesdropping on a main station platform in India would soon disillusion them. The inhabitants of Clive Street and Harrison Road[1] have much in common —all want to buy cheap and sell dear, all profess to find it hard to make both ends meet, and all are driven to a common despair by the alleged inefficiency of Government and by the iniquities of the Excess Profits Tax. All, too, seem to agree, that if only Government would adopt modern business methods and put sound commercial men at the head of affairs, India would go forward by leaps and bounds.

Men of business and men of arms do not, however, make up the whole of the platform crowd. There is a third section, separate, austere and self-assured, a section similar in its remoteness and conscious rectitude to that strange aloof community which Plato envisaged in his Republic as guardians of the State. These are the civil servants, heaven-born or otherwise, who proceed majestically on their predestined courses, to control this or regulate that. A lifetime of controlling and regulating leaves its ineffaceable mark, and the experienced observer can readily pick out these main props of the Government hierarchy:

> For on his brow deliberation sate
> And public care.

But one and all, soldier, business man and administrator, are jostled together in the democratic but uncomfortable equality of the platform and the crowded compartment. Gone are the days when the unsociable could hope for a journey in solitude, or when a high place in the Warrant of Precedence could avail to keep

[1] An important residential centre of Indian business men in Calcutta.

out intruders from the Great Man's compartment. Four to a four-berth compartment is now the rule and eight the not uncommon exception.

These changed conditions have naturally produced their effect on social habits and, more difficult still, on mental processes. The Englishman, reserved, self-conscious and by nature suspicious of those to whom speech comes easily, rubs shoulders as never before with the friendly, courteously inquisitive Indian and the frank, uninhibited American—with results which, though at times startling, are beneficial to all. Conversations on the following plan are heard:

Mr. A. (English, or more probably Scottish) enters a first-class compartment and takes his seat in self-complacent silence and with evident satisfaction at finding the other berths unoccupied.

Mr. B. (an Indian official) arrives next, takes possession of the other lower berth, smiles genially and asks: "Are you going far?"

Mr. A. (embarrassed and therefore stiff): "Yes, to Calcutta." Then after a long pause: "And you?"

Mr. C. (an obvious and unapologetic American) enters angrily and looks at Mr. A: "What the hell is the matter with this —— country. I booked a berth seven days ago, but this —— of a —— pretends he hasn't received the reservation order. How does anybody think we can win a war with this kind of muddle and inefficiency?"

Mr. A. (anxious to avoid an argument, but not willing to let the Indian administrative system be disparaged): "I suppose in the U.S.A. these things are done better?"

Mr. B.: "May I help, sir?"

Mr. C.: "Very kind of you."

Mr. B. then discovers that Mr. C. has got hold of the

soda-water vendor instead of the reservation clerk. He finds the Railway Official concerned.

Railway Official (still under the influence of the Wedgewood Committee's comments on the incivility of railway officials in India): "Sir, I am sorry I was not here when you arrived. This is your berth. I trust you will be comfortable, sir."

Mr. C. manifestly relieved, offers a five-rupee note to the official.

Railway Official (pleasantly, but a little reproachfully): "Thank you, sir, but it is my duty. I cannot receive pecuniary gratification for doing my duty."

The American and the Railway Official leave the carriage together and it may be that the austerity of the official attitude is then softened by the absence of spectators.

The foregoing is a more or less true description of an everyday scene in the India of 1945, but it is only relevant to the subject of the present book because it explains how the writer of this book, a British ex-civilian, heaven-born but now descended to earth, came to enter into conversation with a stranger on a railway platform in Central India. The stranger was an American officer, tall, intelligent-looking and downright in his speech. He broke out at once into one of those direct questions which we British avoid—and fear—like the plague.

Q.: "How long have you been in this country?"

The Writer (humbly): "About twenty-three years."

Q.: "What are you—a government official?"

The Writer: "Well, no, but I *was* until a few years ago."

Q.: "Well, then, perhaps you can tell me something. I don't understand you folks at all. You have been in this country two hundred years—why haven't you

taught the people not to spit on the floor? What on earth *have* you done in two hundred years? "

At this stage the guard blew his whistle and the writer was spared the embarrassment of giving a succinct reply to so difficult a question. But though the questioner had gone, the question was one which could not be dismissed from the mind—it had to be answered.

The journey came to an end at Howrah and the writer soon found himself in one of those comfortable but exclusive clubs, which are so often held up against the British. Strolling out from the club in the evening, he passed by groups of homeless wanderers—clad in rags, crouched round a small fire over which they were preparing their meagre and unappetizing meal. It was not a sight of which an Englishman could be proud—and so once more the mind of the writer was forced back to the American's question: "What on earth *have* you British *done* in two hundred years in India? "

CHAPTER II

A SQUARE DEAL

WHAT indeed have we British done and what have we tried to do in two hundred years in India? Two radically different answers to this question are given by two different sets of people.

The first—the answer of the Congress extremists, who may be expected to paint the picture dark—is expressed in the pledge taken by members of the Congress Party on what is known as "Independence Day," 1930:

> "The British Government in India has not only deprived the Indian people of their freedom but has based itself on the exploitation of the masses, and has ruined India economically, politically, culturally and spiritually. We believe, therefore, that India must sever the British connection and attain *Purna Swaraj* or complete independence."

The second—which like any pronouncement of a great British pro-consul is bound to savour of complacency—was well expressed by Lord Curzon when he described the British statesman's ambition with respect to India:

> "To leave India permanently stronger and more prosperous, to have added to the elements of stability in the national existence, to have cut out some sources of impurity or corruption, to have made dispositions that will raise the level of administration not for a year or two but continuously, to have lifted the

people a few grades in the scale of well-being, to have enabled the country or the Government better to confront the dangers or the vicissitudes of the future."

There is nothing in this second answer which suggests unscrupulous exploitation or vile tyranny, and yet somehow it has to be reconciled with the other answer —we shall get nowhere in this controversy unless we assume sincerity on both sides. It would, of course, be easy to choose and hold fast to the answer according to one's temperament, for as Herbert Spencer has it:

"To doubt everything and to believe everything are two equally easy solutions—both dispense with the necessity of reflection."

If we are to avoid this easy choice, what are we to believe? Tyrant or benefactor—which has Britain been in India?

If we are to answer this question intelligently with respect to any Empire, we must remember that Imperialism is not philanthropy. The sentiments which comfort elderly spinsters, sitting by warm fires in peaceful suburbs, do not build Empires or launch new enterprises; except at rare epochs in human history, men in the mass do not go out to fight, to conquer and to found Empires solely for humanitarian or spiritual motives. The mainsprings of Imperial expansion throughout the ages have been pride of race or religion, the love of adventure and the desire for economic advancement. Imperial Rome, Portugal, Britain from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries and, in modern times, Germany and Japan, all illustrate the way in which these three factors, in varying strength, can combine to produce an expansionist urge. This urge cannot be classified in any clear-cut manner

as "materialistic" or "idealistic," for Imperialism, like many great world movements, is a blend of the two impulses. To the uncalculating, venturesome youth who goes out to carry on the work of the Empire, the call to adventure combined with idealism may be paramount, whereas considerations of profit and loss can never be absent from the mind of the statesman who plans or controls the growth of Imperial policy. The true Imperialist is a curious cross between shopkeeper, buccaneer and missionary and it is indeed this illogical blend of materialism and idealism that has given character and durability to the great Empires of history. A nation of pure idealists would probably never grapple successfully with the practical problems of Empire, while on the other hand economic materialism alone would not provide the inspiration by which men can overcome danger, discomfort and exile, and build an Empire in the process.

If then we are to judge the British rule in India fairly, we must begin by admitting that the primary motives of British expansion have been "selfish" and we must then go on to ask, "Has the British power in India, in the achievement of its own primarily selfish aims, given a square deal to the people of India?"

To answer this question we have to consider what is meant by a "square deal" between a ruling people and those they rule. It is, of course, possible to say—and perhaps most of us to-day would say it—that the very existence of the relationship of ruler and ruled is the negation of a "square deal." The question here, however, is given a ruling people and a people ruled, have the British given India a "square deal"? Most people would, perhaps, agree that ancient Rome gave such a deal to the people associated with her, while most people would condemn the Portuguese as Empire

builders. Has Britain in India approximated to the Roman standard, or is she nearer to the Portuguese? What tests can we apply to determine Britain's Imperial affinity?

Some of them spring to the mind at once. Is India more or less prosperous, more or less peaceful, more or less intellectually alive now, than before the coming of the British? Has the progress of India in the last two hundred years been reasonably rapid, judged by the rate of development in other parts of the world? Have the British applied in India standards not lower than those accepted by the contemporary world? Has Britain taken from India more than she has given?

It is not easy to apply these tests. The friends of Britain—generally mis-described as "die-hard Imperialists"—argue as follows:

"When we went to India the country was in a state of anarchy and chaos; Western science had not reached India and the people were backward. Thanks to Britain, it is now in close touch with all the most progressive influences of the world and has acquired an entirely new intellectual outlook. A great industrial future is at hand for India and already development has been so rapid that India is one of the most important arsenals of democracy in the present war. In the world of the spirit, India, as a result of British influence, is shaking off the hampering superstitions of the centuries. *Suttee* has gone, child marriage is going and *purdah* will soon follow. But for Britain, India would still have been in the dark ages."

Having listened to a conclusion so satisfactory to us British, we can sit back and draw our dividends, undisturbed by qualms of conscience!

The enemies of Britain have, however, a different story to tell and this is how it goes:

"It is nonsense to talk of progress and put it all to the credit of Britain. Of course, there has been progress in two hundred years. Is there not such a thing as the march of time? If the British had not been there, if the 'soul of the people' had been free, progress would have been far more rapid. On the material side, India can as yet make neither aeroplanes nor wide-gauge locomotives and it is admitted that most Indians are under-fed. On the intellectual side, English education has in the main been a failure in India and the average Indian graduate has neither breadth of interest, nor the capacity to think. In the world of the spirit, remember the thousands of semi-Anglicized young Indians who are without roots, without beliefs and in many cases without hope. In the world of politics, what of the great cleavage between those who stand for a united India and those who see their only hope in the creation of a separate dominion of Pakistan for the Moslems? But for Britain, India to-day would have been politically, economically and intellectually more advanced."

Both sets of arguments are partly hypothetical and not susceptible to scientific test. Choice between them, if the matter rested here, would be mainly a question of temperament, emotion or prejudice. How then can we proceed?

Our aim is to decide objectively whether Britain has given India a square deal or not. The most hopeful approach seems to be by an attempt to answer the following questions:

(i) Have the British in India produced the political and social conditions which render progress possible?

(ii) Has the progress of India under British rule been as rapid as that of other countries under more or less comparable conditions?

(iii) Has Britain put obstacles in the way of the development of India by Indians themselves?

(iv) Has India, after the last two hundred years of British rule, the capacity for rapid future development? Or to put it another way, is Britain leaving an India fit to govern herself?

It is not possible to answer these questions at this early stage of the book; we shall return to them much later. To get the real answers we shall first have to probe deeply into the everyday life of the ordinary Indian. We shall have to see what were the circumstances of his life before the British period and then examine how they have been altered for good or evil, by the impact of the British power—and finally we shall have to consider whether it would pay a free India to keep up the British connection or not.

CHAPTER III

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

"Pagett M.P. was a liar and a fluent liar therewith,—
He spoke of the heat of India as the 'Asian solar myth';
Came on a four months' visit, 'to study the East' in November
And I got him to make an agreement vowing to stay till September."

THERE are three ways of studying India. The first—and perhaps the most pleasant and least troublesome—is to follow in the footsteps of Kipling's Pagett M.P. and pay a brief visit to that country. The second is to spend a working lifetime there; while the third is to stay firmly in Britain or U.S.A. and read blue books, white papers and other dreary though variously coloured documents. The third method has nothing in its favour, but each of the first two has something to be said for it. The British official who spends his life in India gets the feel of the country—if he is that kind of man—and acquires a detailed knowledge of many of its problems; but he often fails to see the wood for the trees. Like any good civil servant, he thinks accurately in terms of the matters with which his current files deal, but often he does not consider the general trend of world events and he tends to assume that things are as they are, because they cannot help being as they are. He is too close to the screen. On the other hand, the intelligent tourist—if there be one—though misunderstanding much of what he sees and failing to realize the difficulties of Indian administration, may perhaps get a better

general picture of the country as a whole, of its needs and of the deficiencies of administration, than the British official or business man who is of necessity localized in a particular place. Can we—the readers and the writer of this book—make the best of both worlds, by looking through the eyes first of the traveller and then of the resident official? There is everything to be said for having it both ways, for gaining both on the roundabouts and on the swings if you can. Let us begin with the traveller.

We need not bother about the journey to India. If the newcomer is intelligent, by the time he reaches Bombay he will have grown weary of the nineteenth-century life on board ship, of the sweep on the day's run, of the gossip in the bar before lunch, of the "boiled shirt" dinners and even of the sometimes harmless and always pleasant flirtations after dinner. He will arrive wanting a change and so in the mood for intelligent observation.

His first reaction will probably be one of surprise; he has been done down, cheated out of his money. He contracted with Thomas Cook and Son to deliver him for a certain sum to an oriental country, picturesque, full of mystery and enchanting by reason of its novelty. They have not fulfilled their contract—or perhaps the ship has gone to the wrong place. For here he is in what seems to be a very Westernized city. He expected to find a land of bullock-carts and snakes, but he has actually found a city of trams, buses, taxis and spacious main streets. Instead of fakirs, he has met intelligent business magnates, some of whom speak better English than he does himself. In the restaurants and hotels he is at home at once; what is there in the Taj Hotel that he would not find in the Trocadero, except the airy verandah facing the sea, whence he can watch the meet-

ing of East and West? Even the newspapers seem English in get-up and their reports of the proceedings in the local Assembly might almost be extracts from Hansard. The traveller wags his head reflectively at the sameness of life all over the world. "*Plus çà change, plus c'est la même chose.*" How did that myth of the gulf between East and West ever arise?

The traveller goes to sleep on his first night, feeling in some ways an old-timer, but still rather apprehensive of snakes, scorpions and the other perils which he will not in fact meet in Bombay, and not too sure of the harmless lizard. His mosquito net, however, gives him confidence, combined with a pleasant sense of being in the tropics.

Next morning, donning his palm-beach suit for the first time, with some pride, he sallies forth from his hotel and walks about the town. It is a study in contrast. Pride and poverty, luxury and rags jostle each other; women in lovely saris and smartly dressed men alight from magnificent limousines and pass by half-naked, scarcely human creatures who lie indifferently on the pavements or hopefully beg for alms. A land of riches or a land of beggars? Which is it?

Our traveller's business, however, takes him farther afield than Bombay, and in due course he sets out on his first Indian journey. As the train steams out of the Bombay Terminus, named like so many things in India after the good Queen Victoria—he tries in vain to sort out his impressions. He had begun to think that Bombay was much the same as England, but he has gone on to realize that the gulf between the classes is far wider in India, and that nowhere in England is there poverty and degradation quite so abject as that which is to be found in the towns of India.

As he travels over the Western Ghats, once again he

feels he has been cheated; he came out to a supposedly warm country, but now in the night he is glad to snuggle under a blanket. In the morning he has his first insight into the communal problem. Along the platform at one of the main halts come the vendors of tea, so fast becoming the universal beverage in India. Their cry is arresting and not unpleasant unless one happens to be in the mood for sleeping. "Garam cha" or hot tea is the theme song, but it is worked out in two different patterns. Here comes a faithful follower of the Prophet, with fez set jauntily on his head, calling out in strident tones "Mussalman Cha," "Mussalman Cha," that is, "Moslem tea." Close behind him comes a bare-headed, clean-shaven Hindu, equally diligent in calling attention to his steaming cups of comfort with the resonant phrase "Hindu Cha," "Cha Garam"—"Hindu tea," "hot tea." There seems to be no rivalry between the two vendors. Neither tries to entice away customers from the other and each one seems to know exactly which of the passengers is his man. For a time the traveller might be a little puzzled as to why two sets of people should like different kinds of tea, merely because they belong to different religions. A little later, however, his understanding of the problem is carried a stage further. Travelling in India is a dusty and thirsty business and frequent drinking on a rail journey in the hot weather is a necessity. The first-class European traveller probably betakes himself from time to time to the restaurant car to refresh himself with something which will not merely allay his thirst, but will stimulate his travel-weary spirit. For the third-class passenger, however, for whom social habits as well as pecuniary limitations make any such pleasure out of the question, the railway administration makes its own kindly arrangements. On the main stations

men will be found trundling along what are best described as metal tubs on wheels; they contain water, free for all who care to drink it. This is perhaps one of the very few public services in India for which the recipient is not expected to tip somebody—he really does get it free. Here, too, the traveller will see the same strange division which he observed in the case of the tea-vendors—the passengers separate themselves into two streams as unhesitatingly and automatically as his own fellow M.P.s in London march into their respective lobbies at the time of a division. Even in the matter of drinking water, religion appears to count. It was not the case then that the two tea-vendors sold different kinds of tea; it is simply that there are certain things which the Hindu and the Moslem may not do together. They may not eat together or drink together or marry together. As our traveller, learning every minute, watches the tea-vendors and the distributors of water, he begins to get a new and more cheerful light on the communal issue, for he sees that the vendors can ply their trade to their respective clients in peace and amity and he may begin to realize that communal differences do not always mean communal troubles. The differences are, however, real and deep. They extend even to organized sport—there are Hindu and Moslem "Sporting Clubs"; their fortunes in the field are a matter of great moment and can almost affect the rise and fall of cabinets. This, however, our traveller does not know yet, but he has already begun to learn that India is a land of divisions.

Most obvious amongst these divisions is the apparent gulf that he will observe, for example in Calcutta, between British and Indian. There he will find the best hotels and restaurants and clubs full of Englishmen and Scots; at the cinemas which he visits, he will see

the best seats mainly occupied by British people and his superficial impression may well be that there are two classes in Calcutta—the British Lords of the Earth and their humble followers. Like so many first impressions it will be wrong; but it may be some time before he learns that the Province of Bengal has during most of the last eight years been governed by Indian Ministers, chief of whom was the fat, likeable and able Khwaja Sir Nazimuddin, formerly of Trinity Hall, Cambridge. It may be long, too, before he comes to know that the municipal affairs of the great city of Calcutta are controlled by an Indian Mayor and a preponderatingly Indian corporation. (It is perhaps as well that this knowledge should be withheld from him for some time, for no community could want to claim the discredit of being responsible for one of the Empire's dirtiest cities.) It may take the traveller many days to learn all this, for Calcutta, unlike progressive Bombay, is a city of cliques. Officials and non-officials, Indian and Europeans, Hindus and Moslems—each group tends to go its own way without much knowledge of the others, and so because the traveller is in close contact with only one of these groups, he may conjure up a misleading picture of the "British and their humble followers."

If, however, he begins to mix with the Indian intelligentzia, this idea is bound to be broken down rapidly. He will find nothing humble in the attitude of the modern Indian and not very much of arrogance in the manner of the modern Englishman in India. Things have moved fast in the last forty years. As he builds up his acquaintance with educated Indians he will make the absorbing discovery that every intelligent Bengali (and perhaps every intelligent Indian) is both an amateur doctor and an amateur politician. The writer well remembers being asked by several of his

Indian official colleagues in his first station, whether he believed in homeopathy or in allopathy. Thanks to a good university education, he was able to profess his ignorance of the real meaning of either of these terms. But he soon realized that every Bengali gentleman takes the greatest interest in his own internal apparatus and its clinical or functional peculiarities. In the same way almost every educated Indian to-day is intensely interested in the workings of the body politic. This is not unnatural in a country where nationalism is still nascent and where the desire for complete self-government is universal. This factor, operating for several generations, has produced an abiding interest in politics for its own sake, which is difficult for an Englishman to understand. To the newcomer it will often seem that the people of the country are so obsessed with politics, particularly with constitutional problems, that they devote to it many hours of thought and talk which could more profitably be spent on social or economic problems. It may be that this obsession will pass when India is completely free and has no constitutional grievance; but it is perhaps more likely to last, by reason of its affinity to the metaphysical character of Hindu thought.

At this stage our observer, turning gladly away from these difficult matters, may begin to realize how few Indian women he has met. He has indeed been introduced to some charming and cultured Indian hostesses in Bombay and Calcutta, but, in general, it has become obvious to him that India is a land of men. The Purdah system in the strict Moslem sense and the pale Hindu version of it, which keeps ladies of good class away from public places, is still strong. India still appears to the traveller to be a masculine preserve.

Last, but not least, grows the impression that India

is a land of inefficiency, noise and dirt. The impression is in some respects incorrect, but there is no doubt of its presence in the mind of the newcomer. He has seen four or five Indian porters (he must not call them coolies in 1945) noisily handling luggage which in England would be a load for one or two—and he sees the dirt and endures the smells of the station platform. When he gets to his hotel he soon learns that no Indian personal servant would dream of unfastening his crates; the carpenter must be sent for with all solemnity; and so irritation deepens the impression of inefficiency already half formed. What do not come within the notice of the traveller at this stage are the skill and efficiency of the Indian cultivator and craftsman, the deep abiding peace of the rural areas and the scrupulous personal and domestic cleanliness of the overwhelming majority of the people of India. He has not yet learnt that the house and person of the Indian villager are cleaner by far than those of many of the inhabitants of Whitechapel or Stepney. In India the good way of life is still the life of the villager—the cities tend to be an uneasy compromise between East and West.

What the newcomer sees, or thinks he sees, may then be summarized as follows:

(1) A largely westernized society, trams, restaurants, cinemas, taxis, newspapers, parliaments.
(2) Extreme riches and poverty.
(3) A land of the English and their humble followers.
(4) A land of men.
(5) A land of politics.
(6) A land of communities who eat, drink and make merry separately and do not intermarry.
(7) A land of inefficiency, noise and dirt.

CHAPTER IV

A CLOSER VIEW

THE English law in its wisdom requires a witness to tell not merely the truth, but the whole truth; our traveller cannot do that, for he has seen only the India of the town. His evidence will have to be corrected by that of the official or the missionary who has spent his life in village India, the India of the overwhelming majority of the population. The conflict of evidence may well puzzle the Court for the new witness will contradict the traveller on almost every material point. It is clearly a case where local inspection is necessary.

Having been deputed for this purpose, let us make our way to a village, say in East Bengal, the fertile delta of the Ganges. We had better take tents to live in, for we shall find no hotels nor even rest-houses; perhaps after a day or two we shall be lucky enough to be offered hospitality in the substantial house of one of the two most important men in the village—the president of the Union Board and the landlord's agent. In this particular village the president is a Moslem and no difficulty will arise about his feeding us; but on the other hand the landlord's agent is used to looking after British officials, and can speak a little English. However, for the time being we will take our tents and, of course, our cook. We had better take a stock of tinned provisions too, for we shall find no shops selling European goods in this remote area. Scraggy chickens, eggs,

rice and vegetables, with perhaps a little mutton—or more likely goat described as mutton—will be our daily fare. We may be able to get bread sent in from the sub-divisional headquarters forty or fifty miles away, if we trouble to make a sufficiently elaborate arrangement, and if it works.

Our first impression when we get to our camp, a little distance outside the village, will be of quiet and abiding peace. There is no roar of traffic and no harsh sounding of motor-horns to disturb our meditations here, for there are few roads, and those few cross many rivers over which there are no bridges suitable for motor traffic. The silence, broken by nothing save the yelping of pariah dogs and an occasional altercation between human beings, is sometimes found oppressive by the town-dweller; but the man who spends ten or twelve years of his working life in rural India never ceases to long for this silence and is unhappy afterwards in the noise and bustle of Calcutta or Bombay. His wife, of course, may have other views, for to her the lure of the shops may be better than peace where nothing can be bought.

It happens to be market day and a steady stream of people, clad in the comfortable and attractive loose-flowing robes of the East, either bare-footed or wearing sandals, proceed past our camp. They all stop—for nobody seems in a hurry—and stare long and intently at us and our tents, perhaps, as we are newcomers, to our embarrassment. There is nothing impolite about the staring curiosity of India and, indeed, courtesy is one of the great characteristics of the people; you will find nothing here corresponding to the London street-urchin's ribald mockery of a foreigner in strange clothes. There is just undisguised, unabashed interest. The same kind of interest will often cause an Indian

gentleman, who happens to be sharing a railway compartment with you, to ask questions which in Britain would be considered impertinent. "Where are you going?"—"What are you going there for?"—"What is your business?" And after a few minutes' conversation even, "What is your salary?" He is simply being friendly and will not in the least resent being similarly questioned himself. In the village, too, this same uninhibited curiosity is found.

The procession to the market is very mixed. There are men, and a few women, carrying bundles of goods for sale; others are on bullock-carts laden with grain and yet others are driving cattle to the market. About half a mile from our camp they come to a river some thirty or forty feet wide; farther down, it is fordable, and those with bullock-carts and cattle make a detour to the ford. The others go straight to the river-bank and make for a fearsome erection which, from its appearance, might well be some ancient form of military catapult. In reality it is a bridge, consisting of eight or nine bamboos lashed lengthwise together, fixed firmly to a stout stake on each bank and bent into a semi-ellipse between. Walking across it presents no difficulty to the villager, but we are not likely to find it easy. It is true that there is a bamboo hand-rail, but that is a snare and a delusion. It starts very conveniently near the bridge, but diverges more and more from it near the centre of the river, so that just when you are about mid-stream and in most need of support, the hand-rail is quite useless. More than once the present writer has spoiled the dignity of an official visit by falling off one of these bridges. It was almost worth it, for the insight that those incidents gave into Indian courtesy. Nobody even seemed to want to laugh! Except the writer!

To-day, however, we are saved this nervous ordeal, for we are taken across the river in a tiny craft which is nothing but a hollowed-out tree-trunk. There is not much that these people of East Bengal do not know about boats, for theirs is a land of mighty rivers, which play a great part in everyday life. During some months of the year small, covered boats provide the only means of travel. Propelled by a hand paddle, when the tide is against them their speed may be only one or two miles an hour. There are few aspects of life more peaceful than that seen as one travels quietly, on an evening in the rainy season, in one of these country boats, between vast stretches of paddy on either side, past occasional villages, gladly leaving behind here and there the sinister flames of the cremation ground. However progressive-minded one may be, it is difficult not to dread the thought that some day this quiet may be shattered by the noise of the factory or the mill. Intellectually you may *believe* in industrialization, but in a country boat in the evening, on an East Bengal river, you cannot *want* it.

> What is this life if full of care,
> We have no time to stand and stare?

However, we were sent here by the court to report on Westernization, not to philosophize. Back then to the market.

Gone now are the peace and quiet which a few minutes ago seemed timeless, and in their place is a veritable Babel; strident voices seem to be raised in anger or excitement and the din is overwhelming. What can be happening? Surely this must be the beginning of one of those communal riots of which we have heard so much? Yet when the market-place is within sight, nothing untoward seems to be happening

—everybody is happily engaged in bargaining or arguing or gossiping; for here, as all the world over, the market is not just a place for buying and selling; it is a common meeting-place where news, views and gossip may be exchanged. The strident voices betoken nothing more than the fact that the Indian cultivator always talks at the top of his voice. The greater the noise, the greater the happiness.

The market is held in the open air and the great majority of the vendors squat tailorwise on the ground, their wares spread before them on wicker trays. The more fortunate or more prosperous amongst them occupy "stalls." That is to say, they sit not on the ground, but on a stone plinth and have a tin or thatched roof above their heads. For this they pay a rental of perhaps one penny or twopence each market day to the ground landlord.

All the simple wants of the cultivator are supplied in the market. In one quarter rice, pulses, ginger, Indian vegetables, hot chillies and aromatic spices are on sale and except that the shoppers are mainly men, the procedure is much the same as elsewhere in the world. Keen-eyed and critical examination of the commodity concerned, bargaining and counter-bargaining, the vigilant watching of weighment—these are universal marketing phenomena. Here, however, the scales are of a primitive pattern. The scale pans are suspended by strings from a wooden beam and the vendor holds the whole apparatus by the beam. Though crude, the scales are reasonably accurate, and as for the weights, occasional surprise checks by the Collector and his assistants or by the local police, generally serve to ensure that they are genuine.

In another section of the bazaar are the cloth stalls, themselves a symbol of the mixture that makes up

Indian life to-day. Hand-spun garments, mill-made goods from Bombay and cheap imported clothes all compete for the attention of the shoppers, and on the stalls—as on the persons of the shoppers—you will see a blaze of colour, for many vivid hues which would seem out of place in a temperate and less sunny land, are appropriate here and have a beauty of their own.

Farther down in the lines of stalls are what the economists, in their dreary modern jargon, call consumer goods. What a dull name for the mirrors, pencils, cheap torches, combs for the hair, trinkets of all kinds and the hundreds of inexpensive things which seem to bring the outer world into this remote village and which, when the good man returns home from the market, will bring excitement and pleasure to those awaiting him. These imported cheap goods have become more prominent in India in the last thirty years; before the war many of them came from Japan or Germany and not a few from Czechoslovakia.

In the centre of the market is an open space and here we find little groups of people gathered together to discuss this or that. This group here, from the village of Jamalpur, are deploring the recent increase in their Union Board (parish) rate; how can they live if these impositions continue? A second group is discussing the wisdom or unwisdom of presenting a petition to the Collector[1] asking for the transfer of the local Sub-Inspector of Police. The complaint is not that he takes money—that is to be expected—but that he takes too much. And yet it is a very dangerous thing to complain against a police officer. Who knows how many of the petitioners will be put to trouble and perhaps made accused in criminal cases as a result? Very

[1] Or District Magistrate.

mighty is the power of the Daroga.[1] There is a well-known story of an old Hindu woman who had won a lawsuit before a district judge, and anxious to call down blessing upon his head, cried out, "May the Lord make you a Daroga Sahib." Bearing all these facts in mind, the group decides not to move in the matter. Perhaps when the Collector next comes on tour, they might hint at the matter in a roundabout way.

Here under the banyan tree is a very interesting group. The village tout who attends to the affairs of litigants—and has even been known to encourage litigation—has seated round him two or three potential witnesses in a case which is to come up for trial at the Sub-Divisional Court in two or three days' time. They have been taught their story well, and now they are being put through a rehearsal to see whether, in spite of the stiffest cross-examination, they can stand by what they have been told to say. One is rejected, for his memory is not good enough; but the other two pass the test and will be allowed in due course, perhaps at no pecuniary sacrifice, to give evidence. It is not without significance that in Bengali novels tutored witnesses are often described as "banyan tree witnesses."

We have chosen a lucky day for our visit, for there is quite unusual excitement to-day. The Sub-Divisional Magistrate is coming to try what is known as a "bad livelihood" case. In a country where civic sense is not highly developed, the really ruthless criminal can often avoid conviction and punishment; the two or three possible witnesses to any one of his crimes will not risk coming forward with evidence against him and thus becoming marked men. Such a criminal can, moreover, by reason of his ascendancy, often secure the

[1] Officer in charge of a police station.

destruction of all the corroborative evidence against him. A hundred people may know of different crimes that he has committed, but it may not be possible to convict him of any of them. Some way has to be found of bringing together the witnesses to all the different crimes and giving them that sense of safety which comes from numbers. To meet such cases there is a section of the Criminal Procedure Code under which the villain can be charged, not with any specific offence, but with being a habitual offender, and in such cases evidence of general reputation, good or bad, may be given. It is a case of this kind which the Sub-Divisional Magistrate is to try here to-day. The Magistrate is a tall, good-looking Englishman aged about twenty-seven, a member of the Indian Civil Service. The members of that service are jokingly known in Indian as "heaven-born," and it is not difficult to understand the reason as we watch the Magistrate enter into the village. Policemen and village watchmen, roused from the lethargy of their normal life, dash about saluting, pushing back crowds and generally making a great display of their authority. Village grey-beards salaam and bow profoundly, and the president of the Union Board steps forward to receive the august visitor with due deference. The Magistrate is still young enough to be embarrassed at this semi-deification and only too glad to escape from it to the Court where the trial is to take place. The "Court" consists of a table, with a chair for the Magistrate, placed in the shade of a banyan tree whose branches extend many feet—a tree planted years ago, as an act of piety, by a good Hindu. In front of the table a few chairs are drawn up for the prosecuting police officer and the defending pleaders. The pleader is essentially a soft-living town-dweller and he hates these jaunts to the country, where there are no com-

fortable arrangements for sleeping or eating; but the accused is well-to-do and the fees in this case will be worth the trouble.

The accused takes his stand, the crowd are kept at a respectful distance and the case for the prosecution is opened. Eighty witnesses come forward to testify to the almost limitless misdeeds of the accused; with him in the neighbourhood, life is not worth living. Then comes police evidence, still more damning. He has been named as a suspect in sixty-three different criminal cases; how can a man at whom the finger of official suspicion has pointed in sixty-three cases, be other than a bad hat? How could there be so many coincidences? But the Magistrate, though young, knows this game well. This is how it has been played. The Police Inspector, Harendra Nath Mukherjee, full of the intelligence and subtlety and zeal of the best type of Brahmin, decided last year that the present accused Gopal Pande was a bad character against whom a "bad livelihood" case should be run. From that time onwards, whenever investigation of any crime in the locality failed to provide a clue as to the culprit, Gopal Pande was declared by the local police to be suspected of the crime. Repeat this process fifty or sixty times—and what better evidence could you want in a case where the point at issue is whether the accused is a habitual offender, a bad character, or not? This sounds very strange to Western ears, but the police force of India is not working amongst Western people and it has got to get its job done. This particular Inspector is an honest man and a devoted public servant; he knows that Gopal is a menace to the local public and must be restrained. The Magistrate, however, now behaves very unfairly from the police point of view; he calls for the records of the police investigation into

the sixty-three cases in which Gopal has been suspected and he finds, as he expected, that in fifty-four of these cases there was no justifiable ground for these suspicions. In the other nine there was ample justification.

Then follows the evidence for the defence. Ninety witnesses testify that Gopal has for years been the benefactor of the locality; old men in their weariness, young men with their problems, maidens in their perplexities, all have gone to him for counsel and help and none has been sent empty away. It becomes monotonous after the first twenty or thirty versions; but there are bright moments. Here are one or two.

Q. (by prosecution): "Who asked you to come here and give evidence?"

A.: "Nobody."

Q.: "Has anybody paid you for coming?"

A. (sadly): "No." (Meaning he has not yet had his money.)

Q.: "Why did you come?"

A.: "I don't know."

. . . . . .

or again

Q.: "Have you been in jail?"

A.: "I don't remember."

. . . . . .

or yet again

Q.: "Yesterday you said that you saw Gopal beat Bishtu. To-day you say you do not know either Gopal or Bishtu. How can you reconcile these two statements?"

A.: "Sir, I do not know. I have had fever lately and my head is very bad and I did not know what I was saying yesterday."

So it goes on, and one might think that not even

Solomon could make head or tail of it; but somehow or other the Sub-Divisional Magistrate extracts some sense from it and decides that Gopal is a habitual criminal. As he has not been charged with a specific offence, Gopal is not sent direct to jail, but is merely required to produce a guarantor for his good behaviour. He will have to go into jail if he cannot find one. None is forthcoming, for nobody in the district is foolish enough to believe that Gopal could play straight, even if he tried. So Gopal goes to jail and crime in the locality drops significantly. All very rough and ready, but it works—and India is, on the whole, a safe, law-abiding country.

Perhaps we have seen enough to enable us to report to the Court on the first issue. Our finding must be obvious. Whatever may be the case in the towns, in the villages Western influences have produced very little effect, except on the surface. The old order has not changed.

If, then, the traveller has been proved unreliable on this important point, we must not be too ready to accept his evidence on other matters, or at any rate we must correct it by that of other witnesses. The second matter to which he testified, concerned the economic aspect of Indian life—he told us of the extremes of richness and poverty. Here his evidence will be seen to be not so much incorrect as incomplete. The gulf between the great landlord and the landless labourer is wide enough in all conscience; while as for the small cultivator, he is almost invariably in debt and it may in truth be said of him that

> His life is a long drawn question,
> Between a crop and a crop.

He has no reserves. Yet in normal times there is a

stability and economic security about village life, beyond what theory would lead us to expect. Land does indeed change hands as a result of debt, but the great majority of holdings pass from father to son intact and undiminished except by the process of fragmentation from generation to generation inside the family. Poverty, in the sense of an inadequate diet or the bare minimum of clothing, is common enough, but there is nothing in the village quite comparable to the destitution often found in the towns. Loyalty to the family, perhaps stronger in India than anywhere, does not allow the feckless or the lazy or the weak to starve; it may hamper progress, but it protects the under-dog. In this sense there is comparative economic stability in village life.

We can find no corroboration in the villages for our traveller's town impression that India is a land of the "English and their humble followers." In the district where we now are, there are three million inhabitants. The Collector as it happens is an Indian, and the only Englishmen in the district are the young Sub-Divisional Officer, whom we have seen, and the Superintendent of Police; to many of the people here a white face is as much of a curiosity as a Hottentot would be in London. Nor is this district an exception. In the whole of India, apart from soldiers, there are less than twenty thousand British adult males and the overwhelming majority of them are concentrated in the large cities. As for soldiers, they too, in peace-time, are concentrated in a limited number of areas, and most of the people of India never sees a British soldier. In his early days the writer was Sub-Divisional Officer in a somewhat troublesome sub-division with a population of a million people. One of the local politicians, from whose lips words like "Exploitation," "Oppression" and "Slav-

ery " flowed easily and unceasingly, was never tired of declaring that he and his fellow countrymen were held down by force. " British bayonets alone maintain the conqueror in his proud place " was one of his bursts of eloquence. It was indeed a fine phrase and a credit to his creative imagination, for in that sub-division there was not a single British bayonet nor a single Englishman, apart from the writer and one engineering officer, nor a soldier of any kind, Indian or British. The overwhelming force by which a million people were subdued and cowed consisted of perhaps two hundred Indian constables, most of whom were armed with nothing more formidable than a stout cudgel. It is always a pity when a fine phrase turns out to have a hollow ring.

We cannot stop to report all the points on which the evidence of the traveller required correction; on one such matter we must, however, touch briefly. The traveller was impressed with the division of India into creeds and communities. That division is real and, as many observers believe, is growing wider; and yet a few years ago it could be said that the last half century had seen the beginnings of a sense of Indian nationality embracing Hindus, Moslems, Sikhs and every community in India. It is difficult to define what it was that constituted this growing sense of common nationality. It was not language, for language in India divides rather than unites; it was not race, for there is no ethnic tie between, for instance, most of the inhabitants of Madras and the man from the Punjab; clearly, too, it was not religion or culture, for the gulf between the austere monotheism of Islam and the elaborate social-religious system of the Hindus is impassable. Was it perhaps the product of a common system of government? We shall consider this in more detail later;

here we need only note that for the first time in history, in the nineteenth century the idea of India as a country and its people as a nation began to form. Since then it has suffered a severe set-back. We shall have more to say about this when we discuss the relations between the Hindus and the Moslems; for the present we need merely report to the Court that there has been a reaction, and that though the sense of Indian nationalism is strong in some sections of the community, there are others who repudiate it firmly.

We have seen then that our traveller, though a helpful witness, is not to be trusted implicitly; his half knowledge needs to be corrected. Let us sum up what he sees and what he does not see.

WHAT THE NEWCOMER SEES	WHAT HE DOES NOT SEE
1. A largely westernized society, trams, restaurants, cinemas, dances, newspapers, parliaments.	1. A rural society scarcely affected by Western modes of thought.
2. Extreme riches and poverty.	2. The comparative economic security of village life—except in war-time.
3. A land of the English and their humble followers.	3. An India in which the number of Englishmen is negligible.
4. A land of men.	4. Woman the ruler of the household.
5. A land of politics.	5. A land where most people are still politically unconscious.[1]
6. A land of *communities* who eat, drink and marry separately.	6. The growth of Indian Nationalism.

[1] This is of necessity a very summary statement which may well arouse criticism in India. In making it the writer does not ignore the large following of the Congress and the Moslem League and the way in which the masses in some areas were stirred during the non-co-operation and civil disobedience movements. Nor does he ignore the almost universal desire of the intelligentzia for self-government. In spite of these facts, the statement is still true of the overwhelming majority of the four hundred million people of India.

WHAT THE NEWCOMER SEES	WHAT HE DOES NOT SEE
7. A land of inefficiency, noise and dirt.	7. The cultivator's hereditary skill—the peace of the village and the cleanliness of the people.

CHAPTER V

HINDU INDIA

PEOPLE with tidy minds always begin at the beginning—but the drawback is that the beginning is so rarely interesting until you know the middle or the end. That is why the fair sex, knowing that there are better things in life than mere tidiness, read a novel in the proper way, first the end, then the beginning and then the middle. That is also why in this book, having started with 1945, we shall now go back to the remote past, then skip on to the present again and then perhaps once more back to history. If that reason is not good enough, there is the other one, that without a brief sketch of Indian history, the discussions of modern India in later chapters would be difficult to understand.

Hitler's sham Aryan has been so fully exposed, that most people have probably forgotten the real Aryan, the common ancestor of the people of Europe, North America, of Northern India and of Persia, just as they have forgotten that the swastika is not a Nazi invention, but an ancient Hindu symbol. Tracing one's ancestors is a fascinating game, particularly when you get far enough back to escape from the fear of discovering a murderer, a forger or a rake amongst them. As you go towards remote antiquity, direct proof becomes hard to find and its place has to be taken by circumstantial evidence. Ethnology, which involves measuring peoples' noses, examining their eyes, considering whether they are fat-headed or thin-headed, and all kinds of delightful impertinences, is the most important method of

approach to this problem. Considerations of language also help, but they have to be used with great care for they can easily be misleading. A conquered people may lose its language, or a small group, becoming merged into a large one, may adopt the language of the latter. For example, though the Cornish are historically a different people from the Anglo-Saxons, their own language has died out and they speak only English. When, however, we find linguistic affinities between certain people scattered over a large part of the world, it is at least probable that there is some connection between them; at any rate the probability is strong enough to make it worth while starting to measure their noses and heads and examine their history.

To anybody with a smattering of Latin or Greek who starts learning one of the languages of Northern India, certain similarities at once appear. One does not need to be a philologist to notice the following resemblances:

English.	Indian Language.	Latin or Greek.	German.
Mother	Mata	Mater	Mütter
Father	Pita	Pater	Vater
Daughter	Duhita	θυγατηρ	Tochter
Is	Asti	Est	Ist
Eight	Ashta (āth)	ὀκτω	Acht

Making up lists of this kind is both entertaining and instructive. There are certain rules of the game, however; one is that where you have "d" in English you put "t" in German and an "δ" in Greek; another that "f" in English will correspond with "p" in Sanskrit or Latin or Greek. Many of these rules were discovered by the two German brothers Grimm, and it is perhaps an interesting sidelight on the German character that the brothers took their philology much

more seriously than the lovely fairy-tales which they unearthed in the course of their ponderous linguistic researches.

These similarities of languages are merely suggestive, but they are backed up by plenty of other evidence which shows beyond doubt that Hitler, Winston Churchill, Gandhi, Mussolini and Tito—however much they may hate it—all belong to the same family. Chiang Kai-Shek and Stalin are outside the domestic circle, though to some very welcome guests. The members of the family are known as the Indo-Aryans and at a somewhat indeterminate date, several thousands of years ago, they lived somewhere just east or south-east of Europe; we do not know exactly where, but as most of us are rather vague about the geography of that part of the world, it does not much matter. There may have been a big family row or some of the children may have suffered from wanderlust, or it may be that there were too many of them to live on one patch of land. For some reason or other they split up into three main groups. One batch went west to Europe, the second turned into Persia, and the third made its way gradually down into India.

These Indo-Aryans when they came to India were generally fair, tall, long-headed and good-looking. In India they found an altogether different type of people, speaking a language which, to them, was quite unintelligible. The people of the country, the Dravidians as they are called, were, as a rule, short, squat, dark, curly haired and, truth to tell, rather ugly. Mr. Gandhi had not then invented the theory of non-violence and there began to be a bitter struggle for the lands of Northern India. Gradually the Indo-Aryans got the best of it and the Dravidians were pushed down to the South. India north of the Vindhya mountains came to

be the land of the Aryans and south of that became the land of the Dravidians.

The theory of penetration, however, existed long before Hitler, and though these Aryan folk did not in general conquer the people of the South, they influenced them considerably in language, religion and customs. In modern times the South Indian has made up for this by using his quick intelligence to secure a very large proportion of the jobs in India requiring brains. The Indo-Aryans are the people of immediate interest to us, for in time they managed to superimpose their culture and religion on the whole of pre-Moslem India. They were very proud of their light skins, just as their descendants are to-day, and it is not an accident that the ancient Sanskrit word for caste is "varna," which means "colour"; though it must not be imagined that caste is wholly racial in origin, or that it is based entirely on the relationship between the conqueror and conquered.

Let us take a look at the early invaders—the first of the peoples who throughout the centuries were to pour down from North-West into the prosperous plains of Northern India. Fortunately we are able to learn quite a lot about them from a collection of religious poems, more or less contemporary with the Homeric poems, and known as the Vedas. Veda means knowledge. They were a mainly pastoral people, and as one writer puts it, "the stress laid by the poets on the possession of cows is almost pathetic"; at the same time agriculture was growing in importance, and when the Aryans entered into India the use of the plough was becoming more frequent. Meat-eating was still the order of the day and there were no signs of the modern Hindu objection to the taking of life, though the cow, because of its special value to the community, was not to be killed.

In the domestic sphere monogamy was usual, marriage was indissoluble and the status of the wife was high. Some of the most striking hymns of the Vedas were meant to accompany the marriage ceremonies. One of the best-known stanzas is the following:

> Free from the evil eye, thy husband hurting not,
> Kind to our beasts, be friendly, full of energy;
> Bear heroes, love the gods, and live in happiness;
> Bring welfare to our bipeds and quadrupeds.

Each tribe has its own king, but while it is clear that "he was marked out from his subjects by his glittering apparel, his palace and his retinue" and that he led his people in war, we know little of his functions in peace or of the relations between him and the popular assembly which existed even at this early date.

The gods were still, in the main, personifications of the powers of nature, and as might be expected, the violence of the storms of North-West India was reflected in the importance of Indra, God of Thunder and the Maruts or storm gods. The following is a stanza regarding the might of Indra:

> Both Heaven and Earth themselves bow down before him;
> Before his might the very mountains tremble.
> Who, known as Soma-drinker, armed with lightning,
> Is wielder of the bolt: he, men, is Indra.

In another stanza the Maruts are apostrophized as follows:

> Before you, fierce ones, even woods bow down in fear
> The Earth herself, the very mountains tremble.

Parjanya, the god of the rain-cloud, is important too:

> Like charioteer, his horses lashing with a whip,
> The god makes manifest his messengers of rain.
> From far away the roaring of the lion sounds,
> What time Parjanya veils the firmament with rain.

The winds blow forth to earth the quivering lightnings fall.
The plants shoot up; with moisture streams the realm of light.
For all the world abundant nourishment is born,
When by Parjanya Earth is fertilized with seed.

Nor are the softer aspects of nature forgotten, and to anyone who has seen the beauty of sunrise and sunset in the hills of the Punjab and the North-West, it is not surprising that the principal goddess of the Vedas was Ushas, the goddess of Dawn, to whom is addressed one of the most beautiful of the Vedic poems:

This light has come, of all the lights the fairest;
This brilliant brightness has been born, far-shining;
Urged onward for God Savitar's uprising,
Night now has yielded up her place to morning.

The sisters' pathway is the same, unending;
Taught by the gods, alternately they tread it.
Fair-shaped, of form diverse, yet single-minded,
Morning and night clash not, nor do they tarry.

Now Heaven's Daughter has appeared before us,
A maiden shining in resplendent garments.
Thou sovran lady of all earthly treasure,
Auspicious Dawn, shine here to-day upon us.

In the sky's framework she has gleamed with brightness;
The goddess has cast off her robe of darkness.
Rousing the world from sleep, with ruddy horses,
Dawn in her well-yoked chariot is arriving.

Bringing upon it many bounteous blessings,
Brightly she shines and spreads her brilliant lustre.
Last of innumerable morns departed,
First of bright morns to come has Dawn arisen.

Again and again newly born though ancient,
Decking her beauty with the self-same colours,
The goddess wastes away the life of mortals,
Like wealth diminished by the skilful player.

Gone are the mortals who in former ages
Beheld the flushing of the earlier morning.
We living men now look upon her shining;
Those will be born who shall hereafter see her.

The hymns as a whole show a high conception of duty and a very close relationship between men and the gods. As one writer puts it:

"Always and everywhere he feels that he is in their hands, and that all his movements are under their eye. They are masters close at hand, who exact tasks of him, and to whom he owes constant homage. He must be humble, for he is weak and they are strong; he must be sincere towards them, for they cannot be deceived. Nay, he knows that they in turn do not deceive, and that they have a right to require his affection and confidence as a friend, a brother, a father. Without faith, offerings and prayers are vain."

Altogether then we have a picture of a people who had arrived at a very high level of civilization, though they were weak in political organization. In India they came into contact with a people on a lower level of culture, in whose religion the phallic element played a large part and whose deities were largely malignant. Historical records of the first few hundred years after the arrival of the Aryans are scanty, but it was clearly a period in which war played a great part. Not only was there a struggle between Aryans and Dravidians, but amongst the Aryans themselves there were great tribal battles, resulting in the foundation of a number of separate kingdoms. Well before the time of Alexander's invasion of India, the Dravidians had been forced south of the Vindhyas, Northern India itself had been carved out into a number of great kingdoms, together surprisingly enough with a number of Repub-

lics. There were no signs of any progress towards unity.

This era of struggle was also the formative period in Hinduism. It saw not only the emergence of the Brahminical systems of philosophy, but also the growth of the caste system. Both these developments are of importance to our present purpose. The former concerns us because the great cultural and philosophical differences between modern Hindus and Moslems are complicating factors in modern Indian politics, while the extreme forms, which the caste system assumed in its later stages, led to the modern problem of how the scheduled castes (or untouchables as they used to be called) can be fitted into the political framework of a self-governing India.

The later teaching of the Brahmins is in essence twofold.[1] First is the doctrine which may be described as a very abstruse and extreme form of pantheism. Whereas the pantheist says that God is *in* everything, the Brahmin says in effect that the universal spirit *is* everything. This paper, the table at which the writer sits, the reader and the writer *are* all identical with the world soul or *atma*—separateness, i.e. the material world, is just illusion. As it is put in one of the sacred commentaries: "The whole world consists of it; that is the real, that is the soul, that art thou." One of the most famous of all the Brahminical formulae is simply "That art thou." But the ordinary man wants something less cold and abstract than this, and so side by side with it grew up the doctrine of Karma, that is reincarnation, governed by accumulated merit or demerit. It is the principle that as a man sows so shall he reap, extended beyond the boundaries of the grave. When a

[1] Strictly speaking, this account applies to one of the several schools of Hindu philosophy—but it is the dominant school.

man dies he is reborn in another form and the particular form depends on his behaviour in his previous life. It is all an inevitable chain of cause and effect.

Both these principles have had a powerful influence on Hindu character. Both conduce to a rather negative attitude, a putting up with things as they are, and neither make for a strong belief in the rights of the individual. In these respects they are in strong contrast with Islam, and here we have one of the fundamental, cultural and psychological differences between Hindu and Moslem. To the Moslem, a determined individualism and the belief in equality are natural—to the Hindu they are unnatural.

Even more important is the rise of the caste system. The essence of this system is that a member of one caste must marry inside his own caste and, in general, may not eat with the members of another caste. In the past —and to a limited extent to-day in village India—a man's occupation was determined by his caste. The four main castes were the *Brahmin* or the priestly order, the *Kshatriya* or the warrior, the *Vaisya* or trader, and, far below these three, the *Sudra*. Some idea of the gulf between the three higher castes and the Sudra may be obtained from the mythological account of their origin in the Rig Veda:

> Into how many portions did they divide this being whom they immolated? What did his mouth become? What are his arms, his thighs, and his feet now called?
>
> His mouth became a priest; his arm was made a soldier; his thigh was transformed into a husbandman; from his feet sprang the servile man.

Originally a loose classification, the system gradually hardened into a definite stratification, and the Brahmin priestly class, in the course of time, framed elaborate rules " to guard their ceremonial purity against defile-

ment through unholy food or undesirable marriage." Lower castes began to imitate this ceremonialism and so the caste system in its more rigid form came into existence. Its origin is extremely complex. The gulf between a conquering race and the conquered people was one factor; the difference in the civilization and standards of life between the Aryan and the older inhabitants of the country was a contributory cause; and it may be that occupational differences were another factor.

Much of early Indian history was taken up with the struggle between Brahmins and kings, and "to the spiritual claims of the Brahmins (who alone could perform the religious sacrifice) must be opposed the practical power of the kings." The description of the Vaisyas as "tributary to another, to be lived on by another and to be oppressed at will," clearly indicates the struggle between priest and king on one hand and their commoners or tenants on the other. As for the Sudra, he was not fit to take part in the sacrifice, nor, when milk had to be offered to the God Agni (fire), might he even milk the cow.

However contrary to modern Western ideas this system may seem, it was not wholly a misfortune for India. It provided stability and minimized disputes at a time when the State was weak and political organization was poor—as it mainly was in the period of Hindu rule. Generally speaking, the ancient Hindus did not show a genius for large-scale governmental organization, and it may be that something like the caste system was necessary to hold society together. The stability which it produced "has been the main agent in preserving Hindu ideas of religion, morals, art and craftsmanship," or as Monier Williams puts it: "Caste has been useful in promoting self-sacrifice, in securing

subordination of the individual to an organized body, in restraining vice and in preventing pauperism."

In more modern times, however, there is a darker side to the picture. Untouchability may have had its origin in the natural desire of an enlightened and fastidious people to preserve themselves from contact with men of a lower order of civilization and of primitive personal habits. Nothing, however, can justify, to modern eyes, the width of the gulf which was set up between the main body of Hindus and the many millions of untouchables, and few modern educated Hindus will defend the system under which even the shadow of an untouchable will pollute a man of high caste. As late as 1931 it was reported, during the census of a certain district in South India, that there still existed a caste of "unseeables," the very sight of whom would defile. It is important to remember that these extreme forms of untouchability are an excrescence on the caste system, not contemplated by the early Brahmins under whose influence that system grew up. To-day they present an additional complication in the scheme of Indian politics, for there are nearly fifty million of these untouchables (now called by the less derogatory name of Scheduled castes) and they are not prepared to link themselves politically with the main body of the Hindu community. At one time their leaders considered the advisability of leaving the Hindu fold altogether and forming a fresh religion of their own. This has not happened, but they nevertheless regard themselves as a separate community and they claim that in the new constitution they must be treated as such. They are as unwilling as the Moslems to accept rule by the Hindu community as a whole.

The changed conditions of modern life, involving many people in frequent journeys and contacts with

people of all kinds, are necessarily producing their effect, but the caste system is still strong, particularly in the villages; nor does its influence necessarily disappear when a man goes out into the wider world. The present writer well remembers an incident, early in his service, in a remote Bengal district: the officer in charge of the local police station, a Vaisya by caste, arrived at the writer's camp. The Brahmin constable on duty smartly saluted the officer, and the officer then bent down to "take the dust" off the Brahmin's feet. Not even the precision of the official heirarchy had obliterated the age-long influence of caste. It still happens too that an orthodox high caste Hindu, after a call on the Collector in which he has shown the most profound respect for the representative of Government, will return home to undergo a ceremonial purification. This clash of the old and the new is one of the difficult features of Indian life in the present day and adds considerably to the complexity of the political problems.

It is not necessary to study in detail the rather dreary history of the centuries during which these developments took place; during most of that time India was a land in which kingdom struggled with kingdom, chieftain with chieftain, and in the larger sense there was little political development. In all the two thousand years between the arrival in India of the Aryans and the invasion of India by Moslems from the North-West, only for three brief periods was there anything approaching a unified government even in North India. First was the Empire of the Mauryas, set up by the famous Chandragupta about 322 B.C. and continued by the great Asoka. The empire was highly organized, but was characterized by the utmost severity and by the virtual disappearance of free institutions. The Roman historian Justin tells us regarding Chandragupta that

"when he had gained the victory and ascended the throne he transformed nominal liberty into slavery, inasmuch as he oppressed with servitude the people whom he had rescued from foreign rule." The Maurya State was "organized elaborately with full supply of Departments and carefully graded officials with well-defined duties." It exercised a general control over distant provinces and employed an efficient and all-pervading secret service. The Emperor Asoka brought to his royal task an exacting sense of duty and a lofty idea of the responsibilities of a ruler. High moral principles were carved out on great rock pillars throughout the country, and to this day those pillars are amongst the wonders of India. On one of them Asoka sets forth graphically his conception of the duties of a king:

> For a long time past it has not happened that business has been dispatched and that reports have been received at all hours.
>
> Now by me this arrangement has been made that at all hours and in all places—whether I am dining, or in the ladies' apartments, or in my private room, or in the mews, or in my conveyance, or in the palace gardens—the official Reporters should report to me on the people's business; and I am ready to do the people's business in all places. . . . I have commanded that immediate report must be made to me at any hour and in any place, because I never feel full satisfaction in my efforts and dispatch of business. For the welfare of all folk is what I must work for—and the root of that, again, is in effort and the dispatch of business. And whatsoever exertions I make are for the end that I may discharge my debt to animate beings, and that while I make some happy here, they may in the next world gain heaven.

The most important influence of Asoka on the future of India, however, arose not so much from his high sense of duty, as from the fact that he enthusiastically embraced Buddhism. Although some centuries later Buddhism practically disappeared from India, it left a

prominent mark on the Hindu outlook, and the pessimism which is the great characteristic of Buddhism—the belief that on the whole misery preponderates over happiness in human life—has undoubtedly influenced Hindu psychology.

After the death of Asoka the empire rapidly crumbled to pieces, and for the next six hundred years India again became a land of many warring kingdoms.

In the fourth century A.D. the Empire of the Guptas, not dissimilar in extent and organization to that of the Mauryas, dominated Northern India. In many respects it was a golden age; literature and art were raised to a high level, and, indeed, Hindu art was probably at its best during this period; administration was mild and the Buddhist rule of life was observed. It was said that "throughout the country no one kills any living thing or drinks wine, or eats onions or garlic . . . they do not keep pigs or fowls; there are no dealings in cattle, no butchers' shops or distilleries in their market places." It is interesting to note, however, that, in the words of Vincent Smith, "The chandalas or outcastes, who did not observe the rules of purity, were obliged to live apart, and were required when entering a town or bazaar to strike a piece of wood as a warning of their approach, in order that other folk might not be polluted by contact with them." After three or four generations this empire too began to decline and again disintegration occurred.

Yet a third time did one of the rulers of India endeavour to establish a far-flung empire. King Harsha reigned for forty years in the seventh century A.D. and made himself feared as far east as Assam. He was a human dynamo, whose energy was inexhaustible; he does not seem to have built up anything like the elaborate administration of the Mauryas or the Guptas,

but he travelled incessantly throughout his dominions, radiating energy wherever he went and imposing his will by the sheer force of personality. He too was an ardent Buddhist, and it is said of him that he "sought to plant a tree of religious merit to such an extent that he forgot to sleep or eat." Unfortunately his rule depended entirely on his own strong personality, and when he died the whole country relapsed into chaos, from which it was never rescued until the establishment of the Moghul administration some nine hundred years later.

If then we take the two thousand or more years during which Hinduism—or its offspring Buddhism—was a predominating influence in Indian life, we see that, while it contributed greatly to the world of thought, religion and culture, it failed to develop any stable form of government over a widespread area, or to give rise to progressive political institutions.

CHAPTER VI

MOSLEM INDIA

A THOUSAND years ago there was nothing in India corresponding to the modern communal problem. The country, it is true, was divided into many kingdoms, often at war with each other, but within each kingdom the great mass of the inhabitants unhesitatingly acknowledged the authority of the Ruler, until such time as intrigue or military prowess enabled another chief to usurp his place. The caste system amounted to stratification rather than division, and in any case, as it was accepted without question by all within its fold, it presented no major problems. From north to south, Hinduism was paramount, though there were indeed jungle tribes not yet affected by its tenets.

A new element now appeared to disturb this comparative uniformity. Moslems from the North-West, alien in race, traditions and outlook, speaking languages unintelligible to the people of India, discovered and coveted the riches of the land. At first these men of the mountains were content with seasonal raids; in the cold weather they poured down into the plains, and in the hot weather they retired with their booty to the hills. It was inevitable, however, that these raids should in time be replaced by systematic and determined attempts to conquer the country as a whole. Islam was in an expansionist phase, and crusading zeal was as much respected by the Moslems as by the Christians of that period. One of the early historians

of the Moslem invasions of India, described with manifest glee how the Moslem invaders, after conquering a powerful Hindu tribe, "sent that refractory race to Hell and carried on a holy war as prescribed by the canons of Islam and set a river of the blood of those people flowing." When holiness and good business can be combined, what more could a man want? The invaders soon discovered that India was a land, if not of milk and honey, at least of jewels, silver and fine linen, and we are told by a modern historian that when Sultan Mahmood returned to Ghazni after one of his early invasions of India, he took with him "a house of white silver like to the houses of rich men, the length of which was thirty yards, and the breadth fifteen. It could be taken to pieces and put together again. There was a canopy, made of the fine linen of Ruhm forty yards long and twenty broad, supported on two golden and two silver poles which had been cast in moulds . . . jewels and unbored pearls and rubies, shining like sparks, or like wine congealed with ice, and emeralds like fresh sprigs of myrtle, and diamonds in size and weight like pomegranates."

Even the combined motives of religion and gain might have been insufficient to tempt the newcomers to settle down in the torrid plains of Northern India, if they had met with any effective military resistance. Again and again, however, it became clear that, in spite of gallantry and individual prowess, the Hindus were no match for their Moslem enemies. Not only did the Hindus appear to be inferior in the technical aspects of the art of war, but they proved quite incapable of setting up a united command. As one modern historian puts it: "Time after time, enormous hosts, formed of the contingents supplied by innumerable Rajas and supported by the delusive strength of ele-

phants, were easily routed by quite small bodies of vigorous Western soldiers, fighting under one undivided commandant, trusting chiefly to well-armed and mobile cavalry." The first decisive battle between the Moslem invaders and the Hindus was fought in A.D. 1192. Though the Hindu host was vast, it could not cope with the mobility and organization of the invading army. The principal Hindu general and his brother were killed, and this great defeat of the Hindus, in the plain to the north of Delhi which was to be the scene of many battles, made it quite clear that, in the long run, victory would rest with the Moslems.

There is little that is attractive about the history of the first few hundred years of the Moslem assault on India. Vast tracts of territory were conquered, and at least in theory, the suzerainty of the invaders extended over much of North India. No stable political constitution, however, was established, and it is perhaps hardly unfair to say, that the early rule of the Moslems in India was characterized by cruelty, intolerance and exaggerated devotion to ceremony. Frightfulness was the main characteristic of some of the early invading Rulers, and we are told of the first Sultan of Delhi that "his gifts were bestowed by hundreds of thousands and his slaughters likewise were by hundreds of thousands." Of one of his successors we have this terrible description: "By Royal command, many of the rebels were cast under the feet of elephants and the fierce Turks cut the bodies of the Hindus in two. About a hundred met their death at the hands of the flayers, being skinned from head to foot; their skins were all stuffed with straw and some of them were hung over every gate of the city." Or again, in the same year, we are told that when the Emperor found it necessary to deal with insurgents "he fell upon them unawares and captured

them all to the number of twelve thousand—men, women and children—whom he put to the sword. All their valleys and strongholds were overrun and cleared and great booty captured. Thanks be to God for this victory of Islam." To put it briefly, the policy of the invading Moslems with regard to the people of Hindustan was *vae victis*.

Stern repression was the order of the day. In our present mild age, the liberty of the Indian Press is almost unlimited, and day by day there appear in the leading newspapers of Calcutta and Delhi criticisms of the ruling power which must make the early Moslem emperors turn in their graves. In their day such mildness would have been laughed at as feebleness. The following story of the fourteenth century will make this point clear:

"One of the Mohammedan Rulers who had invaded India was annoyed because the inhabitants of Delhi had thrown into his audience-hall papers criticizing his policy. The Sultan therefore decided to ruin Delhi. So he purchased the houses from the inhabitants, paid them the price and then ordered them to remove to Daulatabad. First they were unwilling to obey, but the crier of the monarch proclaimed that no one must be found in Delhi after three days. The greater part of the inhabitants departed, but some hid themselves in the houses. The Sultan ordered a vigorous search to be made for any that remained. His slaves found two men in the streets, one was paralysed and the other blind. They were brought before the sovereign, who ordered the paralytic to be shot away from the catapult and the blind man to be dragged from Delhi to Daulatabad, a journey of forty days' distance. The poor wretch fell in pieces during the journey and only one of his

legs reached Daulatabad. All the inhabitants of Delhi left, they abandoned their luggage and their merchandise and the city remained a perfect desert. A person in whom I have got confidence assured me that the Sultan mounted one evening upon the roof of his palace, casting his eyes over the city of Delhi, from which there was no fire, smoke nor light, said: 'Now my heart is satisfied and my feelings are appeased.'"

This is a story told, not by a foreigner, but by Ibn Batuta, a great Moslem officer of the Sultan.

Side by side with this general cruelty and ruthlessness went a determined persecution of the Hindus. One of the most vivid accounts of what this policy meant in practice is given by a Moslem historian who lived at the Court of Sultan Allauddin Khilji (who was described by a contemporary as one of the best sultans). We are told that "no Hindu could hold up his head and in their houses no sign of gold or silver or of any superfluity was to be seen. These things which nourish insubordination and rebellion, were no longer to be found. . . . Blows, confinement in stocks and in prison were all employed to enforce payment." Questioned by a learned lawyer as to the wisdom of this policy, the Sultan himself replied, "Oh, Doctor, thou art a learned man, but thou hast had no experience; I am an unlettered man, but I have seen a great deal; be assured then that the Hindus will never become submissive and obedient till they are reduced to poverty. I have, therefore, given orders that just sufficient should be left to them from year to year of corn, milk, and curd, but they shall not be allowed to accumulate and hoard property."

Of all the early Moslem Rulers of Northern India,

Feroz Shah is generally praised as one of the most enlightened. He abolished the many forms of torture which had prevailed before his day. But even his toleration could not extend to the Hindus, whom he regarded as infidels. Having learned one day that a certain new Hindu temple had been built—let us now quote his own words—"under divine guidance I destroyed those edifices, I killed those leaders of infidelity who seduced others into error and the lower orders I subjected to stripes and chastisement until this abuse was entirely abolished. . . . I forbade the infliction of any severe punishment of the Hindus in general, but I destroyed their idol temples and instead thereof raised mosques." Torture and punishment alone, however, were not considered to be sufficient to force the Hindus to change their faith. Economic sanctions were also brought into effect. A special tax was levied upon all non-Moslems and, judged by the financial standards of those days, it was far from light.

It would not be fair to judge these severities by the mild standards of modern days. It must, indeed, be remembered that at the same epoch in Europe, torture, intolerance and oppression were almost taken for granted. The only reason for emphasizing these aspects of the Moslem invasion is the fact that, for the first time, there were present in India two incongruous elements. The stern proselytizing monotheism of Islam and the elastic all-embracing philosophy of the Brahmin—these two attitudes of life could not be reconciled. Either one must yield to the other, or the foreign conqueror must hold both in check or, as is happening to-day, there must be the demand for Pakistan and Hindustan.

The modern reader studying the first five hundred years of the Moslem invasions of India is quickly tired

of the stories of bloodshed and severity and longs for some relieving feature. Fortunately he can readily find it in the development of art, and in particular of architecture, during this period. Almost every European who visits India plays golf at the Lodi Golf Course in Delhi—and however poor a player he may be, exasperation at his bad strokes must be tempered by his enjoyment of the beautiful Lodi tombs which surround the golf course and which are amongst the chief architectural remains of the early Moslem period in India. Dignity and simplicity were the keynote of Moslem architecture in India at this time, and it cannot be denied that the Moslems brought to India a conception of beauty more developed and more austere than anything which India had previously been able to evolve for herself.

From about the beginning of the sixteenth century the Moslems began to assume a new role in India. India at this stage consisted of a loosely knit dominion under the Sultans of Delhi; certain more or less independent though allied kingdoms in the East and West of the country; and a number of powerful states farther South—some Hindu and some Moslem—which refused to acknowledge the authority of the King of Delhi.

Moslem Rulers of a somewhat different race, and altogether different calibre, now appeared upon the scene. They were not content to have it said of them as of their predecessors that "they had come as aliens and as aliens they remained." These newcomers, known as Moghuls, had come originally from the outskirts of Turkistan, but in the course of generations they had mixed their blood freely with that of the Persians. Baber, the first Moghul king in India, and one of the most romantic figures of his age, was descended on one side from the famous and dreaded

Chenghiz Khan and on the other side from Timur, better known in Europe as Tamerlane. He was one of those rare figures who love equally the arts of war and peace, and in whom the spiritual and practical were blended in just proportion. His memoirs are full of an almost supersensitive appreciation of the beauty of nature; poetry was part of his daily life, and his knowledge of architecture and music was great; but nevertheless it was said of him that he was so strong that he could fell an ox with a single blow—and his exploits are sufficient evidence of his superb generalship. Above all he had the gift of leadership and of compelling the affection of all who served under him. There is no space here to tell the story of his life in India, but one anecdote, which is believed to be authentic, vividly illustrates his generous nature:

> "When all hopes from medicine were over, and while several men of skill were talking to the Emperor of the melancholy situation of his son, Abul Baka, a personage highly venerated for his knowledge and piety, remarked to Baber that in such a case the Almighty had sometimes vouchsafed to receive the most valuable thing possessed by one friend, as an offering in exchange for the life of another. Baber exclaimed that, of all things, his life was dearest to Humayun, as Humayun's was to him; that his life, therefore, he most cheerfully devoted as a sacrifice for that of his son; and prayed the Most High to vouchsafe to accept it."

Vainly did his courtiers remonstrate. He persisted, we are told, in his resolution; walked thrice round the dying Prince, a solemnity similar to that used by the Muhammadans in sacrifices, and, retiring, prayed earnestly. After a time he was heard to exclaim: "I have borne it away! I have borne it away!" The

Mussalman historians relate that almost from that moment Humayun began to recover and the strength of Baber began proportionately to decay.

Great character though he was, however, Baber made no real progress towards introducing in India any system of centralized and orderly administration. He merely followed the examples of those Moslem invaders who went before him and handed out conquered provinces to distinguished individuals to govern in direct responsibility to himself. That responsibility in practice frequently meant little, and so at his death, as for centuries before it, the foreign invaders had no roots, in the political sense, in India. They had done nothing to bring about the integration of India.

It was left to Baber's grandson, the great Akbar, to establish an orderly administration and to attempt a union of Hindus and Moslems.

The easiest way to fix the chronology of this period is to remember that the long reign of Akbar roughly coincided with that of Queen Elizabeth in England. In these days when we are apt to take it for granted that education must necessarily depend on literacy, it comes as something of a surprise to learn that this great man, endowed with a restless, ever-enquiring mind and profoundly learned in theology, science, history and other matters, was, in the formal sense, illiterate. As one modern historian puts it:

> "Although when a boy he had steadily refused to learn his lessons and was the despair of successive tutors, so that to the end of his days he could not decipher a written word or sign his own name, he was nevertheless well informed in many subjects after an unsystematic fashion. He loved to have books of history, theology, poetry and other kinds read to him, and his prodigious memory enabled him to learn

through the ear, more than an ordinary man could learn through the eye. He was thus able to take an active part in the discussions of literary and abstruse subjects, with such skill that the listener could hardly believe him to be illiterate in the formal sense. His special taste was for endless debates on the merits of rival religions which he examined from a strangely detached point of view."

His rule was marked by two main characteristics, the first and the better known of which was his determined adherence to the principle of toleration. It is not easy, in the twentieth century, to realize how remarkable this adherence was. Few rulers, anywhere in the world, at that time believed in toleration, while to the ordinary Moslem the conversion or extermination of unbelievers was a matter of deep religious duty. His liberal attitude was part of a natural generosity of character which is illustrated by a well-known story concerning an incident which took place right at the beginning of his reign. Akbar, who was then a mere boy, was engaged under the tutelage of the distinguished General Bairam Khan in fighting the Hindu usurper, Hemu. The great Hindu army, with its vanguard of five hundred elephants, had been routed and Hemu himself, pierced in the eye with an arrow, was taken captive and led before the young Emperor. "This is your first war," said Bairam, "prove yourself on this infidel—for it will be a meritorious deed." Akbar is said to have replied: "He is now no better than a dead man; how can I fight him? If he were set free before me, I would try my sword." Bairam, however, troubled by no such scruples, cut down the prisoner forthwith. Over Hemu himself no tears need be shed, for it is reported of him that during the terrible famine of 1555-56, when men died by hundreds of thousands, he had "displayed the

most brutal indifference to the sufferings of the people and had pampered his elephant with rice, sugar and butter, while men and women ate one another."

The belief in toleration, which was the most important aspect of his generosity, was not merely the result of a philosophic concept. It was based too upon the realization that, in a mainly Hindu country, a Moslem dynasty which encouraged religious persecution could never be stable. The highest offices in the land were now distributed without regard to creed, and the key man in the reorganization of the revenue administration—to which perhaps Akbar owes his greatest title —was a Hindu.

Akbar was much attracted by the conception of the philosopher-king; wise men, learned in religion and philosophy, were brought to his Court to be questioned on those abstruse problems of the meaning of life, of the nature of death and of the hereafter which throughout the centuries have puzzled the mind of man. Here, no view was too unusual or heretical to be expressed, and time and time again orthodox Moslems had to listen patiently to what must, to them, have seemed blasphemy. Nor was Akbar's tolerance confined to the debating room. By marrying a Hindu princess he secured the support, for some generations, of a powerful Rajput family; he abolished the tax on the Hindu pilgrims and he put an end to the poll-tax on non-Moslems.

The second great characteristic of his rule was his complete reorganization of the system of administration. Up to his time, Government had depended almost entirely upon the personal energy of the sovereign himself and on all major matters orders had to be issued by him direct, on every occasion. Akbar set to work to replace purely personal rule by a system.

He reformed the judiciary, he established a system of district administration which in many respects has lasted to the present day, and through his great Minister, Todar Mall, he laid down the principles of revenue administration with clarity and liberality.

By the time of his death the Moghul Empire was firmly established over the whole of Northern India and part of the Deccan.

Little need be said of the reigns of his two immediate successors, except that they covered the Golden Age of Moghul Art in India—the age which produced the Taj Mahal, that incomparable monument raised by the Emperor Shah Jehan to his queen Mumtaz Mahal. From the political point of view, in spite of much that was done to improve the administration of the law, these two reigns must be regarded, if not as a period of decline, at least as one of preparation for decline. Prosperity produced its usual result and it has been rightly said of this epoch that "toleration had bred indifference and success engendered luxury." The Moghul courtiers, who three generations before had been hardy warriors, had grown accustomed to the soft life of the Court.

CHAPTER VII

DISINTEGRATION

THE finest fighting men in India at this time were the Hindu Rajputs. Innumerable legends have grown up around their bravery, but none of these exemplifies the Rajput spirit better than the true story of the last sack of their great fortress of Chitor. The city was attacked by Moslem armies and the Rajput command devolved on Patta of Kailwa, then aged sixteen. Tod, the author of the famous annals of Rajasthan, tells us that "Patta's father had fallen in the last siege, and his mother had survived but to rear this, the sole heir of her house. Like the Spartan mother of old, she commanded him to put on the saffron robe and to die for Chitor; but surpassing the Grecian dame she illustrated her precept by example; and lest thoughts for one dearer than herself might dim the lustre of Kailwa, she armed his young bride with a lance and the defenders of Chitor saw the fair Princess descend the rock and fall fighting by the side of her brave mother." On three occasions in history when the Fortress of Chitor was about to pass into the hands of the enemy, the wives of the Rajputs, with their Queen at their head, marched steadfastly into a great subterranean retreat wherein the funeral pyre was lit, and gave themselves to the flames rather than to the foe.

The Rajputs had loyally served the Moghul Emperor since the time of Akbar, and in return respect had been paid to their status and prejudices. It was obviously

the right policy to treat them with respect, but by one of those strange mischances which are the delight of the cynic, in the middle of the seventeenth century there came to the throne a man who was obsessed with a narrow sectarian view. Of the Emperor Aurangzeb, ascetic by nature, it has been rightly said that he was "first and last a firm puritan. Nothing in life—neither throne nor love nor ease—weighed for a minute in his mind against his fidelity to the principles of Islam. For religion he persecuted the Hindus and destroyed their temples, while he damaged his exchequer by abolishing the time-honoured tax on the religious festivals and fairs of the unbelievers." Akbar had abolished the tax on non-Moslems from a belief in freedom of religion; his grandson, Aurangzeb, abolished the tax on Hindu festivals and fairs because he could not bring himself to admit that those festivals ought to take place. Even his desire to extend the Moghul territory was mainly due to the wish to bring within the dominion of Islam lands which had not up till then accepted the true faith. Inevitably, this policy alienated the Hindus, drove the Rajputs into military opposition and undermined the foundations of the Moghul Empire.

At this time the great fighting confederacy of Hindus known as the Mahrattas came to the front. The Mahrattas lived in those mountains in the West of India known as the Western Ghats, and in the plains between the Ghats and the sea. The people were hardy, their Rulers were clever and unscrupulous, and as mountaineers they were easily trained into perfect guerilla warriors. Until the beginning of the seventeenth century they had not counted in Indian political life, but the famous Shivaji, their first well-known Ruler, inspired them with the aggressive spirit and set himself to overthrow the Moghul Empire. As one of our modern

historians says of the Mahrattas, " their ability to climb cliffs, like monkeys, specially fitted them for success in a war which was mainly devoted to the capture of the steeply scarped hill forts so numerous in their country. Fort after fort yielded to the young Chieftain who built other strongholds of his own account." Shivaji was a firm believer in the principle that the end justifies the means, and when inferiority in the field prevented him from obtaining his ends by battle, intrigue and treachery were called into use. On one occasion in the early career of Shivaji, the Mahratta Chief met the Moslem General Afzal Khan to discuss peace terms. As Vincent Smith puts it:

> " The Mahratta professed the most abject submission and threw himself weeping at the General's feet. When Afzal Khan stooped to raise him and embrace him in the customary manner, Shivaji wounded him in the belly with a horrid weapon called ' Tiger's Claw ' which he held in his left hand, and followed up the blow by a stab from a dagger concealed in his sleeve. The treacherous attack succeeded perfectly; and the Mahrattas ambushed in the surrounding jungle destroyed Afzal's army."

Treachery, intrigue, negotiation and undoubted military prowess all played their part in building up the new Mahratta State. The natural defence of the Moghuls against the rise of this new power would have been their long-standing alliance with the Rajputs—but this alliance had been destroyed by the puritanism of Aurangzeb. Without the aid of their former allies, the Moghuls were powerless to resist the onset of the Mahrattas. These mountain warriors soon developed an efficient technique of blackmail. Having raided some portion of the Moghul Empire, they compelled

the local Ruler to pay them tribute, for which they granted regular receipts which "would not only exempt them from pillage but ensure them protection." Unfortunately Shivaji and his successors showed no signs of any great political genius and to the end their State must be described as a Robber State. The warriors who ruled it, however, were quick to realize that much might be gained by taking into their service the subtlety of the Brahmin, and so it came to pass that the Brahmin Prime Minister, known as Peshwa, gradually took to himself more and more power. The Mahrattas extended their rule in the North and East of India, and to this day there are Bengali ballads which bear witness to the terror inspired in Bengal by the advent of the Mahrattas.

It must not be thought, however, that at this time there was in India a straightforward conflict between Moslems and Hindus. The Mahrattas at no stage tried to secure the alliance of the Rajputs or other great Hindu Princes, and they seem, indeed, to have become a terror to Moslem and Hindu alike.

This failure of the Mahrattas to coalesce with other Hindus should have provided the Moslems with a great opportunity of recovery. As it happened, however, the state of unity which had been imposed on the Moghul dominions by the strong hand of Akbar and maintained in lesser degree by his two immediate successors was already in the advanced stages of disintegration. At the death of Aurangzeb in 1707, confusion became worse confounded; virtue seems to have become extinct in the Moghul line and the successors of Aurangzeb were in the main feeble and degenerate. The Moghul Empire broke up into a large number of provinces, the Rulers of which, though nominally subject to the Peacock Throne in Delhi, paid scant attention to the

orders of the Emperor and were, for all practical purposes, independent princes.

At the beginning of the eighteenth century the country was thus rapidly dissolving into chaos. Numerous Moslem princes were building up their own kingdoms, the loose Mahratta confederacy was carving out dominions here and there, but failing to consolidate them; the Rajputs would ally themselves with neither the Moslems nor the Mahrattas and the country was a scene of indescribable conflict and confusion. If the rest of the world had been content to remain inactive and leave the warring races in India to settle their own quarrels, it is not easy to guess what the result would have been. International affairs, however, do not work like that, and in 1738 the Persians, under a great adventurer, Nadir Shah, marched into India and attacked Delhi. The degenerate successor of the great Moghul, convinced that discretion was the better part of valour, opened his citadel to the invader with the curious stipulation that he should still continue to reign. As was to be expected, there was trouble between the invading armies and the inhabitants of the town, and Nadir Shah, anticipating by two hundred years the technique of Hitler, made this trouble the excuse for a general massacre.

> "Nadir Shah left the Moghul Empire bleeding and prostrate. No central government worthy of the name existed, and if any province enjoyed for a short time the blessing of tolerably good administration, as was the case in Bengal, that was due to the personal character of the noble or adventurer who had secured control over it. Very few indeed of the prominent men of the time possessed any discernible virtues. It is not worth while to relate the intrigues which occupied the corrupt and powerless Court of Delhi."

For practical purposes that was the end of the Moghul Empire.

For some generations to come Moghul emperors might continue to sit on the throne—though their own Peacock Throne was taken away by Nadir Shah to Persia—but never again would they exercise effective rule. In due course the Persians retired, and in the meantime the Mahrattas, carrying their dominion northwards, occupied Delhi in 1760. The habit of aggression is, however, infectious, and the Afghans decided to follow the example of their Persian predecessors. In 1760, under the leadership of Ahmed Shah, they swarmed down into India and at Panipat—not far from Delhi and so often the scene of the decisive battles of India—they completely routed the Mahrattas. It is not easy to understand why the Afghans failed to follow up their victory, but it seems that the Afghan soldiers had grown tired of the campaign and insisted on going home. The effect of the battle has been graphically described by Elphinstone, who says:

> "Never was a defeat more complete and never was there a calamity that diffused so much consternation. Grief and despondency spread over the whole of the Mahratta people; most had to mourn relations and all felt the destruction of the Army as a death blow to their national greatness. The Peshwa never recovered the shock. He slowly retreated his frontier towards Poona and died in a temple which he had himself erected near the city. The wreck of the army returned beyond the Narbada, evacuating almost all their acquisitions in Hindustan. Dissensions soon broke out and the Government of the Peshwa never recovered its vigour. Most of the Mahratta conquests were recovered in the sub-

sequent period; but it was by independent chiefs, with the aid of European officers and disciplined sepoys. The confederacy of the Mahrattas dissolved on the cessation of their common danger."

CHAPTER VIII

THE EAST INDIA COMPANY

IN the year 1946, we hear much talk of deadlock in India. In one sense there was deadlock in the year 1760 too. The Moslem Empire had disintegrated and the new states which were rising out of its ruins were at war with one another; the Mahrattas would not unite with the Rajputs and a Hindu regime was therefore out of the question; the Persian invader was in process of retiring. Who was to take on the business of government?

Had this question arisen three centuries earlier, Europe would not have been interested in the answer. Throughout the centuries that continent had been to a great extent self-contained; its inhabitants had had little wish to travel far beyond either its geographical or its mental boundaries.

In the sixteenth century, however, the New Learning broke down the narrowness of the Middle Ages and prepared the way for the great scientific discoveries which at a somewhat later date were to widen indefinitely the horizon of man's mind. Throughout Western Europe life was in a ferment. Revolutionary geographical discoveries and the great advance in the science of navigation, opened up both the East and the West to the new spirit of adventure, and statesmen were not slow to discover that the daring of the adventurer might bring riches to the State. At this stage the world had not wholly broken loose from medieval concep-

tions, and so it fell to the Pope to allocate the newly discovered territories among the nations of Europe—naturally enough those races outside the pale of Christendom had no claim to consideration. In this grand partition of the world, the East Indies fell to the share of Portugal. However arbitrary this decision may have been, it was not entirely inappropriate in view of the fact that Prince Henry the Navigator, of Portugal, had devoted his life to the attempt to find the way from Portugal to India by sea, and that in 1498 Vasco da Gama, with three tiny ships, after a voyage of almost incredible difficulty, had found safe harbour in Calicut, on the West Coast of India.

The Portuguese newcomers to India were by no means mere traders. They were imperialists and missionaries, and in token of their imperialism, the King of Portugal took to himself the high designation of " Lord of the Conquest, Navigation and Commerce of Ethiopia, Arabia, Persia and India." The Portuguese, who had perfected the ocean-going vessel, rapidly obtained the mastery of the Indian Seas and we are told that " the Atlantic gales had compelled them to build stouter vessels than man had ever built before. The new ships could therefore mount and use heavy cannon with no danger of opening their seams with the recoil of their own fire. It was not merely the ocean-going ship that the Portuguese had produced, but also the man-of-war." Backed by their unrivalled sea-power the Portuguese attempted to establish a coastal dominion in India—but that attempt was doomed from the start to failure, by reason of their religious fanaticism. The motives of profit and adventure which had first tempted the Portuguese to India were soon replaced by the desire to make converts, and the story of the activities of the Inquisition, which established an outpost at Goa on the

West Coast of India in 1560, does not make pleasant reading.

Towards the end of the sixteenth century the Dutch became the great rivals of the Portuguese in Far Eastern waters, and before long the Portuguese were ousted from their position there. For a time it looked as though the Dutch would be the people who would count in Far Eastern affairs. Unlike the Portuguese, the Dutch had no interest in proselytizing in the East and were concerned simply and solely with trade. Nor were they interested in what we should nowadays call imperialism. They sought no fresh territorial dominion, but their theory was that they must control the seas in order to protect their trade. The spices of Malaya and the Dutch East Indies were their main objectives, and their interest in India was largely confined to the trade in pepper on the West Coast of India. They found, however, as the British were to find a little later, that they could scarcely avoid taking their part in local politics, and that the protection of their trade frequently involved them in conflict with inland Rulers. The period of their greatest power in India was from about A.D. 1650 to 1750.

England, in the days of Queen Elizabeth, was bursting with a new spirit of adventure and even buccaneering, and the expansionist urge, which is so often associated with nascent nationalism, was given a special stimulus by the victory over the Armada. At last the people of England felt that they were a great sea-faring folk—and once this consciousness had arisen it was inevitable that their thoughts should turn towards trade in the Far East. We are essentially a nation of shopkeepers and must go where customers are to be found, and so it came to pass that, in the year 1600, the famous East India Company came into existence,

with the royal blessing, for the express purpose of "trading into the East Indies."

The East India Company differed in several important respects from its Portuguese and Dutch predecessors and rivals. The Portuguese enterprise in India was inspired, controlled and financed by the Portuguese Government; as for the Dutch Company, although it was purely a commercial concern—an association of merchants—it was realized at a very early stage by the Dutch Government that the maintenance of their trade must depend on the building up of a great sea-power in the Far East. In the case of the East India Company neither the Company nor the Home Government had any such clear-cut policy. Indeed, it might be said that the only policy of the Company was to buy and sell as quickly as possible, and though the men on the spot quickly came to realize the bitter opposition which was to be met, not so much from the people of India as from European competitors, it was long before the British Government understood that the Eastward expansion of trade would mean the growth of Empire.

When the British first appeared in India as traders, neither the Rulers nor the people showed any disposition to be unfriendly. The Portuguese, however, had no intention of allowing interlopers into what they had come to regard as their own preserve, and the history of the next few decades is very largely occupied with the attempts—often successful—of the Portuguese to embroil the British with the Moghuls. In spite of these attempts the British received a fair measure of favour from the Moghuls, as well as from the local Rulers of the different parts of India, and throughout the seventeenth century, despite the opposition of the Portuguese and later of the Dutch, British trade in India continued to expand. The men in charge of the Company's trade

were known as "factors" and their establishments thus came to be known as factories, in a sense quite different from that in which the word is used to-day. By the end of the seventeenth century Britain had established a large number of these factories throughout the country. The main commodities purchased by the Company were indigo, cotton goods, lac, sugar and raw silk of Persian origin, while in return broadcloth, tin and lead were the principal articles of sale.

Throughout this period the Company and the Home Government consistently discouraged attempts to acquire territories or to fortify factories. It is one thing, however, to lay down a peaceful policy at a distance of six thousand miles from danger, and another thing to carry it out on the spot. Towards the end of the seventeenth century considerable trouble arose on the Bengal side regarding the matter of customs duties. The Company's agents had compounded for all such dues by an annual payment to the Emperor, but the local Moghul Governor of Bengal refused to recognize the arrangement and his officials made excuse after excuse for continuing to levy the duties. Things went from bad to worse, and it soon began to be clear that the British had either to abandon the attempt to trade in Bengal or be prepared to fight for their rights. These customs disputes provided the first occasion for what is customarily described as imperialism in India. The then Chairman of the Company, Sir Josiah Child, for the first time set forth the aim of "laying the foundations of a large, well-grounded, sure, English dominion in India for all time to come," and in pursuance of this aim persuaded King James the Second to send a small naval expedition to the Bay of Bengal. The first imperialistic attempt ended in utter failure and in 1688, as a result of that failure, the East India Company

abandoned Bengal for the time being. Fortunately reversion to the former peaceful policy, together with the tact of Job Charnock, the founder of Calcutta, soon enabled the British to return to Bengal and to develop a thriving trade in that province.

It is interesting to notice that not one of the great modern cities of Bombay, Madras and Calcutta was acquired by the British as a result of fighting. The acquisition of the site of Madras was due solely to the desire to escape from the tyranny and the exactions of the local Rulers on the East Coast of India, and for this purpose Mr. Francis Day, the Company's agent, was directed "to see if he could buy or rent a piece of land within the limits of which the Company's merchants might work without hindrance." He succeeded in renting a piece of land for this purpose from the Raja of Carnatic—or rather from one of his subordinate chiefs—and of this land Mr. Day says: "It had nothing apparently to commend it; it was devoid of beauty, of scenery, and had no harbour, though there was good anchorage in its roads. It was nothing but a dreary waste of sand, on which a monstrous sea broke in a double line of surf, giving it an inhospitable look which it retains to the present day." The rent of the site was £600 a year. When Mr. Day embarked on the business of fortifying the place, he was firmly rebuked by the Directors in England.

Bombay, as is well known, was ceded to the British by the Portuguese as part of the dowry of the Queen of Charles the Second—Charles in his turn, who never knew a good thing when he saw one, promptly made it over to the East India Company.

Even less exciting were the circumstances of the acquisition of the site of Calcutta. After the complete failure of the Company in the war with the Nawab

and their consequent abandonment of Bengal, the new Viceroy of the Moghul Emperor became alarmed at the loss of trade which seemed likely to result, and in 1690 he invited Job Charnock, the Company's principal agent in North-East India, to return. After much shrewd bargaining on both sides, permission to rent three villages was granted, while the customs controversy was settled once and for all by the renewal of the arrangement previously made for compounding. The three villages were Sutanati, Calcutta and Govindapur—and thus to Job Charnock belongs the honour of being the founder of the greatest city in the East.

The fact that each of these three great cities of the future was obtained entirely by negotiations and peaceful means, is typical of British policy in India during the seventeenth century. Trade, not territory, was the aim of the very commercially minded gentlemen in London who regulated the affairs of the Company, and though younger and more adventurous spirits amongst the English in India might sometimes have had other ideas, they were seldom given much chance of putting them into practice. "Dividends first and last" might well have been the slogan of the Company.

In the meantime the French, under the influence of the great imperialist Colbert, had also begun to develop their factories in India. The spirit of the French enterprise was radically different from that of the East India Company, for the French Company had in mind not so much dividends as the development of a great naval and military power. French financiers and men of commerce took little interest in the new venture and most of the original capital of the Company had to be provided by the French king. The spirit which underlay this undertaking is well illustrated by the advice given to Colbert by one of his lieutenants in the East

"to show a little sample of his master's power to give the Rulers of the country a high opinion of the justice and goodness of His Majesty at the same time that they learnt his power." The spirit of the French newcomers to India was imperialism in the strict sense of that word.

The servants of the East India Company were not much interested in the early activities of the French in India—they were far too busy making money both for themselves and for their masters, and the last thing that the Directors wanted was a diversion of their attention to matters other than commerce. In the second part of the seventeenth century dividends were extremely high, and on one occasion, indeed, the Company paid fifty per cent cash, in addition to a bonus of double that figure. In the eighteenth century, though the results obtained were not so startling, they were extremely satisfactory and as many as twenty ships per year were despatched to the East by the Company. The ships were mainly small in size, for the excellent reason that the Company's charter compelled the provision of a chaplain for any ship of more than five hundred tons. The Directors preferred to spend the considerable extra sums involved in using smaller ships, rather than create what the men of commerce doubtless regarded as the unnecessary posts of chaplains. Some idea of the size and importance of the Indian trade can be obtained from the considerable agitation which took place in England about this time with regard to the under-selling of English products by printed Indian calicos. So serious did this competition become, that in 1700 an act was passed in England forbidding the use of Asiatic printed calicos. This Act has sometimes been included by Indian politicians in the list of their charges against Britain, but it must be remembered that at the time concerned Britain had no political

responsibility whatsoever for India and was merely following the accepted principle of protecting home industry. Moreover, the measure affected mainly the British merchants who constituted the East India Company. The fact that the measure was purely economic is illustrated by the similar provision imposed a few years later prohibiting the use in England of calicos printed in England—a prohibition brought about as a result of agitation on the part of the woollen and silk manufacturers.

It was with considerable reluctance that the agents of the East India Company in India turned their attention from these profitable transactions to embark on the wars with the French. That trouble was, however, inevitable. It was unthinkable that the two greatest powers of Europe, during a century of continually recurring strife in Europe, should remain at peace in a country such as India, where political authority had almost entirely broken down, and where large numbers of local Rulers were contending for supremacy. The greatest of all the Frenchmen concerned in the building up of the French power in India was Dupleix, a contemporary of Clive.[1] Dupleix displayed unsurpassed genius in building up alliances with Indian Princes and in creating trouble between them and the English. His aim was to achieve supreme power in India by means of Indian alliances. The English, somewhat unwillingly at first, abandoned their former aloofness and began to compete with the French for alliances with the most powerful Indian Rulers. The genius of Clive, and the ultimate supremacy of the British at sea, finally brought about the downfall of the French in India.

It is important to remember that the number of

[1] Dupleix served in India from 1720 to 1745.

European soldiers involved in these struggles was almost negligible. When Clive set out on his famous march from Madras to Arcot, he had with him two hundred English soldiers, and in most of the main battles between the rival groups, the total number of European soldiers in both armies cannot have reached one thousand. The position was simply that in the internecine war between the Indian Princes, the British and the French were taking sides. Perhaps the most important fact which emerged was the undoubted military superiority of European to Indian troops at that time; a psychological ascendancy was established, which was to stand the British in good stead in the years to come. By 1753 the power of the French in South India had been broken and Dupleix was recalled to France, a conscious failure in spite of his greatness. Northern India now became the main theatre of the most important events.

As we have seen, in the eighteenth century the Moghul Empire was disintegrating, and the Governors of the various provinces of which that Empire was composed were in many cases almost independent. The Moghul emperors in Delhi had repeatedly granted concessions with regard to customs and other commercial matters, but those concessions had been ignored by local officials. Disputes between the East India Company and the local Rulers of Bengal were therefore frequent, but in 1742 the rule of Bengal passed into the hands of a realist, who was prepared to protect the foreigners while compelling them to respect his rights. Ali Verdi Khan, an Afghan adventurer and a skilful soldier, with no other right than that of the sword, seized the rulership of Bengal in the year 1742. According to a contemporary record his attitude towards the English was thus expressed by him: "What have the

English done against me that I should use them ill? It is now difficult to extinguish fire on land, but should the sea be in flames, who can put them out?" For the fourteen years of his rule, the Company's servants in Bengal were able to attend with undistracted minds to the development of trade, and it is significant that when in 1746 a Colonel James Mill worked out a scheme for the conquest of Bengal, he submitted it, not to the East India Company or the British Government, but to the Austrian Emperor. It would, indeed, have received scant attention from the Directors in London, who were interested not in territorial expansion but in profits. Colonel James Mill's scheme is extremely interesting. He says:

> ". . . the whole country of Hindustan or empire of the great Moghul is and ever has been in a state so feeble and defenceless that it is almost a miracle that no prince of Europe, with a maritime power at command, has as yet thought of making such acquisitions as at one stroke would put him and his subjects in possession of infinite wealth. . . . The policy of the Moghul is bad, his military worse, and as to a maritime power to command and protect his coasts, he has none at all. . . . The Province of Bengal is at present under the dominion of a rebel subject of the Moghul whose annual revenue amounts to about two millions. But Bengal, though not to be reduced by the power of the Moghul, is equally indefensible with the rest of Hindustan on the side of the ocean and consequently may be forced out of the rebel's hands with all its wealth, which is incredibly vast."

If the wise policy of the usurper, Ali Verdi Khan, had been continued after his death, the Colonel's theories might never have been put to the test. As it happened, his grandson, the infamous Siraj-ud-doulah, had other

ideas. In recent years, political considerations have led some writers to attempt to whitewash the character of Siraj-ud-doulah—here it need only be said that, amongst the very voluminous records of that time, there is nothing to suggest that any of his fellow countrymen had anything good to say of him. Conspiracies against him were rife from the beginning of his rule, and in May, 1756, Siraj-ud-doulah set out on an expedition against his cousin, who was one of the conspirators. Either the expedition was a feint or he changed his mind; he turned back in his tracks, seized the English factory at Cossimbazaar and moved on to Calcutta in great strength. No one was expecting the attack. There were only about seventy European soldiers in the place and no preparations of any kind had been made for defence. The army of the Nawab numbered about fifty thousand men, and it is very difficult to understand why it took that vast army three days to compel the garrison to capitulate. It is not worth while dwelling in detail on many of the sordid incidents of this period. There is ample material to discredit either side according to one's inclination—the Black Hole, the forged document by which Clive duped Ami Chand into parting with thirty lakhs of rupees, intrigues and counter-intrigues—the best we can say of them is that they were typical of eighteenth-century political morality, which was at a low ebb both in England and in India. The outstanding fact is that in the following year Clive was sent to Bengal, joined forces with Mir Jafar—one of the conspirators against Siraj-ud-doulah—and, at Plassey, gained one of the most decisive victories of Indian history. Eight years later, at the battle of Buxar, an army of seven thousand men, including a hundred and fifty-seven Europeans, under the command of Sir Hector Munro, completely routed a

force of anything from forty thousand to sixty thousand and completed the work which had been begun at Plassey. Though some years passed before the Company took on the actual work of administration in Bengal and Bihar, all real power had now passed into the hands of the Company. Few battles have had more lasting consequences than Plassey. A scholarly English writer of the nineteenth century says of it:

> "It was Plassey which made England the greatest Mohammedan power in the world; Plassey which forced her to become one of the main factors in the settlement of the burning Eastern question: Plassey which necessitated the conquest and colonization of the Cape of Good Hope, of the Mauritius, the protectorship over Egypt; Plassey which gave to the sons of her middle classes the finest field for the development of their talent and industry the world has ever known; to her aristocracy unrivalled opportunities for the display of administrative power; to her merchants and manufacturers customers whose enormous demands almost compensate for the hostile tariffs of her rivals, and alas! even of her colonies; to the skilled artisan remunerative employment; to her people generally a noble feeling of pride in the greatness and glory of the empire of which a little island in the Atlantic is the parent stem, Hindustan the noblest branch; it was Plassey . . . which has given to her children a sense of responsibility, of the necessity of maintaining a great position, the conviction of which underlies the thought of every true Englishman."

Although the foregoing verdict may savour to us of Victorian complacency, it is at least clear that from the time of Plassey the ultimate extension of British rule throughout the greater part of India was inevitable.

The legal position was in due course regularized by

a somewhat worthless grant from the helpless and worthless Emperor in Delhi. It was Plassey and not the document which mattered. Much has been written regarding the character of Clive and the very doubtful transactions of which he was the author. Perhaps the most balanced judgment is that given by Vincent Smith:

> "It appears to me impossible for the impartial historian to deny that Clive was too willing to meet Asiatic intriguers on their own grounds; too greedy of riches and too much disposed to ignore delicate scruples in their acquisition. That verdict undoubtedly tarnishes the memory, precludes the historian from according to him the unqualified admiration which his heroic qualities seem to exact. His most outstanding characteristic was an inflexible will which guided his conduct to success in affairs, whether military or civil."

The most important conclusion from all these transactions is the fact that the British in Bengal—and indeed throughout India—were concerned mainly with trade and making money, and that before the unprovoked attack of Siraj-ud-doulah on Calcutta they had not contemplated interfering in the business of governing Bengal. Such interference was, nevertheless, inevitable, though neither the Directors nor the British Government knew it. India was in a state of political and social revolution. Neither the Moghuls nor the Mahrattas nor the Rajputs nor the Princes of the South possessed the right combination of military and political qualifications to reorganize the country and lay the foundations of a modern governmental system. Four nations had become deeply interested in the trade of India and therefore concerned in the restoration of order and stability. The Portuguese had disqualified

themselves by their religious fanaticism and cruelty; the Dutch had turned their attention farther East; while the French, having developed the system of military offensive alliances with Indian Rulers, were ultimately destroyed by their own system. Only the English remained—and for them it was Hobson's choice. Events in Bengal showed that they either had to assert their power by force of arms, or else they must get out. There was no room in eighteenth-century India for a prosperous, but peaceful, foreign trading community. The English chose to fight rather than abandon their trade, and so the nation of shopkeepers became a nation of empire builders. The Company's young men in India must often, stirred by the spirit of adventure, have welcomed the new chances and responsibilities—but to the business men and statesmen at home, these developments were a troublesome and expensive interruption to business.

CHAPTER IX

EXPANSION

THE years immediately following the battle of Plassey (1757) form a period of which no Englishman can be proud. Power over North-Eastern India had passed into the hands of merchants whose only concern was to make money, and who were responsible to a Board in London still more interested in the same object. The military power of the Moghuls and their Lieutenants in Bengal had been broken, the civil government was without foundations and the merchants had nothing to put in its place. As one modern writer has put it:

> "They represented an association which insisted upon regular remittances to Europe; their primary interests and objects were still commercial, and as soon as they found themselves irresistible they began to monopolize the whole trade in some of the most valuable products of the country. By investing themselves with political attributes without discarding their commercial character they produced an almost unprecedented conjunction, which engendered intolerable abuses and confusion in Bengal."

Fortunately this discreditable period was a short one. Within ten years public conscience in England had been aroused by the iniquities and abuses which had been prevalent, parliament began to take a hand in the game, and from 1773 onwards a series of statutes began to bring the affairs of India more directly under the

control of the British Government. The period of the Parliamentary Governors-General had begun.

In this chapter, however, we are concerned not so much with the growth of administration as with the development of British power in India. Broadly speaking, the boundaries of the Company's domains in India remained stationary in the period between Plassey and the last decade of the eighteenth century, and there were no signs of anything which could reasonably be called an imperialist or expansionist policy. In a famous minute written on the occasion of the restoration of some territories to an Indian prince, Lord Clive laid down his policy once and for all:

> "This decision disappointed the expectations of many who thought of nothing but a march with the Emperor to Delhi. My resolution, however, was and my hopes will be, to confine our assistance, our conquest and our possessions to Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. To go further is, in my opinion, a scheme so extravagantly ambitious and absurd that no Governor and Council in their senses can adopt it, unless the whole system of the Company's interest be entirely newly modelled."

This "standstill" policy was fully endorsed by the Directors of the Company in London. In a letter of 1767 to the President in Calcutta they say:

> "The Dewani of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa are the utmost limits of our view on that side of India. On the coast the protection of the Carnatic and the possession of the Siecars . . . and on the Bombay side the dependencies thereon with Salsette, Bassein and the Castle of Surat. If we pass these bounds we shall be led from one acquisition to another until we shall find no security but in the subjection of the whole,

which by dividing your force would lose us the whole and end in our extirpation from Hindustan."

Clive and the Directors alike had grasped the realities of the situation. The conquest of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa had been forced upon us by circumstances beyond our control. If we stood firm upon the boundaries which we had thus been compelled to establish, we could hope to pursue successfully the legitimate object of our presence in India, the expansion of our trade; if, on the other hand, we embarked on a policy of deliberate conquest, our whole character would be transformed and we should find ourselves no longer a body of traders but an imperial power. Nobody in the eighteenth century in any country in the world would have suggested that there was anything morally wrong about imperialistic schemes and conquests, and the desire of the British to avoid territorial expansion in India at this time was due, not to any ethical considerations, but to sound business reasons.

In the North it was fairly easy to carry out this policy consistently, but the position in the South was far more complicated. Three great powers struggled for supremacy there. In the centre of the Deccan the Nizam of Hyderabad ruled over a vast territory which he had formerly administered on behalf of the Moghul Emperor. Farther south the war-like Hyder Ali had turned Mysore into a great military power, while north of Hyderabad the Mahratta Confederacy stretched right across Central India. Though the Confederacy had never wholly recovered from its disastrous defeat by Ahmed Shah, some of its component elements were still great military powers. At an early stage in the history of the British in India the Company had contracted alliances with the Nizam of Hyderabad, and by

and large both Britain and the Nizam remained true to those alliances, with certain notable exceptions. It was impossible to be an ally with one of the parties to a triangular contest of this nature without from time to time being drawn into war with one or both of the other two. But again and again the principle was reaffirmed from London that trade, not war or conquest, was our object in India. When Parliament revised the constitution of the Company in 1783, it laid down that "to pursue schemes of conquest and expansion of dominion in India are measures repugnant to the wish, the honour and policy of this nation," and again in 1793 the same principle was emphatically affirmed. The Governor-General was forbidden to make war except in the event of a direct attack against the British nation in India or against her allies. In some respects these restrictions, and the very considerable attention which was paid to them by the Governors-General in India, served to encourage rather than discourage war. Had there been no such restrictions, it would have been possible for the Governor-General to enter into more definite alliances against the more aggressive of the various contending powers. As this was not permitted, each such power was always led to hope that the Company would not interfere with its schemes of aggression. It is a matter of irony that Lord Cornwallis, who, above all things, was a man of peace, found himself as Governor-General drawn into the third and greatest Mysore war, which resulted in considerable accessions of territory to the British.

With the advent of Lord Wellesley as Governor-General, there was a definite change of policy and tempo. Up to that time the Company's military and territorial policy may reasonably be stated to have been negative and, in one sense, unsuccessful; they had con-

sidered trade more important than war, but in practice they had been drawn into a number of wars during the period. Parliament, by the restrictions which it imposed in the acts of 1784 and 1793, had sought to preserve the Company from entanglement—but Britain had nevertheless become inextricably entangled in Indian dynastic troubles. The truth is that neutrality in those struggles was out of the question.

Lord Wellesley, who had studied Indian affairs closely for some years before his appointment as Governor-General, realized from the start that some political power would have to provide a focal point in India. The position was well stated a few years later in a report of the Resident for Rajputana regarding the attitude of certain States:

> "They said that some power in India had always existed to which peaceable States submitted, and in return obtained its protection against the invasion of upstart chiefs and the armies of lawless banditry; that the British Government now occupied the place of their protecting power and was the natural guardian of weak States, which were continually exposed to the cruelties and oppression of robbers and plunderers owing to the refusal of the British Government to protect them."

This, in brief, was the view of Wellesley from the start. It was a view which he was fitted by his imperious temperament to take, and as it happened it fitted in well with the new outlook in England. The policy of non-interference had not worked in India, and Britain was just in the mood to recognize its failure. It was therefore possible for Wellesley to set forth as his aim "the complete consolidation of the British Empire in India and the future tranquillity of Hindustan." For the first time the principle of imperial

supremacy was proclaimed and implemented in practice. Territorial expansion was the inevitable result, but at times it went so fast as to startle the Home Government into ineffective protest. Every modern Indian official must envy the good fortune which left Lord Wellesley at a distance of several weeks by mail from his immediate superiors. In one of his more important wars, he commenced hostilities in April, reported it to London in August and received no comment until the following year. Thus left to develop his own policy without much interference, Wellesley built up the system of subsidiary treaties. In essence this system meant that the British organized and equipped armies to protect the various Indian States with which they were in alliance, while those States made some financial contribution for the maintenance of those forces. The system must obviously have had two effects. In the first place it consolidated the power of the British, and at the same time it emasculated those States who came under their influence. The influence of the British was still further strengthened by the energetic action which Wellesley took to suppress the roving predatory bands which owed their origin, on the one hand to the disintegration of the Moghul Empire, and on the other hand to the break-up of the Mahratta Confederacy.

By the end of Wellesley's term of office, although large tracts of territories remained—as they do to this day—outside direct British rule, Britain had become unquestionably the paramount power in India. As Sir Alfred Lyall puts it:

> " Henceforward it became the universal principle of public policy that every State in India (outside the Punjab and Sind) should make over the control of its foreign relations to the British Government,

should submit all external disputes to British arbitration and should defer to British advice regarding internal management so far as might be necessary to cure disorder or scandalous misrule. A British Resident was appointed in the Courts of all greater princes as the agency for the exercise of these high functions; while the subsidiary forces and the contingents furnished by the State placed supreme military command everywhere under British direction."

After the time of Wellesley, reaction set in and it was not until the rule of Lord Dalhousie, some fifty years later, that the expansionist policy was carried to its final phase and India achieved its present division into British India and Indian India. Whether a particular piece of territory to-day belongs to British India or the India of the Princes is largely a matter of luck or historical accident.

We may summarize as follows. In the century after Plassey, vast political changes had taken place in India. A Company of merchants had become transformed into the paramount power; factors and chief writers had become Secretaries and members of Council; and the aim of money-making had been replaced by high imperial policy. The counting-house had become a palace—and yet, with the possible exception of Wellesley, perhaps none of the principals in these transactions had realized what was happening. The merchants of the East India Company had sought trade and trade alone; their agents had been forced to discover that trade in a foreign country depends on negotiation with the ruling power—and in India at the time concerned, there was no effective ruling power. Again and again in Bengal they had come to some arrangement with the Moghul Emperor, only to find the arrangement disregarded by his local officials. They had persevered in

spite of these difficulties, but their success had encouraged the jealousy and, at length, invited the attacks of the local Rulers. The resulting war had compelled them to establish dominion over North-East India—a dominion which they were so reluctant to exercise, that for some years to come they left the practical business of governing in the hands of the former subordinates of the Moghul Emperor.

In Southern India the attitude of the British was throughout the eighteenth century conditioned by their relations with the French. An era of war between the two countries in Europe could scarcely be a time of peace in chaotic India, and the early development by the French of the technique of alliances with Indian Princes forced the East India Company, against its will, into the whirlpool of Indian politics. A triangular struggle was going on between Hyderabad, Mysore and the Mahrattas, and by reason of its early alliance with Hyderabad the East India Company became involved in wars with the two other aspirants for power. It soon became apparent that no Indian power in the eighteenth century was capable of maintaining peace or providing the conditions under which trade could flourish. Again and again the British Government and the Directors tried to shirk the inevitable conclusion, but finally the logic of facts, aided by the authoritarian temperaments of Wellesley and Dalhousie, proved irresistible, and Britain stepped into the position formerly held by the Great Moghuls. At one time it had seemed possible that the French might become the paramount power in India, but British supremacy at sea, in the long run, made any such development impossible. Britain was the only power capable of filling the vacuum created by the break-up of the Indian political system.

CHAPTER X

EARLY PROBLEMS

IN 1829 Captain Sleeman was the District Officer for the District of Jubbulpore. It is not easy to describe briefly the duties of a District Officer. When the present writer held a similar post in Bengal some years ago, he was asked by a loving aunt at home exactly what he did; puzzled by so unfair a question, he replied that he was a kind of licensed "meddlesome Mattie," whose job it was to do everything which had to be done. Captain Sleeman must have been very conscious of this fact when on the 29th of November, 1829, an old lady of respectable family piteously entreated him to allow her to burn herself alive. Her husband—a greatly respected Brahmin—had just died, and it was at that time an act of the utmost piety and an expression of deep conjugal devotion for a widow to burn herself alive, so that her ashes might be mixed with those of her husband. Like most young men, Captain Sleeman was a reformer. On taking charge of his District shortly before this occurrence, he had issued a proclamation prohibiting anyone from assisting a woman in burning herself alive on the death of her husband. There was no legal authority behind this proclamation, Government had not authorized it and it was contrary to the feelings and belief of every high caste Hindu in the District. It represented nothing more than the determination of a keen young reformer to wipe out a practice which he considered barbarous. Let the scene be described in his own words.

"On Saturday, the 28th, in the morning, I rode out ten miles to the spot, and found the poor old widow sitting with the dhaja round her head, a brass plate before her with undressed rice and flowers, and a coco-nut in each hand. She talked very collectedly, telling me that 'she had determined to mix her ashes with those of her departed husband, and should patiently wait my permission to do so, assured that God would enable her to sustain life till that was given, though she dared not eat or drink.' Looking at the sun, then rising before her over a long and beautiful reach of the Nerbudda river, she said calmly, 'My soul has been for five days with my husband's, near that sun, nothing but my earthly frame is left; and this, I know, you will in time suffer to be mixed with the ashes of his in yonder pit, because it is not in your nature or usage wantonly to prolong the miseries of a poor old woman.'"

In vain did the District Officer talk to her of her children. Her simple reply was, "I commit them all to your care and I go to attend my husband, Ummed Singh Upadhya, with whose ashes on the funeral pyre mine have already three times mixed." This was the first time in her long life that she had ever pronounced the name of her husband, for in India no woman, high or low, utters the name of her husband. "When the old lady named her husband, as she did with strong emphasis and in a very deliberate manner, everyone present was satisfied that she had resolved to die. 'My soul is with Ummed Singh Upadhya and my ashes must here mix with his.'" For five days—during which the widow refused to eat—Sleeman strove to prevent the widow from carrying out her purpose. At length, in his own words:

"Satisfied myself that it would be unavailing to

attempt to save her life, I sent for all the principal members of the family, and consented that she should be suffered to burn herself if they would enter into engagements that no other member of their family should ever do the same. This they all agreed to, and the papers having been drawn out in due form about midday, I sent down notice to the old lady, who seemed extremely pleased and thankful. The ceremonies of bathing were gone through before three (o'clock), while the wood and other combustible materials for a strong fire were collected and put into the pit. After bathing, she called for a 'pan' (betel leaf) and ate it, then rose up, and with one arm on the shoulder of her eldest son and the other on that of her nephew, approached the fire. I had sentries placed all round, and no other person was allowed to approach within five paces. As she rose up fire was set to the pile, and it was instantly in a blaze. The distance was about 150 yards. She came on with a calm and cheerful countenance, stopped once, and, casting her eyes upward, said, 'Why have they kept me five days from thee, my husband?' On coming to the sentries her supporters stopped; she walked once round the pit, paused a moment, and, while muttering a prayer, threw some flowers into the fire. She then walked up deliberately and steadily to the brink, stepped into the centre of the flame, sat down, and leaning back in the midst as if reposing upon a couch, was consumed without uttering a shriek or betraying one sign of agony."

Twenty years later when the British annexed the Punjab the first order passed was "Thou shalt not burn a widow, thou shalt not kill a daughter, thou shalt not bury a leper alive." Much had happened in the meantime. In the interval of twenty years, the British theory of government in India had changed. The

doctrine of the minimum possible intervention had been replaced by the doctrine of trusteeship.

The object of this book is to ask—and if possible to answer—the question: "Has Britain given India a square deal?" To go from the general to the particular—did Captain Sleeman give India a square deal in the case described above? Was he right when he refused permission to the widow, or was he right when he finally gave his consent? What answer would the reader have given—not in a comfortable arm-chair in London or New York in the year 1945, but on the banks of the Nerbudda in 1829? It is to be remembered that the desire of the widow was in accordance with the traditions of the Hindus at that time; piety and conjugal love were behind it; and the very name by which she would be described was "suttee" or virtuous, the chaste one. Captain Sleeman and his contemporaries were not confronted with a savage, uncultured people whose attitude towards life might be treated with contempt; they had to deal with a people who had behind them a great civilization, a developed system of philosophy and a social code which had been elaborated throughout the centuries. Was it right to accept a widow's code of chastity or to impose on her alien views? Only a shallow or a fanatical mind could have found Captain Sleeman's question easy to answer.

It was indeed a part of a larger question which was constantly present in the mind of the early British rulers of India. Were they to impose British standards of conduct on the people of India, or were they rather to insist that the people of India should act rightly in accordance with Hindu and Moslem standards? Had the British gone to India, like the Portuguese, as missionaries they would have found the answer simple—

but they had gone as traders and were in the first place concerned only with preserving peace. It is not surprising that there were vacillations before a consistent policy was adopted. For a long time there was controversy between two different schools of thought. The one maintained that the British must interfere as little as possible with the customs of the country, and above all that religious institutions and practices must be respected however wrong they might seem to the European mind; the other school contended that Britain had assumed responsibility for the welfare of India, and was therefore under an obligation to impose on the people of the country practices and ideas which, to her, seemed better than those of India. In these days when it is the fashion to criticize the early empire builders, it is easy to find faults with men of both schools. The reformers can readily be accused of racial arrogance, or of taking it for granted that their way of life and thought was right; while the non-interventionists can be treated scornfully as mere traders, careless of the welfare of the people as long as they were left in peace to make money. The critic can always have it both ways—but the early rulers of India had to take a line one way or another. After fifty years or more of vacillation, the British finally settled down into a doctrine of trusteeship, which fitted in well with the British attitude to life in the Victorian age. Thenceforth, in judging what was good for India, British standards were to be applied, and it was the profound hope of the British rulers that in due course India would imitate Britain in many respects.

It is easy to condemn this attitude as smug and complacent, but it is at least doubtful if, in the long run, a foreign ruler can adopt any other position. In any case it would be idle to pretend that the men of the

Victorian age could have been expected to apply the loose, easygoing toleration of our own days. We live in an age which has been powerfully coloured by the doctrine of relativity; few would go to the stake in defence of any particular belief, and most of us are only too ready to agree that the other man is just as likely to be right as we are. In the Victorian Age, however, life was clear-cut; right was right and must be proclaimed as such, regardless of anybody's feelings. This uncompromising moralist attitude played a considerable part in nineteenth-century India; many of the Englishmen who counted for most were stern men of God, not unlike the Covenanters of an earlier age. Their lives were dedicated to the uplift of India—and for them, uplift meant Anglicization. In law, in education, in local self-government and throughout the whole field of administration, Britain was the model.

Let us consider the sphere of education. In the early part of the century, there had been a fierce controversy between those who maintained that we should do everything possible to encourage education on Oriental lines, and those who held with Macaulay that "the great object of the British Government ought to be the promotion of European Literature among the natives of India; the funds appropriated to education would be best employed in English education alone." There was much to be said on both sides in this controversy. The objections to the policy of cultural de-nationalization, of bringing up a people on the literature and philosophy of another country rather than of their own land, are obvious; on the other hand, Indian learning at the beginning of the nineteenth century was entirely reactionary. No modern scientific knowledge was accessible in any Indian language, nothing in Indian literature showed signs of any contact with the Western

world and the whole bias of the Indian man of letters was towards the past. It was not just a choice between English or Indian education. The real issue was as to whether India should be left to develop—perhaps to stagnate—in its own traditions, or should be subjected as intensively as possible to the influences of Western thought and modes of life. The decision was in favour of Westernization, and bit by bit the slow but relentless machinery of our administration in India was geared to the new policy. English became the language of the Courts, the medium of official correspondence and the vehicle of higher education, and in a very short time a knowledge of English was an essential condition of rising to high official position.

This change was to have profound political effects, for it meant that before long all the influence of British Liberalism would be brought to bear on the educated classes of India. Even to this day, the ordinary Indian high school boy is more at home with the stately periods of Macaulay or Burke than with English as spoken by the normal Englishman, and perhaps the most potent polemic weapons in the hands of Indian Congress leaders to-day are quotations from British Liberal statesmen. It is easy, now, to see that Anglicization was carried too far; too many boys have been so overwhelmed by the difficulty of studying in a foreign language that they have in fact learnt nothing worth while; far too many men of ability, neglecting their own national culture, have had their energy diverted into channels in which they could never hope to achieve greatness. On the other hand, it is worth remembering that when Indian Congress men gather together to curse the British Government, English is the only common language in which they can do it. The choice of English as the language of administration and higher

education has been a factor of the greatest importance in the development of the ideal of Indian nationality and of the determination to achieve complete self-government. The result was neither unintended nor unforeseen. Elphinstone, Governor of Bombay early in the last century, wrote that, "We must not dream of perpetual possession, but must apply ourselves to bring the natives to a state that will admit of their governing themselves in a manner that may be beneficial to our interests as well as their own and that of the rest of the world."

Lord Macaulay had expressed the same sentiment:

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

All this and more was implicit in the decision, sometimes more or less unconscious, to Westernize.

This decision presented the British administrators with endless problems, and not the least of them was in the field of law. Nobody would pretend that in nineteenth-century Britain there was any real equality before the law, or that the poacher and the man of rank obtained the same treatment; nevertheless the humblest Englishman had certain rights and could call upon the Courts to enforce them. No such system prevailed in India, and it would indeed have been unthinkable in pre-British India for a man of low caste to proceed by

legal methods against his natural superiors. Westernization, however, involved the adoption of at least the forms of legal equality. Stage by stage the idea of the rights of all classes was developed. We are told by a modern historian that "in 1841 it was noticed that the Chamars, despised untouchables of Northern India, were not afraid to bring suits against their landlords and, it was added, that nothing vexes or annoys the Zamindars in our whole system so much as this." The plain truth is that the principle of equality of rights was not and never had been accepted in India, and British insistence on the adoption of this principle was perhaps the most drastic example of interference with the habits and modes of thought of the country. Necessarily it had far-reaching consequences—it was indeed bound to lead in the long run to the demand for self-government. If the British had been concerned to perpetuate dominion in India, it would have been to their interests to do everything possible to strengthen the principles of authoritarianism; the promulgation of the idea of the rights of all was sure to result, in due course, in the desire for freedom and in the relinquishment by Britain of dominion over India.

This has been a somewhat highbrow chapter. We have talked of principles and policies, almost as though the men who administered India began with a blueprint and then proceeded to construct the building in conformity with it. In practice, of course, most of the men who carried on the business of ruling India in the nineteenth century can have had little time for formulating theories or making elaborate plans. They were mainly concerned with such matters as keeping the peace, coping with famine, developing communications, and at a somewhat later date, with building up public health services and laying the foundations of

bodies equivalent to County Councils and Parish Councils. They had also to train a corps of subordinate officials in new principles and methods of administration. At no time did the number of British officials in India exceed a few hundreds, and obviously most of the day-to-day business of government had to be carried out by Indians. It was therefore necessary for the British District Officer to begin by earning the respect and, if possible, the affection of those who served under him. Some evidence of his success may perhaps be found in the Anglophile spirit which dominated the educated classes of India in the second half of the nineteenth century. Even the founders of the Indian Nationalist Movement were themselves profound Anglophiles. It was because British traditions stood to them for something admirable that they sought to reproduce in India the institutions which they believed to have been the foundation of British greatness. From the beginning of the twentieth century this spirit was to be swept aside by a more intense and perhaps healthier spirit of nationalism, but its creation in the Victorian age has been one of the most important factors in modern Indian history. It owed its existence largely to the high mental and moral calibre of the men who, in that age, went from Britain to the Indian Civil Service and the allied services.

CHAPTER XI

A DULL CHAPTER

IT may be that by labelling this chapter "dull" the author flatters himself with regard to the other chapters; but if so, the reader will not get as far as this and so the conceit will not be exposed. Be that as it may, there are certain hard, gazetteer-like facts, which have to be known if we are to understand the problem of the British in India.

1. *Religion*

At the time of the 1941 Census the population of India was about three hundred and eighty-nine million, of whom two hundred and fifty-five million were Hindus and ninety-two million Moslems. By making the statement in this form, the writer at once lays himself open to attack—which is exactly what he intended to do in the hope of relieving the dullness of this chapter. The critic will pounce on him at once and say, "Why must you emphasize the classification into Hindus and Moslems—is not that tendentious? Why cannot you content yourself with the statement that there are three hundred and eighty-nine million people in India, nearly all of whom are Indians?" "If," the critic continues, "you were writing a descriptive chapter on England, you would not begin by saying that the population consisted of so many people, of whom so many were Protestants, and so many were Catholics. You would say simply that the population of England consisted of so many Englishmen and a few

foreigners. Why can you not apply the same procedure to your description of India?" The answer to this fierce attack is twofold. In the first place, if the writer had been giving a description of England in, say, the sixteenth century, and particularly if his object had been to consider the political condition of England at that time, he would have *had* to classify the population into Catholics and Protestants. The second part of the author's defence is that a considerable proportion of the inhabitants of India *do* in fact think of themselves as Moslems or Hindus rather than as Indians. For many years the writer of this book had a Moslem bearer from Bengal, who habitually referred to the Hindus of his own Province as "the Bengalees." When it was gently pointed out to him that he too was a Bengalee, his reply was invariably, "I am a Moslem." There was nothing unusual about this—it is indeed the normal attitude of the uneducated classes. Certain sections of the intelligentzia have, it is true, learnt to think of themselves first and foremost as Indians, and it is possible that service in the war may spread this idea more widely; nevertheless, to the ordinary villager, a man is still primarily either a Hindu or a Moslem. In those languages of India with which the writer is familiar there was, until modern times, no word for "India" or "Indian," though there were indeed names for that part of India in which the Aryans originally settled and for the areas conquered by the Moghuls. Hindustan is not India and certainly no Bengalee or Telugu would accept the adjective "Hindusthani" as meaning Indian. The classification into Hindu and Moslem is, then, essential in any description of India to-day. Its use does not imply that the two communities are always at loggerheads; it does, however, denote certain marked differences

between them. We are justified therefore in standing by our classification and stating that about two-thirds of the entire population of India are Hindus, in the widest sense of that term. Of the two hundred and fifty-five million people classified for this purpose as Hindus, nearly one-fifth are outside the fold of Hinduism proper. They are the untouchables or scheduled castes, outside the caste system altogether, beyond the pale of Hinduism, despised and rejected by the caste Hindus. We shall have more to say about them in another chapter; for the present, it need only be noticed that they constitute one-eighth of the population of India, and that for every member of a scheduled caste there are rather more than four caste Hindus and nearly two Moslems.

The only other numerically significant communities are the Christians (six million) and the Sikhs (nearly six million).

The rise of the Sikh religion was contemporary with the reformation in Europe, and like Protestantism it was a revolt against the existing, dominant religion. Guru Nanak, its great founder, rose up against the elaborate ceremonialism of the Brahmins and founded a new sect based on simplicity and militancy. The Sikhs are essentially a fighting people and every man amongst them is enjoined by his religion to carry a sword wherever he goes—it may, if necessary, be a miniature sword, but it must be worn. They live in the Punjab where, because of their militancy, the importance of the Sikh attitude towards the new Constitution is likely to be greater than their numbers alone would justify.

2. *Races*

Besides these divisions of religion and community,

there are marked variations in racial origin and in language between one part of the country and another. In Britain, too, there is more than one racial type, but none of those types are localized. You could not, by his appearance, pick out a man from Lancashire from a man of say, Somerset. In India, however, it is, generally speaking, easy to pick out a man of the North from a man of the South or the East. In the Punjab, you have the tall, fair-skinned, straight-haired, handsome Punjabi—an obviously Aryan type. In Madras, you have the short, dark, curly haired, and somewhat ugly —though highly intelligent—folk who inhabited India before the coming of the Aryans; while in Bengal, you have a people whose appearance shows evident signs of there being a mixture of Aryan, Dravidian and Mongolian peoples. No one with eyes in his head could mistake a Punjabi for a Bengalee, or a Madrassi for either.

3. *Languages*

A question frequently asked by people in England and elsewhere is, What is the language of India like?

This question could, of course, be given a statistical answer, to the effect that over 200 languages are spoken in India. But statistics mean very little to most of us; they are too abstract and we suspect them. Let us have concrete answers to our question. Here they are, three of them:

(*a*) An ordinary man from Bengal or the Punjab, visiting Madras, could not ask for a cup of water or enquire the way to the village, for the Bengali and Punjabi words for water, way and village would be quite unintelligible to the Madrassi.

(*b*) Every time the recruiting authorities in India issue a general poster or advertisement calling for men, it has to be issued in at least a dozen main

languages. Imagine what a complicated business administration would be in Britain, if every change in the food rationing rules had to be notified in a dozen languages or more, if war savings certificates had to be issued in many different scripts, and if B.B.C. talks had to be given in ten or twelve languages.

(*c*) Years ago the writer of this pamphlet used to try both civil and criminal cases in a certain district of India. He can remember numerous occasions when the complainant, the accused and the witness spoke entirely different languages and no one of them could understand either of the other two. It fell to the lot of the writer to interpret on these occasions—and he still hopes he did it correctly; but those concerned had no means of knowing and had to take his word for it!

(*d*) As we have already seen, when the All-India Congress party meets and its more extreme elements want to abuse the British, there is only one language in which they can do it and be sure of being understood—and that is English.[1]

4. *Economic Organization*

Of recent years India has undergone a rapid industrial expansion, and to-day she is classified as the eighth largest industrial country in the world. In spite of this the population is overwhelmingly agricultural. Only about one-tenth of the entire population live in towns containing ten thousand or more inhabitants. Two-thirds of the inhabitants live in villages, each of which is inhabited by less than two thousand people, and four-fifths live either in villages or in towns of less than five thousand inhabitants. The Indian is essentially an agriculturist, and for the great majority of the people,

[1] This section is taken from *Are We Humbugs?* by the author of the present book.

the regular recurrence and cessation of the rain is a matter of infinitely greater moment than the decisions of the "Big Three," or the machinations of great industrial magnates.

The Indian peasant is primarily a subsistence farmer and sells—or should sell—only what is left over after his own need has been met. Unfortunately, a very large proportion of Indian cultivators are in debt and therefore, in practice, have to sell more than the margin left over—and towards the end of the agricultural year, borrow again in order to buy back the paddy or wheat which they have previously sold. What a wonderful opportunity this last statement gives to the unfriendly critic of Britain. How can you, he exclaims indignantly, defend British imperialism when, under its ægis, the children of the soil are perpetually in debt? The problem, however, is not quite so simple as it seems. For many centuries the population of India was more or less stationary, and low compared with the size of the country. During the last century, modern science has materially reduced the toll which tropical diseases used to take of life in India; and improved transport arrangements, together with better administration, have—except in the one solitary and terrible instance of 1943—made wide-scale famine a thing of the past. Population has gone up by leaps and bounds, and in the last forty years alone it has increased by over one hundred million people. In the twenty years between 1921 and 1941 the increase in the Indian population was considerably greater than the total population of Great Britain to-day. A stage has now been reached where the pressure on the soil is greater than any country can support under a purely mainly agricultural economy. In India as a whole there are two hundred and fifty persons for every square mile—

a greater density than in Europe, U.S.A. or China.

Various experts have reckoned that in Europe, rural areas can support a population of two hundred and fifty per square mile; and so, at first sight, it might look as if all were well in India. But it is not so simple as this. There are large tracts of desert, forests and many other unoccupied areas, while, on the other hand, in some of the most important parts of rural India, population is far more closely packed than two hundred and fifty per square mile. In large tracts of Bengal, for example, there are more than five hundred people to the square mile and there are, indeed, purely rural areas where we reach the amazing figure of three thousand persons to the square mile. It is true that many persons from those areas earn their living in the towns and elsewhere and remit money home, so that the areas concerned do not have to be entirely self-sufficient in food. As against this, however, we have to remember that the yield of food crops per acre in India is less than in the most fertile parts of Europe. It is fairly clear that taking India as a whole, the pressure on food supply is already very severe.

The pressure on the land is indeed obvious without reference to any figures. Simple observation will show that, in many provinces, there is not much cultivable land still unoccupied and that individual holdings are becoming smaller, generation by generation. Already, in many cases, they are too small to feed the families who own them. It seems doubtful if the process can go any further.

Even apart from the difficulty of food supply, there is a limit to the number of people who can usefully be employed on the land. In many rural areas today that limit has already been reached, and so there is nothing for it but a drift to the towns.[1]

[1] This section is taken from *Peace Hath Her Victories*, by the present author.

The prime cause of rural indebtedness in India is thus the fact that, for a mainly agricultural country, population has grown too fast.

5. *The States*

One other fact which must be borne in mind before we can consider the political problems of India, is the relative size and importance of British India and the States. It has been explained that the expansion of British power in India did not proceed on any pre-arranged plan. The Indian States to-day are simply those parts of India which were not absorbed by the British power in the era of its development. Until recently there were over five hundred States, but their number has now been somewhat reduced by a merger of some of the smaller States in Western India. They vary greatly in size and importance, from Hyderabad with its population of sixteen million people, its vast wealth and its progressive outlook; to the tiny States which are little more than the demesne lands of a somewhat privileged landlord.

The following figures show the relative size of British India and the States:

	Area (sq. miles)	Population (1941 census)
British India	865,446	295,808,722
The States	715,964	93,189,233

CHAPTER XII

THE INDIAN PROBLEM

MANY people, in England and elsewhere, want to know why there should be an Indian problem at all. As a rule, when there are problems connected with the attainment of independence they arise from the unwillingness of the ruling House or Power to transfer sovereignty to the people concerned. In the case of India, however, the problem is somewhat different in nature. Britain is already fully pledged to grant India complete self-government and to accept a constitution framed by Indians themselves in a constituent assembly, not at some distant date in the indefinite future, but immediately. Why then should there be an Indian problem at all?

The problem arises from the fact that the logical conclusion of Britain's work in India points one way, while the actual circumstances of India to-day point another way. The political development of India during the past seventy-odd years should logically lead to

(*a*) a unitary Government, or at any rate a close federation for the whole of British India,
(*b*) a system of Government based on the British parliamentary model, and
(*c*) a system in which the States would have some organic link with British India.

The logic of this conclusion does not, however, alter the fact that many millions of Moslems of India will

have nothing to do with (*a*) or (*b*), while the Indian States would very much prefer to remain as they are.

To put the matter another way, Britain is pledged to make over the full powers of Government, but before she can do so, she has to decide into whose hands to put those powers. There are four obvious possibilities, none of which, however, seems to be acceptable to the people of India as a whole.

1. If Britain decides in favour of a federal government with wide powers retained at the centre, many of the Moslems of India will refuse to play.
2. If, on the other hand, Britain says that any such federal arrangement would keep the Moslems in a permanent minority and that to avoid this injustice the Hindus and the Moslems, though unequal in numerical strength, must have an equal share in the control of the Central Government, or that the Moslems must have the right to secede, the Hindus at once begin to talk of democracy and demand what they call fair play.
3. If, in this dilemma, Britain says—as in fact she did say at the time of the Cripps mission to India —"Settle it for yourselves, choose your own constitution and we will accept it," the main responsible parties of the country at once say, "Thank you very much, but that is not what we want."
4. If, on the other hand, people in Britain begin to say that the hope of an agreed solution is so poor that Britain herself must settle the future constitution of India, then the people of India join together loudly to declare that they will have no constitution which is not of their own making.

If Britain does nothing, she is accused of wanting to continue to rule; if she suggests doing anything she is accused of wanting to mould the constitution in her own interests; whatever she does, if

she pleases the Moslems, she will antagonize the Hindus and if she satisfies the Hindus, the Moslems will have nothing to do with it.

In the meantime Britain is under promise to do what seems almost impossible—to make India govern herself, almost whether she likes it or not. It is worth remembering at this stage that the Cripps offer—which, roughly speaking, meant that India was to frame her own constitution just as she liked—received unqualified support from the British mercantile community in India. The representatives of that community in the Central Legislative Assembly made it abundantly clear that India must be given full liberty to choose her own form of government and to settle her place within or without the British Commonwealth; and the writer of the present book went so far as to declare that he would lead the opposition against any government, either in Britain or in India, which went back on the promise contained in the Cripps offer. Nor is there any doubt that the ordinary man in Britain is convinced that India must now govern herself. The reasons by which he arrived at this conclusion vary with the temperament of the individual—in some cases it may be a belief that the continuance of British rule in India would be contrary to Britain's declared aims in the war; in other cases it may result from the feeling that Britain already has enough on her hands nearer home; while in yet other cases, this view may frankly arise from the feeling that India is a nuisance, that many of her politicians have given considerable trouble in our time of greatest need during the war and that Britain really cannot be bothered with India any longer. As for the British financier and the business man, their support of the Cripps offer may be actuated

by the reasonable belief that British business will flourish better in an India from which political ill-will has been removed by the grant of independence. However much the motives may vary, the conclusion is the same—Britain wants India to govern herself, but does not know who is going to form the Government or how it is going to work or whether India is to be divided into several dominions or to remain one country. The crux of the Indian problem, then, is the decision as to the body of persons into whose hands the power of government is to be given.

Another complicating factor arises from the fact that the transition from tutelage to full self-government has been somewhat long drawn out and that the Indian politician has never been able to understand the British belief in gradualness. It is now nearly twenty-six years since the first substantial instalment of self-government was given to the Provinces of India, and the average Indian politician—himself, as a rule, unversed in practical administration—cannot resist the belief that the slowness of the process has been due to insincerity on the part of the British. He has developed almost a complex about it and he keeps on reciting to himself the shibboleth that "Britain will never let go until we make her"; he does not therefore realize that he ought to be busy now settling the practical details of the new constitution. This may not be true of the first rank leaders, but it is undoubtedly true of the second rank of politicians both in the Congress and in the Moslem League. The result of this is to give a certain unreality to all Indian political discussion to-day.

This, then, is the problem of India—and it is now necessary to consider in some detail the various factors affecting that problem. First amongst them is the problem of minorities.

CHAPTER XIII

THE PROBLEM OF MINORITIES

THE problem of minorities in India is mainly concerned with two different sets of questions —first, the relations between the Hindus and the Moslems, and secondly, the relations between the Scheduled Castes or untouchables and the caste Hindus. We shall consider first the Hindu-Moslem question.

A. The Hindu-Moslem Question

An ardent Moslem Leaguer would at once protest at the inclusion of this particular subject under a chapter entitled "The Problem of Minorities," for he would claim, "We Moslems are not a minority, but are in fact one of two separate nations which both happen to inhabit the Indian continent." In fact the central point of the controversy between the Congress and the Moslem League is this very question as to whether India is to be regarded as consisting of one nation or of two nations. It is therefore necessary for us to consider in detail this question of Hindu-Moslem disunity.

When an Englishman writes of this disunity he runs a serious risk, for he is certain to be accused of wanting to "divide and rule." The risk, however, must be run, for Hindu-Moslem relations form a factor which no student of Indian affairs can ignore and to which Indians themselves will have to give their primary attention when the Constituent Assembly meets. It will be considered here under several aspects.

(*a*) This disunity is not a new thing, but has its roots deep in the past. Certain politicians have alleged that it has been created by the British, but they ignore the facts of history. Only during two periods has there been general peace and amity between the two communities; the first was during part of the reign of the Moslem Emperor, Akbar, and immediately thereafter (i.e. in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries of our era), and the second was during about three-quarters of the last century. In both these periods, be it noted, India was ruled by an authoritarian, though enlightened, government. When the British first attained governing power in India, that country was in the throes of the greatest communal struggle in her history, that between the declining Moghul Empire (Moslem) and the rising power of that great Hindu military confederacy, the Mahrattas. The communal struggle was not ended until Wellesley and others broke the power of the Mahrattas. Britain in India was then strong and absolute enough to maintain communal harmony, at least outwardly, though the tension was often high and sometimes produced riots and disorders.

(*b*) This disunity is not an artificial creation, but is founded upon a radical difference between the Hindus and the Moslems, not only in their attitude towards the things of the spirit, but also in their mode of thought and their daily habits of life. Those who, for political reasons, seek to minimize the difference between the Hindus and the Moslems are fond of urging that until a few centuries ago India was entirely Hindu, that most of the Moslems of India are in fact the descendants of converts from Hinduism, and that there can therefore be no fundamental difference between Hindus and Moslems. This argument, however, over-

looks the militant and formative character of Islam—a religion which is not content with adapting itself to the habits of the country to which it spreads, but which rapidly proceeds to mould the entire lives of its converts and to refashion their ideas in accordance with the principles of Islam. No one can live long amongst the people of India, particularly in the Eastern Provinces, without noticing the complete difference in character and mentality which conversion to Islam has produced in the course of two or three centuries—in those Provinces at least it is no mere literary licence to speak of the mild Hindu and the militant Moslem. In the predominantly Hindu districts of West Bengal, for example, personal grudges and land disputes are fought out in the Law Courts, and false allegations therein are the order of the day; while in the almost entirely Moslem rural areas of East Bengal the lathi[1] and the fishing spear are considered more appropriate weapons with which to settle quarrels or claims. And yet there is little racial difference between the people of East and West Bengal—it is not race, but the formative Islamic influence that has produced this divergence. The essence of the Hindu spirit is expressed in what is perhaps the best known and most venerated of all Hindu religious slogans—"Ahimsa Paramo Dharma," that is to say, "harmlessness or non-killing is the highest duty"—a slogan which no Moslem would accept under any circumstances whatever.

The difference in outlook goes right down to such fundamental concepts as the nature of the Deity and the appropriate manner of worshipping him. The Moslem believes in a Creator completely separated from his creation and in the survival of the individual soul after death. His attitude towards life is essentially

[1] A stout cudgel.

positive and individualistic, and it follows that both he and his Creator must have a separate and permanent existence. Mohammed is indeed the Prophet of God, but he is not God—the gulf between the Deity and his creatures is unmistakable. Moslem worship is simple, indeed austere, and neither idols nor pictures are allowed. Until recent times, indeed, the use of photographs or pictures, even outside the religious sphere, was regarded as blasphemy against the Creator. There is much in Islam akin to the stern, austere and unyielding spirit of seventeenth-century Puritanism, and both religions alike are characterized by a democratic equality, based on an unyielding belief in the importance of the individual.

Hinduism, on the other hand, is infinitely complicated, luxuriant in its forms and ideas and abounding in symbols. The creator and his creations are one and indivisible, as we have seen in an earlier chapter; there is no limit to the possible manifestations of the all-pervading spirit and a new God may therefore turn up at any time or place. The individual matters little, for he, after all, is but one link in an endless chain beginning and ending in a somewhat nebulous merging with the all-pervading spirit. As for equality, it is a concept necessarily foreign to Hinduism, with its highly stratified society. It is important to emphasize the fundamental difference between the psychological foundations of the two religions—Islam, clear-cut, individualistic, democratic, simple—Hinduism, abstruse, caring little for the individual, essentially undemocratic and extremely complicated.

In the simple things of everyday life, too, these differences continue. As soon as you hear a man's name, you know at once whether he is a Moslem or a Hindu—Mohammad Khan could not be a Hindu and

a man named Gandhi or Jawaharlal Nehru could not be a Moslem. This may sound a superficial distinction, but when it is remembered that the man named Mohammad Khan could not, without breaking all the laws of his own society, marry the daughter of the man named Jawaharlal Nehru, it will be realized that the gulf between the two communities is by no means imaginary. It would be possible to multiply the tale of daily differences almost indefinitely—each single matter would be trivial in itself, but in their cumulative effect they mean a great deal. The Moslem buries his dead, while the Hindu cremates them; the Moslem boy is circumcized as soon as he attains puberty, while no such rite is performed in the case of the Hindus. Even the marriage ceremonies of the two communities are entirely different. They wear different clothes, they eat different food, and as for language, even though in some Provinces they speak in much the same way, they have a different literature and use a different script. In the whole of that part of Northern India where the language vaguely known as Hindustani is current, there are, roughly speaking, two versions of it. Both are based on Sanskrit; one heavily influenced by Persian is known as Urdu, while the other, less Persianized, is known as Hindi. The two versions of what is originally more or less the same language have much in common, but they are written in entirely different scripts. Hindi, like English, is written from left to right, while Urdu is written from right to left. Although there are Moslems who speak Hindi and Hindus who speak Urdu, it is generally true to say that the Moslem of Upper India thinks of Urdu and the Hindu of Hindi as *his* language. As a result there are constant wrangles as to which particular version of Hindusthani should be used by All-India Radio. Even

in a Province like Bengal, where one language and one script are used by both communities, their names for the most intimate personal relationships are different. A Moslem boy addressing his aunt will use an entirely different word from that which a Hindu boy will employ under similar circumstances. Even more important than these outward differences, however, are the differences in intellectual background. In the mental life of the educated Hindu, Sanskrit plays the same part which Latin used to play—until utilitarianism became the rage—in the intellectual life of Europe; all the early mythological and historical conceptions of the Hindu student taken from the great Sanskrit works of old, while in the case of the Moslem, Arabic and Persian provide the classical background. It might be thought that this would be a consideration affecting only a negligible proportion—the cultured few—but, in practice, the constant clamour of every Moslem village in, for example, Bengal is to have a Madrassah instead of a Government High School. A Madrassah is simply a place in which the main instruction is based on Arabic, Persian and subjects connected with the Koran. The standard of education in the Madrassah is generally below that in the non-sectarian schools of the Province—but they satisfy a psychological need and are therefore in great demand.

The emphasis in this chapter on the division between the Hindus and the Moslems is not based on any desire to argue that, because of these differences, India must not govern herself. On the contrary, the contention of the writer is that somehow or other India *must* govern herself—at any rate, Great Britain will not be prepared to go on doing it much longer. The differences are, however, so fundamental that no solution of the Indian problem can ever be produced by people

who are not prepared to face squarely up to these difficulties. Mr. Jinnah says, "There are two nations in India"; Mr. Gandhi says, "India is one nation." A decision between the two conflicting views would probably be very largely a matter of definition, but no one can contribute anything useful to this problem unless he is prepared to recognize that the gulf between the two communities is profound.

(*c*) Of recent years each community has perforce become more politically conscious, and this has naturally increased the tension. Perhaps one of the most important causes of this increase has been the realization by Moslems that as a result of their long-continued unwillingness to take to Western education, they had dropped behind in the race for power and wealth. By the beginning of this century they had begun to see that the Hindus held all the key posts and that special measures would be necessary if the Moslems were to catch up. This realization led in due course to a claim for special treatment, for the right to a fixed proportion of posts in the Government services, and later to the demand for political safeguards. It is not difficult to see that this claim, however reasonable, would exacerbate communal feeling. Take, for example, the Moslem claim, long since conceded, to a fixed proportion of appointments in Government service. From the Moslem point of view this was essential to the development of the community, but from the Indian standpoint it might mean that a capable Hindu would be passed over in favour of a less capable Moslem—a danger which became more serious as the competition of the middle-classes for employment became more severe. Bitterness and mutual recrimination were inevitable.

(*d*) The situation naturally became more serious

with the approach of self-government. As long as power lay in British hands, the minorities knew that they would at least receive fair treatment; they might fail to get posts because they were less qualified than the Hindus, but at any rate they would not be deliberately excluded. All they needed was a system which made allowance for their backwardness. When, however, provincial autonomy was introduced and substantial power passed into the hands of Indian Ministers. the position was wholly changed; communities had to protect themselves against the danger of deliberate discrimination. The whole world knows how Hindus in Moslem Provinces and Moslems in Hindu Provinces have complained bitterly of oppression since 1937. The allegations may or may not be generally true; the important point is that they are made and believed in by the communities themselves. The approach of self-government has thus heightened the communal tension considerably, all the more so, perhaps, because provincial constitutions have been modelled on the British Parliamentary model. If Ministers were not so immediately dependent on the votes of their followers, some of them might set their faces against communal discrimination. But they have to please their followers in the legislatures, and those followers have to please their electorate—and the path to popularity does not lie along the straight and narrow road of communal impartiality. And so it sometimes seems to the observer, that the nearer India approaches to self-government the further she moves away from freedom.

The present writer has recently been concerned with the problem of civil supplies in Bengal, and amongst other things, it has been his duty to set up local committees which would choose shops to serve as distribution centres for cloth, pending the introduction of a

complete scheme of rationing. He began by trying to set up a committee which represented all communities and parties in the Province. After the first choice of shops had been made by the local committees, he was asked to meet a deputation from a local Moslem League which complained—perhaps quite rightly—that the popular ward committees were not giving Moslems a square deal and that the only way in which Moslems could hope for their fair share of the cloth was by an entirely separate system of distribution to Moslems through purely Moslem committees. The complaint may have been reasonable or unreasonable, but it was impossible to meet the delegates without realizing that it represented a perfectly genuine emotional reaction on their part. It was merely another illustration of the profound distrust which exists between the two major communities in India to-day. This district is infinitely distressing to anybody who, as a civil servant, has striven to build up the unity of India; but distressing or not, it is real.

(*e*) Another factor which has undoubtedly contributed to the growth of communal tension has been the intransigence of the Congress Party and the claim that it alone can speak for India—a claim which is quite incompatible with its unmistakably Hindu character. More will be said about this in a subsequent chapter, and it is only necessary for our present purpose to point out that the Congress was always essentially Hindu and that there was therefore always a danger that the growth of the Congress Party would bring into sharp relief the differences between Hindus and Moslems.

The Hindu-Moslem question is not therefore just a problem of devising some clever formula which can protect a small body of men from oppression by a huge majority. It is rather a problem of persuading two

communities to live in peace with one another. It is not a problem for Britain but for India. Britain is determined to make India govern herself—India has to decide how she can do it.

B. The Scheduled Castes

The second most important aspect of the communal problem is that presented by the relations between the Scheduled Castes (or untouchables) and the caste Hindus. The historical background of this problem is quite different from that of the Hindu-Moslem question. As the Brahmin system began to spread itself throughout India centuries ago, the great proportion of the inhabitants of India were gradually absorbed into the Hindu fold; their position might be—and indeed was—vastly inferior to that of the Brahmin or Kshatriya, but at least they were Hindus and the Brahmin would not be contaminated by their presence though he might not eat with them. There were, however, other helpless creatures who, whether from their being in a more primitive stage of development or whether because their own social and religious systems offered stronger resistance to Brahminical influence, remained entirely outside the Hindu system. As the power of the Brahmins grew stronger, the condition of these outsiders grew worse, and in course of time they began to be regarded as beneath contempt—scarcely human. Even amongst these despised creatures, however, there were degrees of degradation; some could be allowed to frequent public places with men of better caste provided they took care that their shadows did not fall on those superior beings; others might approach within a well-defined distance; while others were so far beneath the lofty contempt of the Brahmins that they might not even be seen by them. It is not easy for people living

in Britain or the United States of America to realize that this last statement has to be taken quite literally, and that a Brahmin who, owing to unpardonable carelessness on the part of one of these creatures, should see one of the "unseeables" would have to go through an elaborate ceremony of purification. In many cases the untouchables formed colonies of their own, and often they lived far from the beaten track; where, however, they lived in towns or in villages or near other communities, their social disabilities were very evident. They might not use the public wells, they could not send their children to school, and, needless to say, the temples were not for them. They had no legal redress against a Brahmin, and for a man of higher caste to murder an untouchable was a far less serious offence than killing a cow. Their position, nevertheless, varied considerably from one part of India to another. In Bengal, though there too they were without civic rights. they suffered few practical social disabilities except that they might not enter the temples; in Southern India, however, the hand of the Brahmin lay then, as it does to-day, heavy upon them.

The coming of the Moslems did little or nothing to change the status of these outcastes; British rule, however, with its insistence upon the equality of the Brahmin and the sweeper before the Criminal Courts, began to affect the situation quite early, and even as far back as 1840, it was reported that the untouchables were beginning to show a new consciousness of their rights and were determined to maintain them. A factor much more fundamental than even the influence of law was, indeed, at work. The system of untouchability at its worst was dependent on the unquestioned paramountcy of the Brahmin. The British newcomers had for the time being broken the power of the

Brahmin at least in the political sphere; the psychological foundations of the caste system had been shaken and amelioration of the position of the untouchables was likely to result. India, however, has a great natural capacity for passive resistance—as Mr. Gandhi has proved in recent times—and for generations the great mass of caste Hindus, while helplessly acquiescing in the new-found legal position of the untouchables, continued to interpose every possible obstacle in the way of their social progress. Government might indeed declare that a school should be open to men of all castes—but if the Brahmin and the man of higher caste sent his children away, who would pay the schoolmaster? A very interesting example of this kind of attitude occurred in comparatively recent years in Bengal, when, as a result of long continued and carefully planned agitation, the depressed castes gained the right of entry to a certain temple. They had gained their point—but henceforth the caste Hindus abandoned the temple, so that attendance at it became a badge of inferiority.

In the meantime, however, other influences have been at work. On the one hand, members of the depressed classes have gone abroad for their education, some of them have begun to take part in public affairs, and to-day their best known leader, Dr. Ambedkar, holds a seat in the Viceroy's Executive Council. On the other hand, certain leaders of Indian political thought, nourished in the best traditions of British Liberalism, have begun to realize that an India which permits untouchability cannot hope for an equal and respected place in the Councils of the Nations. Another cause too has been at work. Those members of the depressed castes who have risen to the level of political consciousness have begun to see in the Congress movement a fresh attempt to assert that supremacy of the

Brahmin, from which British rule, to some extent, delivered them. They are determined not to fall once again under that immemorial tyranny, and it is for this reason that their leaders insist that any settlement of the constitutional issue in India must include special protection for the untouchables, or as they are now more politely called, the Scheduled Castes. So strong indeed is this feeling that when recent talks between Mr. Gandhi and Mr. Jinnah filled many with fear, and some with hope, Dr. Ambedkar made it very clear that no settlement arrived at between those two distinguished leaders should be considered by the British Government unless it had the approval of the forty-eight million untouchables.

One reason why Europe went to war was because of the presence of less than three millions of Sudeten Germans in Czechoslovakia. In India there are nearly fifty million untouchables.

CHAPTER XIV

INDIAN POLITICAL PARTIES—THE CONGRESS

A. Historical Background

Until rather less than a hundred years ago, there were no political parties in India. The Moghul Emperors and their satraps were absolute—if you disagreed with them, unless you kept it to yourself, you lost your head. By the beginning of the last quarter of the nineteenth century, however, conditions favourable to the growth of political parties had been established. The land was everywhere at peace, communications were tolerably good, a new middle class was coming into existence, English education was beginning to develop in the better Indian mind a desire to imitate Western institutions, and most important of all, freedom of thought and deed was established. Moreover, the wisest amongst the British rulers of India had begun to realize what a dangerous lack of contact there was between them and the people they ruled. This lack of contact, which was undoubtedly one of the contributory causes of the Indian Mutiny, had become worse as a result of the bitterness which that episode had produced. Lord Ripon, as Viceroy, had fully realized the need for bridging the gulf, and partly as a result of his encouragement a retired member of the Indian Civil Service, Allan Hume, took the initiative in founding the Indian National Congress in 1885. With great difficulty seventy members were persuaded to attend the first meeting of the Congress; their tone was—as it

continued to be for a number of years—extremely moderate; they were concerned mainly with certain reforms in the legislatures and the Civil Service, and they had as their distant aim responsible self-government within the British Empire. Unfortunately, although the phrase "India for the Indians" was a favourite one amongst the early Congress leaders, the Congress itself at no time can be said to have been representative even of the educated portion of the nation. Although from time to time a few Moslems held office in it, it is generally true to say that all through the early days, the Moslem community, under the guidance of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, took no part in it, and indeed that great Moslem leader went so far as to found an anti-Congress association. This abstention on the part of the Moslems was due, not merely to their educational and political backwardness, but also to their profound suspicion of any institution which was so largely Brahmin in character as the Indian National Congress. Nor were the Moslems the only section of the community which went unrepresented. The untouchables were, of course, out of the picture; but what is more significant, the orthodox Hindus also stood mainly aloof. For as the Maharaja of Benares said in 1888: "Democracy is an occidental idea. A Hindu cannot comprehend it as long as he *is* a Hindu. It is against his religious belief. So long as Hindus remain in Hindustan, you cannot succeed in extending the democratical idea." The Congress remained, then, for a number of years, a body mainly composed of highly intellectual, half-Westernized Brahmins, together with a few influential Parsis.

It might have been thought that such a body would throw its full weight into the scale of social reform, but the dangers of such a course were soon realized by

Bal Gangadhar Tilak, a Poona Brahmin, who was perhaps the most important formative influence in the early days of the Congress Party. A Hindu of the Hindus, his main aim was to win over the orthodox party to the side of the Congress, and for this purpose he was prepared to denounce, in the most violent terms, any form of social reform which might affect Hindu society. In 1891 the Government had introduced a bill in the Legislative Council to prevent the consummation of marriage before a wife was twelve years old. A man of dynamic energy, Tilak threw all his great ability into a bitter campaign against Government. Defeated in that campaign, he next set himself to build a rabid militant Hinduism. He revived the cult of the Maharatta chieftain, Shivaji, who had been the sworn enemy of the Moslems, and he combined with all these elements in India which were then busy promoting a Hindu and anti-Moslem revival. The serious outbreak of plague in Western India in 1896 gave him an excellent opportunity of directing this new militant Hinduism to anti-Government channels. The officials of Government naturally took steps to segregate the unfortunate victims of the plague, and Tilak at once came out with a denunciation of the various restrictions found necessary, on the ground that they were opposed to the religious principles of the people. In this campaign he was prepared to use any weapon, and when the more moderate Gokhale published an apology for a certain mistaken allegation made by him against the plague restriction officials, Tilak turned fiercely on him —what, indeed, was truth compared with the achievement of Tilak's militant political ambitions? The violence of Tilak's campaigns had the effect which might have been expected, and two officials on plague duty were murdered by members of a society which

was described as being one "for removing obstacles to the Hindu religion." There were at that time other leaders in the Congress more moderate and balanced than Tilak, but Tilak's appeal was in accordance with the spirit of the times amongst his particular community; he succeeded because he assisted in the resurgence of aggressive Brahminism. As a result of his activities the Congress became more than ever a Hindu body, and by 1905 only seventeen Moslem delegates were left in it.

This phase of political activity had achieved three things—it had widened the gulf between the Hindus and the Moslems, it had established the essentially Brahmin character of the early Congress, and it had taught India the possibilities of political crime. The character of Tilak himself provides the key to much which the West finds it difficult to understand in later Indian political developments. The combination of great intellectual ability with almost primitive communal fanaticism, the existence of a thoroughly reactionary attitude towards social reform, side by side with the modern spirit of national revolution, and the ability to ignore the rights, if not the existence, of other great communities containing many millions of people —these are phenomena with which every student of modern Indian politics is familiar.

The next important milestone in Indian political history was the partition of Bengal in 1905. That transaction need not be studied in detail here; it need only be said that West Bengal is largely Hindu, while East Bengal is mainly Moslem. For administrative reasons it was proposed to partition the Province and join East Bengal with Assam while linking West Bengal with the adjacent Hindu Provinces of Bihar and Orissa. The decision, which was based purely on considerations

of efficiency, had much to commend it, but it was deeply resented by the Hindus of Bengal. A cry was at once raised that the Bengali homeland was being destroyed, and the excitement was deliberately fanned by those who had long been endeavouring to develop an aggressive Hindu outlook. The lessons of Tilak were remembered and the terrorist party in Bengal was born. The Moslem reaction to this was what might have been expected—in 1906 the Moslem League came into being, and from that time onwards it has been true to say that though there have been many Moslems in the Congress, and though there are many millions of Moslems not in the Moslem League, nevertheless the Congress is in character and in outlook an essentially Hindu body, while the Moslem League undoubtedly stands for Moslem aspirations in India. About this time, too, the Moslems began to realize that they had fallen behind in the educational race and had thereby stultified themselves in the field of Government; from this time onwards the Moslem community took more systematically to English education and began to claim that no constitution would be acceptable which did not make special provisions for Moslem interests. As its influence spread in Bengal, the character of the Congress became less predominantly Brahmin.

The main characteristics of the period between the partition of Bengal and the Great War were perhaps the steady growth of the demand for self-government, the increasing determination of the Moslems to take care of their own interests in any political developments, and at the same time the aloofness of the great mass of population from any of these movements. The story of events in India from the Great War onwards is too well known to need repetition here—it will be

referred to incidentally in connection with the particular parties concerned.

B. Congress Party

Right from the beginning of the growth of political consciousness in India, the Congress has been by far the most important party in the country and still holds that position to-day, in spite of many mistakes, in spite of the consciousness on the part of many educated Indians that the Congress leaders have sadly missed the bus during the war, and in spite of the inconsistencies and vacillations of its great leader. Whatever its failures may have been, it has induced men of considerable ability to accept Cabinet posts on salaries far below the ordinary Indian bureaucratic level, it has persuaded men who formerly took pride in their elegance to adopt the unbecoming home-spun Congress-cap, and it has imposed a definite pattern of thought upon a very large number of Hindus throughout India. It is easy to say that the ordinary Indian villager knows nothing and cares less about politics—but this does not alter the fact that again and again he has been willing to take part in demonstrations, to organize boycotts, and even to indulge in violence at the bidding or instigation of the Congress Party. There may be two views as to whether on the whole the influence of that Party is for good or for evil in India to-day, and there may be doubts as to whether it will, in its present form, survive the attainment by India of complete self-government; but there can be no doubt that it is the most potent single factor in Indian political life to-day.

Generalizations about the Congress are made more difficult by the very obvious fact that it is composed of a number of different elements. First there is Indian big business, hopeful of using the nationalist move-

ment as a means of enabling themselves to replace the British in the sphere of commerce and industry. They have not by any means had it all their own way in the Congress Party; they have had to go a long way towards accepting the industrial views of Mr. Gandhi and others, and they have at times had to adopt an attitude towards international affairs—and in particular towards the war—which, as good business men, they must have known to be unreal; but they have taken the long view and have assumed that a Congress Government in India, with all the possibilities which it unfolds of manipulating tariff policies, would in the long run be good for them. No one can criticize them for this—they are merely adopting the attitude of many good business men in most countries—and, indeed, "buy Indian" is no worse a slogan than "buy British." It is, however, worth remembering that the Moslem community plays a very minor part in Indian big business; except for the Parsis, most of the big figures are Hindus and so their enemies see, in their support of the Congress Party, nothing but the desire to secure the domination of the small man by Hindu big business interests.

Next in the Congress Party come the idealists. It has become the fashion of late to speak slightingly of idealism, but we whose grandfathers spoke with fervour of Mazzini or Cavour, or looked with a warm glow of sympathy upon the Hellenic freedom movement, cannot think lightly of men who, however mistaken we may believe them to have been, have been prepared to sacrifice their personal comfort for what seemed to them to be the cause of their country. Any estimate of the Congress Party which does not fully recognize the fact that a very large proportion of its members are genuine idealists, inspired by the same sentiments which have

inspired all the great peoples of the world, is a false estimate. We may believe, as the author does, that the policy of the Congress Party in recent years has been contrary to the best interests of India and that the disintegration of that party, when India becomes fully self-governing, is earnestly to be desired. That belief must not blind us to the fact that men do not go to prison—in some cases time after time—for fun. Nor must we forget that in the terrorist movement, which was undoubtedly a second cousin of the Congress Party, many young men were prepared to face death unflinchingly. This strain of idealism has been one of the main sources of strength of the Congress Party and has enabled it to survive innumerable errors and not a few stupidities. It has also, at times, enabled that party to conceal from the outer world the existence within it of other elements. Unfortunately this idealism has often been of an unpractical, ultra-emotional and unanalytical kind, which has led the sincerest elements in the Congress Party to hitch their wagon, not merely to a star, but to a tailless comet.

The third strain in the Congress Party is of a much more unpleasant kind—it consists of racial fanatics more concerned to harm England than to help India. Perhaps not very numerous, this section is nevertheless vociferous, and its utterances consequently receive greater prominence in the Press and on public platforms than their place in the public esteem really deserves. This section has provided the numerous shibboleths which colour the Congress political vocabulary—shibboleths which enable those concerned to distort history quite happily and to paint the blackest possible picture of the British in India. Slavery, exploitation, ruthlessness, insincerity—one of these words, or something like it, has to be used whenever

the name of Britain is mentioned. Far other was the view of the more balanced leaders of the Congress Party in its early days; when, for example, the first President of the Congress, Mr. W. C. Banerjea, in setting forth the objects of the Congress, mentioned " the fuller development and consolidation of those sentiments of national unity that had their origin in our beloved Lord Ripon's regime "; or when Mr. Gokhale, apostrophizing the British, said, " The blessings of peace, the establishment of law and order, the introduction of Western education, and the freedom of speech and appreciation of liberal institutions that have followed in its wake—all these are things which stand to the credit of your rule." The racialists in the Congress Party will have none of this moderate language—moderation indeed is, in their minds, synonymous with weakness. They have been particularly strong in Bengal and have been, to no small extent, responsible for keeping alive in that Province an atmosphere in which terrorism was bound to flourish.

CHAPTER XV

MR. GANDHI

THE next element in the Congress Party is its virtual leader, Mr. Gandhi. The Englishman who attempts to analyse that strange complex of apparently inconsistent qualities which makes up Mr. Gandhi, is almost certain to go astray, and quite certain to call forth resentment from many thousands of educated Hindus. To the eye of the Westerner, that remarkable leader appears at one moment as a saintly personage who has attracted to himself the affection and veneration of the whole of India, and at another moment as an astute politician who is prepared to veer with every change in the political wind in order thereby to reach his chosen destination more quickly. An illustration of the difficulty of analysing his character is provided by the question of non-violence. Non-violence is not a new thing in history, though it has indeed been developed in India along somewhat novel lines—in principle, John Hampden and the passive resisters in Britain several centuries ago knew all about it. For them, however, it was not a principle, but only the means by which the authority of a tyrannical king could be resisted. Is this the case also with Mr. Gandhi, or is non-violence an end in itself, a sacred principle? Many of his own utterances support the view that it is to him a principle and not just a technique. On the other hand, amongst the many conflicting speeches which Mr. Gandhi has made about India's part in the war, some at least suggest that if Britain had given

India all which Mr. Gandhi claimed, he would have been willing to cast in his lot with the Allies. If these statements are to be taken at their face value, the conclusion must be that non-violence is merely a weapon suitable for use by a subject people who have no other instruments to hand. There is no doubt that this is the view which has been taken of non-violence by Mr. Gandhi's followers, for indeed they have been willing to cast it aside in favour of direct action whenever the times have been propitious. In Mr. Gandhi himself, there is much of that mysticism which seems to dispense with logic and which may, therefore, relieve him from the necessity of making clear-cut distinctions between principle and expediency.

Then again there is the puzzle of how to reconcile Mr. Gandhi's profession of non-violence with the rather curious attitude which he has, from time to time, adopted towards political terrorism. Again and again, occasions arose during the terrorist movement when a clear lead from Mr. Gandhi would have had great influence—never once did he give that lead. From time to time, indeed, he deplored some particular terrorist outrage, but almost invariably that condemnation was so qualified as to mean nothing—the crime of murder was no doubt atrocious, but how could anyone be surprised at young hot-heads committing crimes of this kind when the real responsibility lay with those who refused freedom to India? This lack of any clear statement from Mr. Gandhi at that time was interpreted by Congress speakers and journalists as being tantamount to at least a qualified approval of the cult of violence which appeared day after day in the Indian Press. To such a pitch was this incitement carried, that when Bhagat Singh murdered a British official in a particularly cold-blooded manner, a certain Indian newspaper

came out with a poem, the burden of which was that Heaven was all the better and happier for Bhagat Singh's presence therein. As the leader of the greatest political party in India—and the party whose teachings had undoubtedly done much to encourage the growth of terrorism—Mr. Gandhi will not be able to escape blame at the bar of history for his failure to take a more definite line.

These speculations, however, are of less importance than the undoubted fact of Mr. Gandhi's unparalleled ascendancy over the Hindu mind. Go wherever you will in India and you will find the picture of Mr. Gandhi adorning the walls of the cottage and the town house alike; mention his name in the company of an average Hindu and watch the face of your listener at the same time—you will see flitting across his features that curious expression of adoration and ecstasy which, in the West, is only associated with religious observances. The writer well remembers discussing a certain public matter connected with education with a well-known and highly educated Hindu. It became apparent in the course of the discussion that, had he relied on his own intellectual convictions, the Hindu speaker would have declared himself as opposed to the policy suggested by Mr. Gandhi. As soon, however, as it became clear whither the conversation was leading, the Hindu gentleman pulled himself up, saying decisively: "If I think one thing and Mr. Gandhi thinks another, I must be wrong, for he is always right." This state of mind is, of course, the complete negation of democracy. Under a democratic system, men choose a particular leader because they accept his teachings, and if, in course of time, he appears to go off the rails, or if his teachings turn out to be wrong, he is replaced by another leader. Under the system which surrounds

Mr. Gandhi, you choose your leader for semi-mystical reasons, you abdicate all your right of criticism and you assume that what he says must be right. This is in keeping with the authoritarian cast of the Hindu mind, but it is at least doubtful whether democratic institutions will ever be found compatible with such an attitude. It may be that in India a man can only attain widespread and long-enduring leadership by surrounding himself with this kind of mystical aura—inscrutability may be an essential stock-in-trade of the Indian leader—but if so, it might be wiser to assume that Parliamentary institutions are not likely to work well.

We cannot leave this subject without trying to ask whether Mr. Gandhi's influence has, on the whole, been good or bad for India? Let us try to draw up a balance sheet, beginning with the credit side.

(1) There is no doubt that Mr. Gandhi, particularly in the early years of his work in India, did much to build up Indian self-respect and national pride. Amongst large sections of the community in various parts of India, there was, before the time of Mr. Gandhi, an excessive deference to the outside world, an undue desire to imitate foreign models and a complete lack of self-confidence in the presence of people from other countries. Thanks partly to Mr. Gandhi's influence, those defects have, to some extent, begun to disappear. At present, indeed, many of the intellectuals of India are passing through a stage of transition—they are not sufficiently lacking in self-confidence to practise the deference of olden days, but on the other hand, they have not acquired sufficient self-confidence to feel free from the necessity of being aggressive. Over-assertiveness and a tendency to talk loud are perhaps two of the most obvious characteristics of Indian politicians to-day. The phase is not altogether a pleasant one, but

passage through it was perhaps unavoidable, and it is to some extent due to Mr. Gandhi that this degree of progress has been achieved.

(2) The second item on the credit side is the success of Mr. Gandhi in compelling his fellow countrymen and Government to realize the thoroughly unsatisfactory character of the Indian education system. For decades past, education in India has been based upon the exaltation of purely literary activities—until recent years science has played a comparatively minor part in the curriculum, and handicraft or any other form of practical activity has been rigorously excluded from school life. The reasons for this state of affairs need not be discussed here. For our present purposes the only point is, that Mr. Gandhi, who has above all things the virtue of appreciating simplicity, has seen through the artificiality and hollowness of this system. For years many British officials had laboured to persuade schoolmasters or parents that children in schools should be taught agriculture or carpentry or handicraft of one kind or another—only to be met with the stern refusal of parents who consider such things far beneath the contempt of a boy who might in due course hope to describe himself as a "failed B.A." Mr. Gandhi, backed by one or two enthusiastic Congress educationists, forced the Congress to accept an entirely new outlook on this question. He put forward a scheme, which in many respects was crude and extreme, but under which all education was to be based on teaching through manual activity. His scheme was, of course, in line with the doctrine of the spinning-wheel. It would be easy to pull it to pieces in detail, but it is more profitable to remember that it perhaps represents the first realist contribution to education, made by an Indian political leader in modern times.

(3) The third item on the credit side of Mr. Gandhi's political balance-sheet is his realization of the great dangers of over-rapid urbanization in India. Mr. Gandhi's remedy—the economic self-sufficiency of the village—may seem to most of us unsound if not retrograde; but the danger which he seeks to avert is nevertheless real. Unless the utmost vigilance is exercised, it is more than likely that the development of industry in India will be accompanied by many of the worst evils of the early nineteenth century in Britain—ruthless exploitation, sweated labour and indifference as to the working and living conditions of the labourer, are only too likely to occur in a country where the gulf between the different classes is so profound and where habits of thought incline people to take that gulf for granted. It must also be remembered that, for many years to come, improved agriculture must be the foundation of India's national prosperity. In the absence of some influence such as that of Mr. Gandhi, the concentration of the brains of India in the towns to-day might well result in the serious neglect of village improvement and agricultural development, and so produce economic instability of the entire country. Neither the factory nor the "Charka"[1] alone can bring happiness and prosperity to India; the factory is in no danger of being forgotten, but the merit of keeping the Charka in mind is Mr. Gandhi's alone.

These are the main items to Mr. Gandhi's credit. His followers would no doubt indignantly exclaim that we had omitted the most important of them all—Mr. Gandhi's share in winning self-government for India. It is, however, unlikely that the impartial historian of the future will consider that Mr. Gandhi's activities during the past twenty years have hastened the approach

[1] Charka = spinning-wheel.

of full self-government—he may indeed, with some reason, hold that they have retarded that event. Full responsible self-government for India was publicly declared to be Britain's aim as early as 1919; the speed at which that aim was to be attained was to depend on progress made, and it is perhaps unlikely that a further eighteen years would have passed before the taking of the next effective step, if Mr. Gandhi and his followers had co-operated in the business of Government. From 1919 onwards it was clearly the path of wisdom to take what was offered, and by using it to prove its insufficiency. Mr. Gandhi chose the more spectacular but less certain course. Three times within the space of little more than twenty years he plunged his country into turmoil. The first Non-co-operation Movement in 1921, the Civil Disobedience Movement some nine or ten years later, and the "Quit India" Movement of 1942—a movement timed to synchronize with Britain's greatest peril in the East—can hardly have inspired the British public with confidence in the capacity of Mr. Gandhi and his followers to govern India. Each of these movements was a political present to the die-hard minority in Britain. To-day India has been invited to frame her own government and to enjoy complete freedom in the immediate future. If India rises to the occasion, the step from the mild 1919 instalment of Parliamentary government to complete independence will have been taken in the short space of less than thirty years. Judged by the standards of history, this is a short period for so great a transition, but it is at least possible that but for the intransigence of Mr. Gandhi, the change could have been achieved in a still shorter time.

What of the debit side of the balance-sheet? Perhaps the heaviest item on this side is Mr. Gandhi's success in

forcing the Congress Party into a totalitarian mould. When Provincial autonomy came into force in 1937, it might have been thought that, in the Provinces with Congress majorities, the Congress Ministries would have been left free to frame their own policies, subject only to their responsibility to the people who elected them. Nothing, however, could have been further from the thought of Mr. Gandhi and his colleagues. A Congress Parliamentary Board, consisting of three of the most important followers of Mr. Gandhi, was formed to control the activities of Congress and its Ministries in the different Provinces. The hand of this Board lay very heavy upon the Congress Provincial Ministries. some of whom resented it bitterly—they were allowed to introduce no major legislation without reference to the Parliamentary Board, and their attitude towards all important matters in the legislature was determined not by themselves, the elected representatives of the people, but by the Parliamentary Board, with Mr. Gandhi in the background. The very foundations of Parliamentary Government—the responsibility of the Ministers to Parliament, and of Parliament to the electorate alone—were thus undermined right from the start. The reality of the Board's control became more apparent than ever in 1939, when the Congress High Command decided to strengthen its own bargaining position with Britain, by resigning office early in the war. This decision was taken against the advice of a number of the more responsible Congress Ministers, and one Ministry, in particular—that of Assam—fought hard and long against it. But in vain—the test was to be not private judgment or the views of the electorate, but the decisions of the Parliamentary caucus.

Another excellent illustration of the virtual dictatorship of Mr. Gandhi is provided by the incidents con-

nected with the election of Mr. Subhas Chandra Bose as Congress President for the second time in 1939. In this election, much against Mr. Gandhi's wishes, Mr. Bose was easily elected. In the words of one of the acutest observers of modern India, Mr. Guy Wint:

> "Mr. Gandhi, indeed, had recommended the electors to vote for the rival candidate, but his advice was given with such subtlety and caution that it was apparently misunderstood. Mr. Gandhi's supporters alleged that if the delegates had in fact comprehended what was the Mahatma's wish they would have voted against Mr. Bose; and the fact that they had misconstrued his advice was held in some way to have invalidated their votes and morally if not legally to have rendered void the election of Mr. Bose. They set themselves therefore to undo the work of the polls, launching a great appeal to the people over the heads of erring delegates, and exploiting to the full the holiness and prestige of the Mahatma (then standing very high because of a dispute which had chanced at this moment to break out between him and the Viceroy); and at the ensuing full assembly of the Congress Party they secured a resolution that Mr. Bose should choose a working committee (the central committee which controls the party) only with the advice and consent of Mr. Gandhi. Thereupon it was sufficient that the Mahatma should withhold this advice, and Mr. Bose was forced to resign."

There is indeed nothing about the essentially undemocratic character of Congress to surprise students of Indian history—it would, on the contrary, be remarkable indeed if a party which owed its origin mainly to Brahmin intellectuals had developed a passion for democracy in practice as distinct from theory. The essence of the Congress creed is perhaps that everybody is to be free to vote, but everybody must vote as he is

told. This tendency was manifest before the time of Mr. Gandhi, but he has canalized and strengthened it and it may well be that he, more than any other man, has made democracy in India impossible.

Mr. Gandhi's second greatest disservice to India is that he has taught a large section of the people to regard non-co-operation, or passive resistance, as a normal way of expressing disapproval of a law. It has, of course, always been recognized in most countries that there are occasions when a law may be so at variance with a man's conscience that he is justified in disobeying it—but equally it has been recognized that such occasions are rare in history and that resistance is only justified when major matters of principle are involved. Thanks to Mr. Gandhi, every Hindu schoolboy now regards non-co-operation as the natural reaction to any rule or disciplinary measure which he may happen to dislike; the right to go on strike over the most petty issues has become one of his most cherished liberties. In the legislatures and other deliberative bodies, it is becoming increasingly common for a defeated opposition or minority to walk out, and indeed throughout the whole sphere of public life in India the "I won't play" attitude is becoming the order of the day. It is unlikely that this inability to acquiesce in a decision with which one may disagree will pass with the attainment of full self-government—it is much more likely indeed to persist as a permanent weakness in Indian political life. However dangerous the principle of non-co-operation may be, even when practised by men of intelligence and restraint, its dangers when it becomes the gospel of the illiterate are almost unbounded. It is indeed inconceivable that amongst uneducated people non-co-operation should remain peaceful, and again and again in the last twenty years a professedly non-violent movement

has led, as it was bound to lead, to death and destruction. Perhaps the most significant instance of this was in August 1942. It is not necessary here to discuss the question as to the degree of direct responsibility of the Congress leaders for the outbreak of violence and subversive crime at that time; it is sufficient to observe that at a time when Japan was on the borders of India, they launched a non-co-operation movement which amongst ordinary fallible human beings could not but lead to violence in its most extreme forms. It may be years or even generations before India recovers from the distorted thinking into which so many young minds have been led by Mr. Gandhi's teaching on the subject of non-co-operation or, as he prefers to call it, non-violence.

This curious belief that the individual or the group can somehow or other withdraw itself from the corporate acts and life of the community, if it so wishes, has a parallel in the attitude of Indian politicians towards international relations. That attitude has often been characterized by a kind of unexposed, and perhaps unconscious, but nevertheless unmistakable isolationism—a failure to realize that an independent India will not be able to live to herself. Every Indian to-day wants freedom for India, but very few Indian politicians have yet begun to think seriously as to whether that freedom will be maintained by alliances with other great powers, or by remaining within the British Commonwealth, or whether India will have to build up for herself a vast defensive system of armies and navies and air forces. In some unexplained way they hope to remain apart from international difficulties. The main origin of this isolationism is the anti-British feeling generated in the Congress Party by Mr. Gandhi. It is not suggested that Mr. Gandhi is

solely to blame for the existence of this feeling; the British themselves by their aloofness, their customary assumption of superiority, and their frequent failures to show imaginative sympathy with Indian political aspirations must bear a considerable part of the blame; while, to some extent, the feeling must be regarded as the inevitable accompaniment of the gradual transition from dependence to independence. The tragedy of the situation is that Mr. Gandhi's influence in strengthening this anti-British feeling began to make itself felt just at the time when Britain herself was preparing to extend full self-government to India. Mr. Gandhi himself, of course, would deny this charge indignantly and would claim that he loved men of all nations equally; Mr. Gandhi, however, uses words in a sense of his own, and to the plain man it will continue to appear that the prime lesson taught by Mr. Gandhi to his followers has been to regard the British as their enemy. The "I won't play with the British" attitude which was thus developed, for a time induced Indian politicians to look to other quarters of the globe for potential allies; one by one, however, fresh difficulties began to appear on the horizon. In some cases there was doubt as to how far the new potential allies could be trusted, while in other cases it was by no means certain that they would be able to deliver the goods. Thus it has gradually come to pass during the past two or three years that political India has shelved the problem altogether. Indian politicians now look forward as it were to independence in vacuo. Either they hope that by the time India is self-governing the lion will have begun to lie down with the lamb, and international alignments will therefore be of no consequence, or else they hope in their secret hearts that the long-standing link between Britain and India will

not be finally snapped, and that the grant of Indian independence may therefore not mean the delivery of India to some new bondage. This lack of realism has been encouraged by Mr. Gandhi's archaic economic teachings. Let the villages be self-sufficient, says Mr. Gandhi; India will then have no need of imports, exports will matter little and no longer will India be dependent on the rest of the world. This doctrine has, naturally, never been accepted by the Indian financiers of the Congress Movement, but it has been lapped up by many of the middle-class minor professional men or small shopkeepers, who provide the bulk of Mr. Gandhi's supporters. Curiously enough, however, the "back to the village" doctrine has never led them to show any conspicuous desire to return to the villages themselves, and to-day the drift from the village to town is more marked than ever. This teaching, however, has prevented many middle-class Indians from realizing that the place of India in the future world will depend entirely upon a willingness to give as well as to take, a readiness to depend not on self-sufficiency, but on reasonable bargaining to the mutual benefit of both parties. In other words, it has prevented the growth of a sense of reality.

The last item on the debit side is the fact that, under the influence of Mr. Gandhi, the Congress has come to be regarded by the leaders of the Moslem community as an essentially Hindu and anti-Moslem body. This feeling, indeed, existed in the early days of the Congress Movement, but had been to a great extent broken down by the events between 1919 and 1937. From 1937 onwards, however, the Congress launched a campaign which must have seemed provocative in the extreme to the Moslems. They began by refusing to accept Moslem Leaguers as co-ministers in the reformed

governments; they went on to organize a great campaign for the conversion of the Moslems to the Congress belief; and finally they began to proclaim, on every public platform, that the Moslem League had no standing and that the Congress and the Congress alone could speak for India. It is not necessary to discuss here whether any of those particular acts was justifiable or not; the point is that they filled the Moslems with profound suspicion, that they brought about a rapid development of the Moslem League, and that they produced a serious widening of the gulf between the Hindus and the Moslems. For all this Mr. Gandhi must bear the blame.

The debit items in Mr. Gandhi's balance-sheet are therefore numerous and heavy. They have been well stated by Mr. Guy Wint in the book before quoted.

> "When he came to the forefront there were, as we saw, a number of open questions. It was open to the nationalist movement to become either a force co-operating with the other nationalist movements in the British Empire, or to clash in sterile conflict with Great Britain. It was open to it to take as its ideal the adoption of the best which Western civilization has to offer, or to hunt after the will-o'-the-wisp of India's past glories. It was an open question whether it would absorb the Moslem political movement in itself or whether the Moslems would develop a separate and communal consciousness. Most of these questions are now closed. And they have been settled in a way which few people can regard as satisfactory."

These are heavy charges and it may well be doubted whether Mr. Gandhi's admirers in the future will be able to refute them. Nevertheless, if we are to keep our sense of proportion, we must remember that Mr.

Gandhi has been the idol of a great part of the nation, that he has fought a valiant—though probably unnecessary—fight against the might of Britain, and that he has perhaps done more than any other one man to develop Indian national pride and the belief that independence was India's birthright. These are Imponderables which cannot easily be weighed in the scales against the main four baneful influences which we have described above. Let us leave it to posterity to determine whether, on the whole, Mr. Gandhi's influence has been good or bad for India.

CHAPTER XVI

THE CRUX OF THE PROBLEM

THE ascendancy of Mr. Jinnah over the Moslem League is almost as complete and unrivalled as that of Mr. Gandhi over the Congress, but it is based upon entirely different psychological foundations. Mr. Gandhi holds sway as a mystic, a dreamer of dreams, a man whose head is in the clouds and is therefore worshipped by the common people as a god; Mr. Jinnah, on the other hand, is essentially practical, he lives in the world of reality and he maintains his authority by sheer force of intellect and personality. His mind is, above all, analytical, and he would be quite incapable of that vague semi-mystical use of words on which Mr. Gandhi relies so much; for Mr. Jinnah, words are exact things and mean the same to-day as yesterday. The contrast between the two leaders extends, indeed, to every aspect of their lives. Mr. Jinnah is elegant, of distinguished appearance, a man of culture who enjoys good living and good conversation; a man who would make himself felt in any company, in any country in the world, and whose very appearance suggests the man born to rule. Far more important than these external traits, however, are his three great mental characteristics—inflexibility, complete incorruptibility, and an almost uncanny astuteness. Each of these three characteristics calls for brief comment. His inflexibility of purpose may best be illustrated by a conversation between the present writer and a well-known Moslem League leader. In response to a question as to why he

stood by Mr. Jinnah although he disagreed profoundly with his policy in several important respects, the Moslem Leaguer replied: "I stand by Mr. Jinnah because I know he is the one man amongst us who has the strength of character not to compromise with the Congress." This answer throws a flood-light, not only on the nature of Hindu-Moslem relations, but also on the character of Mr. Jinnah himself. He has taken a line and he will not deviate from it; leave compromise to others, he will have none of it.

As for his second great characteristic, he has been rightly described as the "sea green incorruptible" of India—pecuniary incorruptibility might, of course, be taken for granted in a man whose income at the bar was limited only by the amount of time he cared to devote to it, but much more significant is the fact that Mr. Jinnah cannot be corrupted either by flattery or by offers of office. His enemies say that he is arrogant —and so he probably is—but this arrogance may be partly based on the knowledge that he is one of the very few Indian politicians who are, in this widest sense, incorruptible.

As for his third great characteristic, Mr. Jinnah is probably the shrewdest tactician—not even excepting Mr. Gandhi—in Indian political life to-day. Even in small matters, he never loses an advantage; the slightest slip by Government in the Assembly will afford Mr. Jinnah his chance, and he has an unfailing gift of picking on the weak points in his opponent's case, which is said to have been the foundation of his success at the Bar. It was this keen practical sense which made him seize the opportunity provided by Congress truculence in 1937 and 1938 to build anew the Moslem League. The same astute judgment guided the Moslem League in its attitude towards the war. Official co-operation

with Government would have been embarrassing under existing political conditions—and yet Mr. Jinnah knew that the war had to be won. And so, a solution was found. Moslem Leaguers were left free to take part in the war effort in their individual capacities, and many thousands of them gave their services and their lives in the common cause. Far otherwise was the case with the Congress Party, which stood aloof both in theory and in practice, and left other men to fight the battle for the freedom of the world.

These psychological details concerning Mr. Jinnah are necessary because to-day, to a very great extent, Mr. Jinnah *is* the Moslem League.

The fight between the Congress and the Moslem League with regard to the place of their respective communities in the new Constitution is the focal point of Indian politics to-day. There are indeed many other difficult problems ahead of India. The position of the Scheduled Castes, the claims of the Princes, and the provision of adequate defence for a completely self-governing India, suggest themselves at once, but it is perhaps unlikely that any of these problems would prove insoluble if there were a firm agreement between the Congress and the Moslem League on the main question. It is important, therefore, to understand clearly exactly what is at issue between these two important political parties.

There are in India eighty-eight million Moslems and about three times that number of Hindus. If India is to be treated as one entity, and if in accordance with the ordinary British Parliamentary democratic principle, every citizen is to have one vote, eighty-eight million people cannot expect to count for as much as two hundred and fifty-five million people. If most of the people concerned thought of themselves as Indians

rather than as Moslems or Hindus, so that any of them might be found voting at one time for one Party and at another time for another Party, no particular problem would arise; but, in practice, people in India think and vote on communal lines and the Moslems therefore have to face the fact that in an all-India constitution on the British model, they would find themselves in a permanent minority. This is a position which the Moslem will not accept, though it would, of course, be the logical conclusion of applying to India the ordinary principles of British Parliamentary democracy. The Congress, as representatives of the majority community, can take the high moral tone and claim to be actuated by the liberal spirit. The claim leaves the Moslem League unmoved.

In order to understand the position clearly it is necessary to remember that British India consists of a number of Provinces, each with its own Provincial Government, and a Central Government which deals with all-India questions. Until recent times the constitution was, at any rate in theory, a unitary one; the authority of the Provincial Governments was merely delegated from the Central Government, and in the last resort all power lay in the hands of the Viceroy and his Executive Council. That position was changed, however, in the reforms of 1919 and 1935. The Provinces now possess a good deal of power in their own right, and in so far as matters within their own jurisdiction are concerned, are completely independent of the Central Government. The question as to the division of power between the Central Government and the Provincial Government is naturally one of the most important issues of Indian politics to-day. The Moslem attitude towards this question is largely determined by the fact that though they are in a minority in India as a whole, there are

certain important Provinces such as Bengal and the Punjab in which they are in a majority. If there were no Central Government and all power were in the hands of the Provincial Governments, the position of the Moslems in their majority Provinces would probably enable them to bargain with the Governments of other Provinces, and so ensure a fair deal for Moslems in the Provinces where Hindu rule would prevail. It is thus desirable, from the Moslem point of view, to transfer as much power as possible to the Provinces and to leave as little as possible with the Central Government. This has indeed been the cardinal aim of Moslem League leaders for the past thirty years. The Hindus, on the other hand, have always favoured the existence of a strong Central Government; in the absence of such a Government, they say, the Provinces will tend to pursue independent courses and the unity of India will be broken up.

The Moslem difficulties, as we have seen, proceed from the combination of two factors—(*a*) the attempt to preserve a reasonably strong Central Government, and (*b*) the fashioning of that Government more or less on British Parliamentary lines. Until the beginning of the last war, it was taken for granted by Indian politicians that Britain, which had worked so hard to build the unity of India, would never agree to retrace her steps, and so it was taken for granted that in the ultimate Constitution of a self-governing India, there would be a strong Central Government with authority over many important subjects. Under these circumstances, it was obviously wise for the Moslems to attack the second of the two factors mentioned above, and to try to ensure avoidance of the ordinary British Parliamentary model. By 1906 the Moslems had begun to realize the dangers towards which constitutional pro-

gress was linking them, and the Moslem League was formed, largely in order to press their claims for separate treatment in any new constitution. From time to time they opposed the introduction of the Parliamentary principle altogether, but when it became clear that the tide was flowing irresistibly in that direction, they began to concentrate on two main points. Firstly, they must be given weightage—that is, their numerical strength in the Legislatures (at the Centre and in the Provinces where they were in a minority) must be higher than their population figures would warrant. Their second claim was that Moslem representatives must be elected by Moslems alone—this was the demand for "separate electorates." The Hindus, though generally willing to concede that Moslems should be given weightage, contended that the Moslem members must be elected by general constituencies, consisting of Hindus and Moslems alike. The Moslems, however, feared that if the Hindus had a hand in the election of Moslem candidates, the superior wealth and education of the Hindu community would probably enable them to secure the return of unreliable Moslems who would not protect the interests of their community. The principle of separate electorates was accepted by the British in the reforms of 1919, and has been continued in every new constitution since that date, but the question has continued to be the principal bone of contention between Hindus and Moslems. The Congress has, from time to time, accepted the Moslem claim as a matter of expediency, but there is no doubt that it would abolish separate electorates if it had a reasonable chance of doing so, while the more militant Hindi Mahasabha has always refused to admit the justice of the Moslem claim.

Thanks firstly to the acceptance by the Congress, in

the Lucknow Conference of 1916, of the Moslem claim to separate electorates, and secondly to the fact that the allied treatment of Turkey threw the Moslems into temporary alliance with the Congress against Britain at the end of the Great War, the Moslems remained for some time satisfied with their position. They had made good their claim to separate electorates and need not therefore greatly worry. From about 1922 onwards, however, relations between the two communities began to worsen rapidly. The Hindus instituted a great drive towards militant Hinduism, and the Moslems followed suit with attempts to convert Hindus; riots were the natural results and Hindu-Moslem antagonism waxed fierce all over the country. This naturally led the Moslems once more to consider their own future and to dwell on the dangers to them inherent in any unitary government for India or even British India. Something more than "weightage" and separate electorates would be needed to protect them—and so from 1924 the Moslems began to demand that British India should be converted into a Federation, in which each Province would have full and complete provincial autonomy, "the functions of the Central Government being confined to such matters only as are of general and common concern." From that time onwards—until the claim was further hardened into the demand for Pakistan—the Moslem demand was for a weak centre and strong Provinces.

The chief cause of the subsequent hardening of the Moslem claim was their experience in the period during which provincial autonomy was in force before the outbreak of the present war. As has already been explained, the Congress refused to take Moslem League Ministers into coalition with them, they launched a mass attack on the Moslem League throughout the

country, and they succeeded in filling the minds of the Moslems with a sense of insecurity and even helplessness. It is no answer to this charge to say that Moslem Ministries in certain Provinces produced a similar mental reaction amongst the Hindus. However worried the Hindus might be temporarily in certain areas, they knew that as a majority community in the whole of India, on the long-term view they were safe; far different was the case of the Moslems, who felt that drastic action was necessary to rescue them from Hindu domination. The demand for Pakistan, or a separate homeland for the Moslems, was thus the direct result of the policy deliberately adopted by the Congress Party from 1937 onwards. That policy has goaded the Moslems into claiming to be a nation apart, and the real issue between the Congress and the Moslem League to-day is as to whether India is to be regarded as one nation as the Congress claim, or as two nations as the Moslems claim.

The essence of the Pakistan proposal is the establishment of separate Hindu and Moslem States. There would be one great Moslem State in the North-West of India (consisting of the Punjab, the North-West Frontier Province and Sind), and another great Moslem State in North-East India consisting of East Bengal and part of Assam; the rest of India would form the Hindu State of Hindustan. In each of these two areas the population would be very largely Moslem. The two Moslem States would be outside any Indian Federation —they might be completely independent or they might possibly remain as Dominions within the British Commonwealth and in direct contact with His Majesty's Government. Their relations to the rest of India would be, legally speaking, no closer than those of Canada or Australia. A recent statement of Mr. Jinnah

seems to mean that the North-West and North-East Moslem tracts would form one single State, but this is not quite clear.

It is perhaps worth mentioning that there were two elements concerned in propagating the idea of Pakistan in the first place. First, as we have seen, were those—and they were the great majority—who were only concerned with protecting the Moslems in India from Hindu rule; secondly there were a minority who were influenced by a pan-Islamic conception, and whose imagination was obsessed by the idea of a great Islamic State, stretching right from North-West India into the Middle East. There are few signs at present that this idea has any great hold on the Moslem mind in India, though it might well be that a Moslem State in the North-West of India would naturally look to alliances with adjacent Moslem countries; for all present practical purposes, however, the Moslem demand for Pakistan can be dissociated from any pan-Islamic idea and can be regarded merely as a bitter reaction to their experience of militant Hinduism.

It may be mentioned, incidentally, that the name " Pakistan " appears to be made up of the initial letters of the regions which it was hoped would be comprised in the North-West Moslem State, namely, Punjab, Afghanistan (i.e. the North-West Frontier Province), Kashmir and Sind.

The idea of Pakistan, involving as it does the splitting up of India into two, three or more separate countries—and with the added possibility that such a movement, once started, might lead to an even more complicated division—is naturally repellent to the British mind. For many decades past, the British Government and British officials in India have laboured incessantly to build up a united India; the chief pride

of many of the District Officers has been that they kept the two communities together; and the wisest and the most generous of the British rulers of India have always hoped and dreamed that some day they would be able to boast of having found India in a state of fragmentation and left it a united whole. Those who have been actuated by this high motive now feel that the work of generations is about to be undone—they are naturally horrified at the proposed vivisection of India, and since none of us is free from wishful thinking, many of them harp again and again on the practical difficulties of implementing the Pakistan idea. They talk of defence, they talk of finance, they talk of customs and trade barriers—but to all these arguments the good Moslem Leaguer turns a deaf ear. When communal and racial questions are under consideration, the ultimate factor is often not economic or practical, but psychological and emotional. The demand for Pakistan is largely akin to that cry of "Islam in danger" which has never yet failed to rouse the Moslem to action. It may well be that when Mr. Jinnah and other great Moslem leaders first lent their support to this proposal, they regarded it largely as a bargaining counter—a means of making certain that most of the power in the Indian Federation would be given to the Provinces, and that the Centre would remain weak. The tide of popular Moslem emotion, however, flowed far beyond that position. For many Moslems to-day the demand for Pakistan is connected with one of their deepest emotions; it has become a cry from the heart, which will not be gainsaid. As Mr. Guy Wint puts it: "Among Moslem youth—at least among the urban classes—there is developing one of those romantic, turbulent movements which have been among the great driving forces of human history." It is a movement which may well

destroy irreparably the British conception of a united India.

The movement draws much of its strength from the fact that amongst the Moslems of at least some Provinces there lingers the recollection of their former greatness; it may be in some cases subconscious, but it has lasted in songs and ballads and has given to the Moslem people a pride in themselves and a belief in their capacity to rule. For nearly two hundred years they have had to bow before the might of the great British power; they have had to be content to be merely *one* of the peoples ruled. To-day, however, with the British determination to give India full self-government, a new opportunity unfolds itself before them. Once again they can rise to their former greatness. If they can establish their two proposed Moslem States, they may again become one of the great peoples of the world; but if, on the other hand, they abandon their demand for Pakistan, and let themselves be merged into a united India, they can hope for nothing better than to be a minority community. It is no wonder that the Moslems, with this consciousness of former glory in their minds, have now converted the Pakistan demand from a political proposition into an article of faith.

With this psychological background, it would not be worth while analysing in detail the practical arguments for or against Pakistan, and we shall be content to summarize them briefly, knowing that they will count for little.

Apart from the psychological aspect of the matter, the supporters of Pakistan claim that it will have three main practical advantages:

(*a*) *The Position of Minorities*

It is argued that the existence of great Moslem States,

balanced against great Hindu States, will ensure fair treatment for both communities—it is, moreover, contended that the minority problem will cease to be an irritant, for that problem is only serious where two different communities both claim the right to have a considerable say in the business of government. It is true that under the new arrangement there will still be Hindu States containing a fairly large Moslem population, but in those States the character of the Government will be unmistakably Hindu and will have to be accepted as such by the Moslems who happen to live there. Their fair treatment will be guaranteed by the capacity of Moslem States in other parts of India to make diplomatic representations if justice is not done.

(*b*) *Economic*

Generally speaking, the trade and industry of India is to a great extent in the hands of Hindus, and many Moslems to-day see in Government's post-war industrial plans merely another instrument by which the shackles of the rich Hindu can be riveted more firmly upon them. They fear that they will have no chance of participating in the new industrial expansion. The division of the country into units more homogeneous than those which at present exist will remove this fear and give the Moslems their share in future industrial development.

(*c*) *Defence*

It is argued that the problem of defence will be easier when the North-West is held by a Moslem State. Much of the motive force behind attacks from beyond the North-West Frontier upon India has, it is said, been the Islamic religious motive—with that motive gone, defence will be a much easier problem.

The practical disadvantages of Pakistan are almost too obvious to require stating. Perhaps the most seri-

ous of all is the extreme difficulty which the Moslem States will have in balancing their budget. It is at least doubtful whether Calcutta, with its predominantly Hindu population, could be included in Pakistan—and yet without that great city the two Moslem States proposed would contain few of the great industrial concerns of India. Their sources of revenue would be extremely limited, and unless we choose conveniently to ignore the question of defence expenditure, it is difficult to see how these States could carry on the business of government.

In the sphere of defence, too, the difficulties are obvious. Vulnerable frontiers would be created inside India and each of the States would need to maintain a strong army of its own. It is true that there might be some agreement with regard to defence matters—but on the other hand if such an agreement were likely to be effected, it is doubtful whether the need for Pakistan would arise at all.

On the economic side, the disadvantages of setting up fresh tariff boundaries and of having possibly different commercial and industrial policies in the different States are painfully apparent. The best that can be said of these matters is that, in the words of a well-known Moslem leader to whom the same difficulties were presented, "it will be no worse than the Balkans."

That perhaps is the best that can be said—it will be no worse than the Balkans. To-day, however, many of the Moslems of India would rather have something no better than the Balkans than be merged into a predominantly Hindu State, and it may well be that the only hope for the unity of India in the distant future is to accept Pakistan to-day in the belief that common interests will, in course of time, weld the Moslem and Hindu States into a Federation.

CHAPTER XVII

INDIAN STATES

THE problem of India is not confined to British India. There are several hundreds of Indian States, at present more or less self-governing, which may or may not choose to come into line with a self-governing British India. It is not possible in this book to deal in detail with the problem of the Princes, but a brief sketch of their position must be given.

In broad outline it may be said that the relationship of the Princes of India to the Crown is based mainly on treaties. The Crown is responsible for the defence of the States against external aggression and in return exercises a somewhat nebulous kind of overlordship, commonly known as paramountcy. Constitutional lawyers have written volumes—and will doubtless write many more—on this question of paramountcy, but for practical purposes it means a certain general right of supervision and of interfering if things go too badly wrong. Formal interference is perhaps rare, and a State has to go badly off the rails before any outward action is taken about it by the representatives of the Crown, but those representatives are in daily contact with the Rulers, and, particularly in the case of the smaller States, naturally exercise a constant influence. There are two schools of thought on the subject as to whether the influence of the British Government on the States has been for the good or for bad. One school of thought maintains that the protection afforded by the British has enabled reactionary or badly governed States

to survive, instead of being swept away by the healthy wind of revolution; while the other school contends that the steps towards self-government taken by the British in India have been the prime cause of the liberal trends in the administration of many of the major States to-day.

The States have their own separate Courts and administrative systems; the writs of British India do not run in them, nor have British Indian officials any authority therein. The States themselves vary greatly in size, wealth and degree of advancement. There are States such as Mysore and Travancore which in some respects are well ahead of British India, and at the other end of the scale there are small States which are little more than the demesne lands of their Rulers and which can make no pretence at possessing a modern system of administration. Of recent years a number of smaller States have been amalgamated, and it may perhaps be taken for granted that, in the not very distant future, instead of several hundreds of States, there will be a smaller number of major State units.

It will be noticed that until we reach the very top there is no common point in the administration of British India and the Indian States. The only link is the Viceroy, who in one capacity is the head of the Government of British India and in another capacity is the representative of the Crown in dealing with the Princes. The Princes have in the past attached much importance to the fact that their dealings are not with the Government of India as such, but with the representatives of the British Crown. As long as the Viceroy's two capacities were completely combined in one and the same person, no practical difficulty arose; the separation of functions kept up the sense of the Princes that their allegiance was to the Crown alone

and yet did not result in any serious cleavage, on major matters, between the two complementary parts of India —British India and the States.

With the introduction of Provincial Autonomy, however, complications were at once introduced. The Viceroy, it is true, still remains the head of the Government of India, but to a great extent the Provinces are now autonomous, and with regard to many subjects the Viceroy has no power of interference. In respect of these subjects, there thus ceased to be a common link between the States and British India, and to this limited extent the relations between them began to be much the same as those between two independent powers in proximity to one another.

As it happened, however, the subjects which in the recent reforms fell within the provincial sphere were not mainly those connected with the common interests of British India and the States. Much more importance attaches to those matters such as defence, customs duties and the like, powers which are retained by the Central Government. If British India had become completely autonomous, in the same sense as Canada or Australia, the Governor-General would have been no more than a constitutional head, bound by the advice of his Indian Ministers; the mere fact that he also happened to be the Crown representative in relation to the States would thus not have guaranteed co-ordination between British India and the States. It would clearly have been extremely dangerous for British India and the States to have radically different policies with regard to defence and connected affairs. It was, therefore, proposed in the 1935 Government of India Act that a Federation should be formed consisting of all Provinces of British India and of such States as chose to come into it; and further, in order that the

number of Federating States might be sufficient to guarantee cohesion between British India and the States, it was laid down that the new constitution would not come into force and that these new powers would not pass into the hands of a self-governing India until States representing at least fifty per cent of the States' population had acceded to the Federation.

It was recognized, however, that the States might not be willing to consider this question of Federation until they saw how Provincial Autonomy was working in the Provinces. That part of the Government of India Act, 1935, which related to Provincial Autonomy was therefore brought into force in 1937, the Federal part being left until the Princes were ready to come in. It would be idle to pretend that the Princes were enchanted at the prospect. Their representatives had somewhat reluctantly accepted the idea of Federation at the Round Table Conference—to the surprise of many observers—because there seemed no practical alternative. When, however, it came to a question of settling the practical details of accession, endless difficulties began to manifest themselves to the Princes and their advisers. There were, of course, many complicated questions connected with customs and revenue matters to be settled, but above all there was the anxiety on the part of the Princes that their sovereignty should not be whittled away. These matters are too technical to be discussed here; it need only be said that, thanks very largely to the pertinacity of the Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, considerable progress was being made until 1938, when the Congress once again displayed its ability to throw a spanner into the works. Up to this time, the Congress movement had been active mainly in British India, and the Congress leaders had been content to assume that the existence of a self-governing

British India would inevitably bring about political progress even in the most backward States. In 1938, however, this wise policy of patience was abandoned and the Congress launched a widespread campaign of agitation in the States. No action could have been more ill-timed. The Princes, who had already been alarmed by the intransigent character of the Congress proceedings in the various Provinces, realized at once that the ultimate aim of the movement was a Congress Raj. Mr. Gandhi himself was unwise enough to say that "the Congress bids fair in the future, not very distant, to replace the paramount power." The idea of paramountcy of Mr. Gandhi or Mr. Jawaharlal Nehru (of whom Mr. Gandhi said to the Princes "when I am gone Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru will have no patience with you") held no appeal whatsoever for the princely houses of India, and the net effect of this unfortunate movement was to diminish the chances of a successful Federation. Every thinking Congressman to-day must realize that, had Federation been introduced before the war, the breach between the Hindus and the Moslems would never have attained its present dimensions, there would probably have been no demand for Pakistan, and there might by now have been a healthy all-India Government in vigorous being.

The war has given the Princes a breathing space, although had the Cripps offer been accepted in 1942, they would soon have had to consider their position *vis-à-vis* British India. It would be futile to forecast their probable reactions when the issue once more arises. Three things only need be said—firstly, that the Congress attitude during recent years will make them far more suspicious than they were in 1937, secondly, that no solution of the Indian problem which

ignores the Princes and leaves them outside any new Indian Federation can hold out any promise of peace and prosperity for India, and, thirdly, that no settlement of the question can or should be imposed on the Princes against their will.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE BRITISH ATTEMPT

WE have now seen something of the background of the problem which the British have been trying to solve. We have examined the historical origin of the disruptive forces in India to-day; we have seen that the British imposition of a uniform law and administration had produced a kind of unity in India; but we have also seen how the loosening of British control and the approach of complete self-government has aroused the latent apprehensions and antagonisms of the two major communities in India; we have seen too that besides the problem of the Moslems, there is the problem of the Scheduled Castes who view the future with misgivings and who claim protection against the caste Hindus.

Face to face with these insoluble problems, any rational political philosopher might well abandon the attempt to find a solution. Statesmen, however, can only abandon problems at their peril. Let us examine briefly how Britain has tried to cope with them.

Right from the beginning of the nineteenth century the wisest amongst the British Rulers of India recognized that Britain's trusteeship could not be perpetual. In 1818 Lord Hastings, then Governor-General, declared that "a time not very remote will arrive when England will, on sound principles of policy, wish to relinquish the domination which she has gradually and unintentionally assumed over this country and from which she cannot at present recede."

Thirty years later that true lover of India, Henry Lawrence, said:

"We cannot expect to hold India for ever. Let us so conduct ourselves . . . as, when the connexion ceases, it may do so not with convulsions but with mutual esteem and affection, and that England may then have in India a noble ally, enlightened and brought into the scale of nations under her guidance and fostering care."

It has, however, never been the British way to base political developments on theory. The one outstanding practical fact which appeared clear to the nineteenth-century Rulers of India was that British Parliamentary institutions were not suited to that country. This, at any rate, was the view held by all the most enlightened minds of the nineteenth century, and it is the view which Macaulay expressed in one of the most famous passages from one of his Indian speeches:

"This, then, is the state in which we are. We have to frame a good government for a country into which, by universal acknowledgment, we cannot introduce those institutions which all our habits—which all the reasonings of European philosophers—which all the history of our own part of the world would lead us to consider as the one great security for good government. We have to engraft on despotism those blessings which are the natural fruits of liberty. In these circumstances it behoves us to be cautious, even to the verge of timidity. The light of political science and of history is withdrawn—we are walking in darkness—we do not distinctly see whither we are going. It is the wisdom of man, so situated, to feel his way, and not to plant his feet till he is well assured that the ground before him is firm."

As Parliamentary institutions were thus considered

unsuited to Indian conditions, and as the British themselves knew of no other method of political advance, Britain followed a characteristic policy. She abandoned for the time being the abstract question of progress towards self-government, she continued to rule India absolutely, and in the meantime she applied herself to the practical problems of material progress.

The Mutiny gave a shock to the existing system and mild attempts were made to introduce some form of representation in the few following decades; nevertheless the last quarter of the nineteenth century was a period during which the British bureaucracy in India was almost supreme, the only restraint on its power being that occasionally exercised by the British Parliament. The first substantial advance was made in 1909 when Councils with non-official majorities were set up in all the Provinces and only a small official majority was retained at the Centre. Even these reforms, known as the Morley Minto Reforms, were not intended by their authors to be the prelude to the establishment of the Parliamentary system on the British model. Nearly every official or statesman concerned with the administration of Indian affairs still believed that Parliamentary institutions were quite unsuited to the traditions and psychology of the country, and even Morley himself went so far as to say, somewhat illogically: "If it could be said that this Chapter of Reform led directly or necessarily to the establishment of a Parliamentary system in India, I for one would have nothing at all to do with it."

There was much sound reason behind this view. The successful working of Parliamentary institutions depends largely upon the existence of a spirit of compromise, upon a readiness to acquiesce in a decision of which one may disapprove and above all on the absence

of any wide permanent cleavage of interests and views between different sections of the community. If the Labour Party in Britain had remained a purely working-class movement, this is to say, if every man by reason of his birth had been more or less fore-ordained to be either Conservative or Labour, it is extremely doubtful whether the Parliamentary system could have continued to work in Britain. It is equally doubtful whether the existence of the great gulf between the Hindus and Moslems will render that system practicable in the years to come for a self-governing India. Up to the Great War, Britain took the view that the Parliamentary system would definitely not suit India. By the time of the Great War, however, a change had come over the British attitude. The impact of that war itself on the Indian problem was twofold. In the first place, events connected with the war induced in the Allies an exaggerated belief in the virtue of British and American institutions; while in the second place the remarkable contribution made by India to the war effort was rightly held to entitle her voice to be heard. In the meantime, the Indian demand for Parliamentary institutions had grown stronger than ever, and in 1916 Hindus and Moslems combined (however temporarily) at Lucknow to demand a further substantial advance. In August 1917, Mr. Montague, as Secretary of State for India, made in the House of Commons a pronouncement which was to give a new direction to Indian political development. The essence of the pronouncement was contained in the following sentences:

> "The policy of His Majesty's Government, with which the Government of India are in complete accord, is that of the increasing association of Indians in every branch of the administration and the gradual development of self-governing institutions

with a view to the progressive realization of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire. . . . I would add that progress in this policy can only be achieved by successive stages. The British Government and the Government of India, on whom the responsibility lies for the welfare and advancement of the Indian peoples, must be the judges of the time and measure of each advance, and they must be guided by the co-operation received from those upon whom new opportunities of service will thus be conferred and by the extent to which it is found that confidence can be reposed in their sense of responsibility."

The important part of the pronouncement was the declaration, for the first time, that responsible government was the goal of political advance in India. It is true that responsible government was not defined in the pronouncement itself, but it was undoubtedly used in the usual modern British sense as meaning that system of government by which Britain herself is governed. We need not bother much about the details of the 1919 Constitution which was framed as a result of the pronouncement; it need only be said that in the Provinces power with respect to certain subjects was handed over to Indian Ministers, while other subjects were retained in official hands, and that Government at the centre continued to be an official body. It is easy to condemn this (which came to be known as diarchy) and to demonstrate its illogicality. The practical point was, that since Britain had decided that responsible government was to be the goal of British policy in India, something had to be done about giving Indian public men experience of Parliamentary and Cabinet government. Looking back now, it is easy to maintain that a more rapid transition might have been wiser and that in the long run it would

have paid to hand over full power to the Provincial Ministers straight away. That view may be right or wrong, but few would have been found to support it at the time, and in spite of the clamour of Indian politicians, it is extremely doubtful whether any large proportion of Indians themselves would have regarded so sudden a transition as being practicable. Be this as it may, the important fact is that the 1919 Constitution set the course of Indian political development on British Parliamentary lines.

The period that followed was one of turmoil and disorder, to the accompaniment of continual demands from the Congress Party for a further surrender of power. By 1935 British opinion too was more than ready for a further step and a new Constitution was brought into effect. Under this Constitution, practically all power in the Provinces was transferred into the hands of Indian Ministers, who were themselves to be responsible to the Legislature in the normal British way; certain reserve powers were, it is true, retained by the Governors, but clever practical manœuvring by the Congress, before they assumed office in a a number of Provinces in 1937, took away any real likelihood that those powers would be used. For all practical purposes, the Provinces had now become completely self-governing, except in respect of those subjects which were still retained by the Central Government. At the Centre, however, the Viceroy still remains the focal point and the Government is essentially his Government. It is true that a majority of the members of the Viceroy's Executive Council are now Indian non-officials, but they are selected and removed by the Governor-General and they are responsible to him and not to the Legislatures; these bodies can and do reject Government bills and refuse supplies,

but they have no direct control over the Executive Government. Their capacity to refuse supplies is also limited by the fact that the Viceroy can certify and so implement a Budget which has been rejected by the Indian Legislative Assembly—this, in fact, has had to be done quite frequently. Apart from these details, however, the main feature of the present Constitution, as far as the Central Government is concerned, is that the ultimate authority still rests with the British Parliament. The chain of control from Parliament through the Secretary of State down to the Viceroy is still complete.

This is not, indeed, what was intended at the time of the passing of the 1935 Act. The authors of that Constitution contemplated the establishment of an Indian Federation. In that Federation, although a few subjects such as Defence and External Affairs would have been reserved to the Viceroy himself, over the rest of the field Indian Ministers, responsible to the Legislature, would have had complete sway. Even this, however, would not have been acceptable to Indian politicians—they resented their exclusion from the field of Defence and External Affairs and the Congress Party, in particular, objected to the retention by the Viceroy of certain special responsibilities in the exercise of which he would have powers of intervention.

The coming into operation of the Federal portion of the 1935 Act was to be dependent upon the accession to the Federation of fifty per cent of the Indian Princes. That had not been achieved when war broke out and so the Federal portion of the Act was never brought into effect. The position at the beginning of the war was thus that the Provinces were practically self-governing, while the Central Government continued to be in essence an official government subordinate

to the British Parliament. During the war factors very similar to those which had operated during the Great War were once more seen at work. The great contribution made by Indian soldiers in the war, the conspicuous part which they played in a number of the most important campaigns, more than outweighed the obstructionist attitude of the Congress Party and gave greater weight to that desire for full self-government which is shared by all Indian parties. British opinion, too, had taken a step forward. Most ordinary people in Britain by 1942 had come to feel that henceforth India must paddle her own canoe; they were also disturbed at the unsatisfactory state of feeling in India, and many of them thought—perhaps incorrectly—that an immediate announcement of Britain's intention to give India full self-government after the war would stimulate India to an even greater war effort. It is difficult to see that there was much solid basis for this view. Those classes who could be expected to take an active combatant part in the war came forward in large numbers; while on the industrial side India's big business magnates were, rightly in any case, determined not to let the opportunity slip. The cold, sober truth is probably that the abstention of the Congress Party from the war effort did not seriously diminish India's war contribution, though it did, of course, mean that overworked officials had to devote, to the suppression of the 1942 disorders, energy which might have been more profitably employed.

In 1942 Britain took what was probably the most remarkable action ever taken by a ruling power towards the people ruled. Sir Stafford Cripps was sent to India to announce a plan by which, at the earliest possible moment after the conclusion of hostilities, India would be invited to frame her own Constitution and, subject

to certain qualifications, which will be mentioned presently, Britain undertook, on her part, to accept that Constitution and to leave it to India herself to choose whether to stay within or to go without the British Commonwealth of Nations. Britain took the view that this particular change, involving as it would lengthy and detailed discussions by all concerned and demanding as it would a good deal of the energy of the Government, could not be effected during the war. Had the Hindus and Moslems been in complete agreement as to what they wanted, a major constitutional change during the war might have been possible; but British statesmen have to face the fact that no such agreement existed, that the attempt to secure it would be too lengthy a process to undertake in a time of grave emergency, and that the breakdown of such an attempt might well lead to a degree of strife and dislocation which could not be contemplated in time of war. These were undoubtedly sound reasons for not proposing a major political change at this time. Britain, however, was anxious that effective power should pass, even during this transition stage, into the hands of Indian politicians truly representative of the various shades of political thought. An invitation was therefore issued by Sir Stafford, on behalf of His Majesty's Government, to all Indian parties to come into the existing Government and take over all portfolios except that of Defence. Inasmuch as no change in the Constitution itself was at this time proposed, the right of the Viceroy to exercise a veto in certain cases would have remained, but it was made quite clear to all concerned that, in practice, the effective control of the Government of India would pass into the hands of Indian politicians if they accepted this offer.

Apart from these interim war proposals, however, the

really important part of the Cripps proposals related to the framing of the post-war Constitution. For reasons which will be explained presently, the Cripps proposals were rejected, and to anyone judging merely from the official pronouncement and speeches of the various party leaders, it must have seemed that the real breakdown was over the interim war-time provisions. To anyone, however, who, like the author, was in Delhi at the time and in contact with many of the people concerned, it was quite obvious that the real cause of the breakdown was failure to agree over the post-war part of the plan. It would, indeed, be fantastic to suppose that if the Congress and the Moslem League had been agreed over the plans for the introduction of full self-government after the war, they would have rejected the offer merely because they disagreed with certain interim provisions which in any case were of a purely temporary nature and which would disappear as soon as the post-war Constitution came into force.

In essence that part of the Cripps offer which related to the post-war constitutional change was as follows:

1. A Constituent Assembly consisting of delegates elected by the Provincial Legislatures was to be summoned at the earliest possible moment after the war.
2. The States were to be invited to send representatives to that Constituent Assembly if they chose to do so.
3. The Constituent Assembly was to draft a Constitution for India both at the Centre and in the Provinces. No limitations were placed on the form of Constitution, and it was not necessarily tied to the Parliamentary or any other form of Government.
4. Britain then guaranteed to accept the Consti-

tution framed by the Constituent Assembly and to implement it, subject only to the prior execution of a treaty between the Constitution-making body and His Majesty's Government. That treaty was to provide for the protection of the minorities and for certain other minor matters.

It will be noted that the announcement made no attempt to lay down what form the protection of minorities should take. In effect, the British Government said to India: "We are prepared to give India full self-government with no reservations. Nevertheless, as a result of past history, we have some responsibility for the protection of minorities, and before India takes over from us full authority, she must give us a guarantee that she will discharge those same responsibilities in our place."

The offer contained one other important clause. When the Constituent Assembly had framed the Constitution, these Provinces which did not like it were to have the right to secede from it. This meant, in effect, that if the Moslems in certain areas were not satisfied that the new Constitution contained adequate provisions for their protection, they were to have the right to insist that those areas should have separate governments of their own. It was to this part of the Cripps proposals that the Congress and the Hindu Mahasabha objected most strongly. They claimed that it was tantamount to the vivisection of India and that it was only a trick on the part of Britain to reduce to unreality that independence which she professed to be giving. This, of course, was a complete distortion of the offer. What Britain had, in effect, said to the Hindus was this: "We are giving the predominantly Moslem areas the right of secession under certain circumstances. Neither the need nor the desire for that

secession will, however, arise if you, the majority community, will draft the Constitution in such a way as to provide adequate protection for minority rights." The offer was a perfectly simple and straightforward one and was understood as such by every member of the British community in India.

The Hindu mind, however, essentially Machiavellian itself, is always apt to attribute subtlety and over-cleverness to other people, and so the Hindus refused to take the offer at its face value. They at once began to put up a smoke-screen of suspicion. Firstly, it was suggested that under the new offer British India would still be tied to the leading strings of Britain. Sir Stafford Cripps, however, made it abundantly clear that it would be perfectly competent to the new Government of India to sever her ties with Britain completely and go right outside the British Commonwealth if she so wished.

The next suggestion was that Britain would not agree to the new Constitution unless it contained special protection for British business interests. Sir Stafford at once dissipated this suspicion. In this he was assisted by the spokesman of the British community in India, who at the earliest possible opportunity publicly declared their support of the offer and their desire to see India fully self-governing at the earliest possible moment. Nothing, however, could avail to break down the suspicion in the minds of the Congress; and the only reasonable inference is that they could not be fully confident of either ability or their desire to provide proper guarantees for the fair treatment of the minority communities.

Amongst the Moslem leaders in Delhi at the time, there was an evident sense of satisfaction with the proposals, for, after all, their main claim—the right of

certain Moslem areas to secede if they so wished—had, in effect, been conceded. They were not altogether satisfied with the form of the concessions, and, in any case, as Congress were rejecting the offer, it would clearly have been bad tactics on their part to accept it; it was, however, impossible to be in contact with them at this time without feeling that, had the Congress accepted the offer, the Moslem League would have done so too.

The offer, however, was rejected. Many amongst the most thoughtful of the Hindus realized almost at once that they had made a great mistake; others, though less quick to accept their own share of responsibility, nevertheless felt as though a tempting prize had just been snatched from their grasp. A sense of frustration ensued and it was this sense which made it possible for Congress leaders to launch the "Quit India" movement in 1942, a movement which, however much the authors may disclaim any pro-Japanese intentions, might well have facilitated Japanese plans for the invasion of India. That movement and the violence which accompanied it in due course fizzled out. A long period of flatness succeeded, and the consciousness grew in the minds of the Hindu community that a great opportunity had been lost.

Britain, however, had no intention of holding India permanently to her refusal, and it was at once made clear in Parliament that, in principle, the Cripps offer still remained open. In 1945 Lord Wavell, after consultation with the Cabinet in England, called a Conference of Party Leaders in Simla and made a further attempt to achieve a settlement. The attempt proved abortive on account of the intransigence of some of the parties. Early in 1946 the British Cabinet decided to make a further effort and in March 1946 three Cabinet

Ministers, including the Secretary of State for India and Sir Stafford Cripps, went to India and embarked on a long series of interviews with the political leaders with the object of achieving a settlement. At the same time the British Prime Minister made it quite clear that India would please herself as to whether she remained inside the British Commonwealth or went outside into complete independence. Once more the British Government have made it clear that in its view the new Constitution of India must be framed by India herself.

Could any ruling power go further? If Britain had said, "India must stay within the British Commonwealth," or "the Indian Constitution must first and foremost provide guarantees for British business," then, indeed, India might have had just cause for complaint. In practice, however, Britain has done what scarcely any other Ruler in history has done. She has said to the people she rules, "You may govern yourselves as you please and you may continue or discontinue your association with us as you please." Most significant of all, this renunciation is not the result of defeat or surrender to force; it is a free renunciation made with the consenting mind of every political party in Britain to-day.

CHAPTER XIX

THE CHARGES AGAINST THE BRITISH

IN this chapter we shall attempt to state the main charges made by certain Indian politicians against British rule in India, and to consider how far those charges must be accepted, qualified or rejected.

I

The principal charge is that of "exploitation"—a most effective word, which has the advantage of being at the same time vague yet nasty-sounding. When the accusers of the British are asked to particularize, they generally say something like this: "You have drained the country of its financial resources, you have manipulated fiscal policy in British interests, and you have secured a stranglehold on commerce." Let us examine these three separate indictments—the "drain," "manipulation" and the "stranglehold."

A. The "Drain"

As the charge is that vast sums of money are extracted by Britain from India, it is perhaps worth while stating that India pays Britain no tribute, that the Governmental accounts of Britain and India are entirely separate, and that no single penny is sent by India to Britain except in discharge of some contractual obligation. If the Indian Government has large surpluses, no portion of them goes to Britain, and similarly, if serious

deficits occur, India has to meet them with her own resources. If an impenetrable economic and financial barrier were set up between India and Britain to-morrow, there would be no direct loss to the British Government, though that Government would, of course, lose a good deal indirectly as a result of the loss of income to many individuals in Britain who receive remittances from India.

What then is the "drain"?

There are three main ways in which British people make money out of India. They are:

(1) Buying and Selling,
(2) Investments, and
(3) Pay and Pensions of the Services.

(1) *Buying and Selling.* Buying and selling were, of course, the historical reasons that took the British to India. In the early days of the East India Company the Company's monopoly, and the abuse of that monopoly, could reasonably have been regarded as "exploitation." Since 1813, however, there has been no such monopoly. Any Indian who has any saleable commodity is free to sell it to an Englishman, a Dane, an American, another Indian or anybody he pleases. He produces what seems to him likely to pay, and he sells in the best available market; no Government regulation of any kind prevents people of other nations than the British from buying in the Indian market, and no Indian is stopped from exporting his goods to any country in the world (except, of course, in the time of war).

It may be alleged that though there is theoretical freedom, administrative arrangements are such as to make this freedom difficult to exercise. Statistics provide perhaps the best method of examining such an

allegation. Let us consider the following figures of exports and imports.

Percentages of Exports (Value) from India

Year	To U.K.	To other parts of British Commonwealth	To Foreign Countries
1870	54	20	26
1890	33	23	44
1910	26	17	57
1935	31½	14½	54

Percentages of Imports (Value) into India

Year	From U.K.	From other parts of British Commonwealth	From Foreign Countries
1870	85	6	9
1890	70	15	15
1910	61	8	31
1935	39	10	51

The period from 1870 until the end of the century is generally described as the heyday of British bureaucracy in India, and even in the period from 1900-1910 the Government of India was essentially British and completely subordinate to London. During this period, when "exploitation" should have been simple, Britain's share in the trade of India seriously declined, and by 1910—years before Mr. Gandhi or the Congress counted for much—most of India's exports went to countries outside the British Commonwealth. From 1910 to 1939 the process of change continued. Even apart from figures, anybody who had occasion to tour the country in the years between the two wars saw the village bazaars constantly flooded with cheap goods from Japan and Czechoslovakia—and no British official ever tried to influence people to boycott those goods and buy British. For a century or more, India has

produced whatever she wanted to produce, and sold wherever she found it profitable and convenient. If this is "exploitation," so is every transaction in the realm of commerce. India, under the British Crown, has been subject to no restrictions in these matters, either in respect of choice of markets or as regards price.

In the field of production the one serious and indefensible attempt at compulsion or restriction for the sake of British interests, was that made by the indigo planters in the middle of the nineteenth century. They aimed at compelling Indian cultivators to grow indigo against their will, and for a time, backed by a curious judgment of the Chief Justice, they were successful; but the British officials in the Districts were against the indigo planters, and as Mr. G. O. Trevelyan puts it: "The Civilian Magistrates and Judges, however, so arranged matters that the planters have got scant satisfaction from the decision of the Chief Justice."

The conflict between the British officials and the indigo planters in the sixties is interesting and symptomatic. Whatever may have been the attitude of the British business man, the British official has generally been more Indian than the Indian, and it is at least partly due to his influence that the people of the country have been left free to buy and to sell as they pleased. Apart from the fact that Oxford and Cambridge—the nurseries of the Indian Civil Service—would naturally predispose a British Civil Servant to adopt this uncommercial and impartial attitude, there was another historical cause for it. The East India Company, as a monopolist, regarded all private business men as interlopers, to be suppressed as effectively as possible; the British Indian Civil Servant, as successor in interest to the East India Company, inherited this suspicion of British commerce, and so in all disputes

tended to throw his influence on the side of the Indian villager rather than on that of the business man, British or Indian. This prejudice against commerce, irritating though it must often have been to the British commercial magnate, has in the long run worked for good, for it has meant that India has been free to buy or sell or produce as she liked, free from anything which could reasonably be called "exploitation."

(2) *Investments.* Somewhat similar considerations apply to the question of British investments in India. It would be easy to draw funny pictures of British "Nawabs" sitting quietly in England and drawing princely incomes from the starving Indian proletariat. It would be equally easy—and perhaps equally accurate—to caricature fat Indian financiers in the nineteenth century, lazily holding their money-bags tight and never thinking that they might invest their money in clearing the jungle or developing the country. It is important, however, to escape from caricatures, if we can, to sober facts. Foremost amongst those facts was the realization of hard-headed people from Britain in the middle of the last century, that there were great possibilities of development, and therefore of money-making in India, by men who were prepared to take risks.

Let us take the tea industry as an example of the new spirit of enterprise. In 1830 the Province of Assam in the extreme east of India was a vast tract of almost impenetrable, unexplored jungle, broken only by great rivers and the narrow, malaria-stricken swamps along their banks. It might do for tigers and aboriginals, but no intelligent Indian could wish to visit it—still less could he dream that it might be opened up with profit.

Shortly before this time, however, the British Viceroy, aided by British scientists, had discovered that tea—hitherto confined to the Far East for its cultivation—

could easily be grown in Assam. British business men saw in this an enterprise worth pursuing, and in 1830 the first Tea Company was started in Assam; before long others followed. A hundred years afterwards the stories of the lives of pioneers make romantic reading, but the pioneers themselves have little time to think about romance—hard work, danger and ill-health are their more regular preoccupations. The early Assam planter not only had to begin by cutting down forests —as he cut down each tree he had to build another few feet of road into the jungle; and all the time he had to guard himself against the attacks of wild beasts and to put up with recurring bouts of malaria, in what was then the most deadly swamp in India. There was nothing much he could do about malaria, for in those days he did not know about quinine, and nobody even knew that mosquitoes were the carriers of infection. Many good men died before their plantations were even started—but others came out to take their place; many men, too, lost money, but still other men came forward ready to back their judgment and take the risk. Eventually the pioneers were justified. The forests were felled, the wild beasts were killed, and thriving tea estates began to appear in place of dense jungles. Those planters who had persevered and survived, began naturally and rightly, to make money. Indian labourers, too, had shown enterprise and courage, as they always do, and the results of the joint enterprise was profit for both. The person most conspicuous by his absence from this new adventure was the Indian capitalist. Neither Britain nor the Government of India can be blamed for his absence, for no restriction of any kind, legal or administrative, prevented Indian financiers from opening up the tea estates in Assam, or from taking to any of the great industries which British enter-

prise developed in India in the middle of the last century. The plain truth is that at this time the Indian financier was not enterprising. Why indeed should he be, when he could earn high interest in the safe proceeds of money-lending. The result of his abstention from these enterprises was that British business men took the early risks, and in those cases where they succeeded and survived, have since reaped the reward. If this is "exploitation" or a "drain," the world can do with a little more of it.

Put in simple language the attitude of the extremist Indian politician to-day comes to this: "You British took the early risks and did the pioneer work; we are sorry now that we were not sufficiently enterprising and we think that because we are sorry, you should hand over the profits to us." This, it should be said, is a point of view of the politician, and not of the Indian business man. In many spheres of industry—jute and tea spring to the mind at once—Indian and British business men work in the closest co-operation, often amused at the criticisms of the politicians.

(3) *The Services.* The third source of "drain" is said to be the pay and pension of the Services. The complaint is apparently that British officials draw large salaries and pensions and spend most of them out of India. The facts here are beyond dispute and the only questions are:

(i) Should British officers have been employed?

(ii) Have their salaries been too large?

The second question may be disposed of first and briefly. The Indian Civil Service, which is the Service mainly concerned, has throughout most of its existence consisted of picked men from British Universities; men who if they had not gone into the I.C.S. would have had a market value elsewhere. Their salaries are not

large by comparison with those of successful business men in India, and those of them who choose to leave the Service can generally command a larger salary in the world of commerce. It would only have been possible to pay lower salaries if the Government of India had been content to have men of lower attainments; and not even the most ardent Congressman will maintain that it would have been good policy to bring out *second-rate* men from Britain for Indian administration. The only point for discussion, therefore, is as to whether British Civil Servants should have been employed at all; this, however, is begging a much larger question. It is fantastic to think that Britain could have ruled India without a handful of British Civil Servants—and altogether there are less than two thousand British Civil Servants of all grades in India (of whom only five hundred and sixty are in the Indian Civil Service). To call the employment of two thousand British Civil Servants in a country of nearly four hundred million people "jobbery" or a "drain" clearly indicates a complete lack of sense of proportion.

(4) *The Defence Services.* The Indian politicians' claim that the Army is too expensive, has never been one to be taken completely at its face value. More often than not, the meaning behind the statement has been that the Army should be Indianized, or that India itself should control foreign and military policy. It is true that Indian politicians have made great play of the fact that Indian defence expenditure constituted fifty per cent of the Central Budget before the war and the Congress Party has often made this a ground of complaint against Britain. How this expenditure would be reduced by the removal of the protection of the British Navy or the British Air Force, they have never tried to explain—unless, indeed, we take notice of

Mr. Gandhi's fanciful theories of non-violent defence; nor have the politicians ever emphasized the fact that, owing to the comparative lightness of Indian taxation, the peace-time revenue of the Central Government was probably not more than four per cent of the national income. It is no use saying that India is a poor country and cannot afford considerable expenditure on defence. India may be poor, but she happens to be a vast country with a very long frontier, and in such circumstances defence costs a lot of money. The truth appears to be that India, like Britain, suffered very badly before the war from inadequate defence expenditure, and, like Britain, she has been very lucky to escape the consequences of that unpreparedness in the past few years.

The real charge, then, is not that the Army is too expensive, but that it is too British. British troops in 1925 amounted to only fifty-seven thousand. Can this really be called an excessive reliance upon British force, or a "drain" disproportionate to the defence needs of a country of the size of India?

It is true that the Indian Army was largely officered by British officers until a few years ago. The implications of that fact are, however, political rather than financial, and in any case Indianization, which was going ahead before the war, has now proceeded very rapidly.

It does, then, seem reasonably clear that the story of the "drain" is a myth, and it is perhaps worth considering if any of the four items will be reduced when India governs herself completely. Neither buying and selling nor investments will necessarily be affected by the transfer of political power unless India embarks on a dangerous and unprofitable policy of autarky. Expenditure on the Civil Services will probably be cut down, but, on the other hand, if India is to take on the

business of air and naval defence, her defence expenditure will undoubtedly increase, and as she will, at least for some years, have to buy warships and bombers abroad, the "drain" will still continue and probably increase. The new Indian Government will then perhaps realize that the "drain" merely means paying for services rendered.

B. Manipulation of Fiscal Policy

Here the charge is that the Government of India, under the control of the British Government, has so manipulated India's fiscal policy as to help British and damage Indian interests. To put it more simply, for many years a policy of free trade was forced on India, whereas, according to many Indian politicians to-day, protection would have given Indian industries a better chance to develop. To form an impartial opinion on this question is almost as difficult as to decide whether "free trade" or "tariff reform" was the right policy for Britain at the beginning of the present century—in each case conflicting interests had to be balanced. In India, protection might have helped the development of industry, but would certainly have made life more difficult for the agriculturists who form the great majority of the population. Perhaps the simplest answer to the question is that a policy of limited protection might have been good in the long run, though its immediate effects would have been adverse. This, however, is debatable ground and the real point is that free trade was not a special policy devised by the British for their benefit in India. It was, rightly or wrongly, part of the general British policy all over the world. To many British statesmen of that epoch, free trade was a talisman which was to bring to the world universal peace and prosperity. It is easy to laugh at

that view now, but it was deadly serious then, and though it may well be the case that Britain's own economic interests predisposed her to such a view, it is impossible to read the political records of that time without realizing that free trade as the basis of a new world era was an article of faith with those who most influenced British political thought. It would have been unthinkable that a British Government, holding this view, should have neglected to apply it to India. Sinister motives came to be imputed to Britain in this matter, because two powerful sets of vested interests—one British and one Indian—were concerned. Up to the middle of the nineteenth century, the cotton cloth consumed in India was made almost entirely by Indian weavers. By 1860, however, a number of cotton mills were in operation and imports from Lancashire were already developing. At this time, and for many years before, a five per cent duty was levied on all cotton goods imported into India; the duty was not meant to be protective, for at the time of its imposition there was nothing against which protection was needed. It was purely and simply a revenue duty, and in any case its incidence was too low to exercise a protective effect. Lancashire manufacturers, however, unjustly demanded its repeal and successfully forced that view upon the British Government. The Viceroy's Executive Council unanimously opposed the repeal, but, under the instructions of the British Government, the Viceroy overrode his Council and the duty was repealed. There can be no doubt that the action of the British Government in this matter was unjust and indefensible. It had, however, no practical effect on the development of the Indian cotton mills, the number of which increased from twenty in 1872 to one hundred and forty-four in 1894. The forced repeal did, neverthe-

less, implant bitter feelings in the Indian mill-owners, and perhaps because the mill-owners count for much in the Congress Party to-day, it has helped to build up the legend that Indian fiscal policy has been manipulated for the sake of British interests.

It is interesting to notice that if a similar question arose to-day, the British Government would have no power of interference. The matter is not one in which the Viceroy could override his Council, and in any case there is now an established convention that if the Government of India (that is, the Viceroy's Council) and the Indian Legislature are in agreement on a matter of fiscal policy, the British Government cannot interfere. Britain has voluntarily dispossessed itself of any power which it may once have had to manipulate.

Had the " manipulation " charge been well-founded, India would not, during the last seventy years, have progressively increased her trade with foreign countries at the expense of Britain and the Commonwealth, as shown by the figures quoted in an earlier paragraph.

C. The Stranglehold

The charge is that British business has obtained a " stranglehold " over commerce and industry in India, and that new Indian business cannot spring up. A charge of this kind might mean either or both of two things: (*a*) that British business was so widespread that there was no room for Indian business, or (*b*) that British firms adopted unfair methods to prevent the growth of Indian competition.

As regards the first of these interpretations, the position must vary from time to time with the world demand for the commodities concerned. When, in any particular line of business, world demand contracts, naturally there is not much chance for a newcomer of

any race or country; but it would be fantastic to suggest that in times of boom or even in normal demand, business has so far expanded in India as to leave no room for Indian development. Great developments of Indian business are in fact taking place from year to year—the well-known Parsi firm of Tatas have built up in India, within this century, one of the greatest steel concerns in the world—and indeed in almost every sphere in which the people of India have shown enterprise, they have found that there is ample room for them. The wealthiest business men of India to-day are not British, but Indian or Parsi, and it needs only one visit to the great city of Bombay to dispel the idea that there is no room for Indian business. Even in Calcutta, where the social gulf between the British and the Indians is dangerously wide, Marwari community has huge commercial interests, many of them twentieth century in origin.

There only remains then the charge of unfairness. Like all general charges, it is hard to rebut—we can best reply to it by a counter-challenge. Let the accusers take any one of the great industries of India to-day—tea, jute, engineering, cotton, mining—and search for any evidence of attempts made by the British elements in these industries to prevent the growth of Indian business. They will look in vain. Every well-run business concern, British or Indian, is, of course, constantly on the look-out to prevent its own business being taken by other competitors; but in none of the industries mentioned above is there the slightest sign of any attempt on the part of British firms to exclude or undercut their Indian competitors. Perhaps the one doubtful case is that of shipping. This question is too complicated for examination here, but some observers have alleged that British Shipping Companies in India were

following an unduly exclusive policy. The writer is not in a position to pronounce judgment on this charge, but, if it is true, it is the solitary exception to the general rule. The "stranglehold" is a figment of Indian political imagination.

II. Failure to Develop India

The next main charge against the British is that, in nearly two hundred years of rule, they have failed to develop India's economic resources, either in the field of agriculture or in the sphere of industries and commerce. Like so many of the criticisms of British policy in India, it is partly based on an attempt to apply very modern conceptions to an early period, and partly on a convenient forgetfulness of certain important facts.

When Britain assumed power in India, her first tasks were those concerned with the settlement of frontiers, the establishment of law and order and the consolidation of the revenue system of the country; next came the attempt to study and understand Indian languages, law and ideas; followed shortly by the development of communications and the establishment of the conditions which would make material prosperity possible. These tasks, which were clearly formidable, occupied British administrators until the middle of the century —or even later if we allow for the undoubted setback to progress caused by the Mutiny and the bitterness which it engendered.

Let us now skip forward to 1919. In that year, the not inconsiderable powers handed over to Provincial Ministries included control of many of the nation's building departments—for example, agriculture. The phase in which Britain alone determined Indian policy was at an end. The period during which politicians

may contend that Britain should have developed India more rapidly is thus limited to the forty or fifty years before the Great War. Before that period energies were occupied in more elemental matters; after it the British power in India had passed its zenith.

At this stage it is worth briefly analysing the statement that "Britain should have done more." In this context Britain cannot mean the British business men; it can scarcely be contended that a captain of industry, of whatever race or country, should deliberately encourage and train new competitors in the pious hope that they may oust him from business. The statement that Britain should have done more can, therefore, only mean that the British Indian Government should have done more. Let us remember, however, that we are not writing of an age which has seen the great Soviet experiment or which has grown accustomed to the idea of State interference with commercial enterprise. We are writing of the nineteenth century, the period when almost all men throughout the world agreed that governments must mind their own business. The function of government, as seen by the two or three generations before the Great War, was to maintain law and order and to preserve the freedom of the individual to do what he liked with his own. Neither in Britain nor in America nor in any European country in this epoch did Government make itself responsible for "development." Private enterprise and competition were the dynamic impulses behind the great economic advancement of those countries in the latter half of the nineteenth century, and to argue that Government as such should have been the mainspring of Indian economic advancement, is to suggest that the Government of India should have entertained conceptions fifty years ahead of the times and should indeed

have accepted obligations which have not been wholly accepted by Government in Britain even to this day.

What a nineteenth-century Government could be expected to do in the way of development or providing facilities for development *was* done. The application of modern science to Indian agriculture as a result of Governmental activity, produced a marked increase in the yield per acre; a great co-operative movement was started; much attention was given to the improvement of cattle and the organization of dairy farming; and above all, ports and railways, on which in the last resort the economic value of Indian produce must depend, were developed apace. In the sphere of industry and commerce, the example of British investors gradually taught a somewhat reluctant India to believe in the joint stock system. Modern Western industrial methods were introduced by British technicians and then taken over by Indian capitalists; and during the last fifty years before the Great War, India began to prepare herself for the place of eighth industrial nation in the world, which she proudly holds to-day. Her development in this direction would have been more rapid but for the curious lack of enterprise of Indian financiers in the nineteenth century, the marked disinclination of most of the educated classes to take to technical occupations, and the unfortunate habit of excessive dependence on Government for everything. Even to-day, India has not wholly recovered from the idea that when anything has to be done it is "Government's job." An increasing willingness to depend on individual initiative and to take risks are still required, and it was the lack of these qualities in the last century that prevented India from developing more rapidly.

It may reasonably be concluded from these facts, that in the fifty-year period with which we are concerned,

as much was done by the British Government to develop India as was compatible with the nineteenth-century conception of the functions of Government.

It is perhaps unfortunate that the transitional stage in Indian constitutional affairs began just when men all over the world had begun to agree on a new and wider outlook on the scope and duty of Government. By 1919, many men in many countries had begun to expect Government to take the lead in—or at least to indicate the direction of—new industrial developments. In India, unfortunately, from 1919 to the present day, Government has been neither one thing nor the other. The days of efficient British bureaucracy are past; those of complete self-government have not yet come. In this transition stage, Indian Governments have, perhaps naturally, proved uninspired, lacking in initiative and indecisive. As a result, India missed the full tide of industrial development after the last war and has only partially made up leeway during the present war.

A fair judgment on this charge would perhaps be somewhat as follows. Up to the Great War, the Government of India perhaps did as much as any other Government of the time would have done to develop India; its authority and mechanical efficiency to some extent atoned for its lack of imagination. In between the two wars, on the other hand, it is probable that if an efficient national Government, backed by popular enthusiasm, had been possible, such a Government might have taken India forward faster and more unhesitatingly on the road to prosperity.

III. Divide and Rule

The third main charge, that British policy has been to divide and rule, has already been adequately dis-

cussed in previous chapters. Here we need only record unhesitatingly that the charge is unfounded. As Mr. Mohamed Ali, one of the two leaders of the Caliphate movement in India, said to the British at the Round Table Conference of 1930-31: "It is the old maxim of Divide and Rule. But there is a division of labour here. *We* divide and *you* rule."

IV. Education

There is one charge which is not often stressed by Indian politicians, but which can perhaps be fairly levelled against the British in India—it relates to the unsatisfactory nature of the educational system. It is perhaps not unfair to say that education is one of Britain's failures in India; literacy is the exception rather than the rule, educational standards of high schools and colleges are low and no government in British India—Central or Provincial, British or Indian—has yet taken education sufficiently seriously. The fact is partly explained by financial difficulties and partly by an excessive caution on the part of the early British rulers of India with regard to anything which might seem to savour of interference with Indian thought and sentiment. Be this as it may, education must be accepted as one of the weak spots of British rule in India, though it is interesting to note that in the twenty-six years which have passed since education was transferred completely into the hands of Indian Ministers, the advance has not been remarkable.

CHAPTER XX

THE BRITISH ACHIEVEMENT

WE are now in a position to begin answering the question posed at the beginning of this book: Has Britain given India a square deal? It is not necessary for this purpose to consider the general question as to whether one people can ever be entitled to rule over another people or not; we need only remember that most of our generation would answer this question in the negative, that most of our ancestors—whether British, Indian or American—would have answered it in the affirmative, and that too dogmatic an insistence on a general negative answer would involve condemnation of the means by which the Greeks, the Romans, the Egyptians, the Emperor Asoka, King Harsha and the Emperor Akbar extended their civilizing influence. Nor need we estimate the psychological ill-effects of foreign rule, or the extent to which such rule enervates those subject to it. That such an effect must be produced, is a fact which most of us to-day would take for granted. We propose only to answer the comparatively simple question as to whether, on the whole, Britain has done good rather than harm during her rule of India. An exhaustive examination of this question would require volumes; all we can do here is to draw up a short statement of British achievements in India. This, of course, is going to be an embarrassing business, for whenever a British writer refers to the good done by Britain in India, he is bound to be accused of complacency; nevertheless

only a fool, doing his own accounts, would work out a balance sheet and omit everything on the credit side.

Let us take first some of those items to which Mr. Gokhale—possibly the greatest of the Congress leaders before the Great War—referred when he said: "The blessings of peace, the establishment of law and order, the introduction of Western education and the freedom of speech and appreciation of liberal institutions that have followed in its wake—all these are things which stand to the credit of your rule."

Item 1: Peace

It is not necessary to make this entry in large type or to call particular attention to it. It need only be said that a country which for six hundred years before the advent of the British had experienced continual bloodshed and invasion, has now for a long period been free from those horrors—a freedom so complete that Indian politicians have come to take it for granted.

Item 2: Law and Order

For some time before the British assumed power in India, the Indian political structure had broken down, administration had become feeble, and law and order could scarcely be said to exist. Organized robbery was rife throughout the country, and in the words of a well-known writer: "The British inherited the legacy of lawlessness and distress . . . judicial functions were exercised by anybody strong enough to compel others to submit to his jurisdiction." An interesting sidelight on the state of justice at this time is given by an Indian eye-witness quoted in Hunter's *Statistical Account of Bengal*. Speaking of the Mahratta Governor of Orissa, he says:

> "A poor man would as soon have thought of drinking the ocean dry as of going to Raghuji to

settle his disputes. I know of one case in which a man murdered another and the relations of the murdered man took the murderer and brought him before Raghuji to get him punished. Raghuji replied, 'Why trouble me? If the man has murdered one of you, you can take his life yourselves, can't you, without troubling me?'" "Thieves and dacoits went everywhere," continued the narrator, "and Raghuji's camp followers lived by plunder. They had no pay, but bad men used to struggle to become a camp follower of Raghuji. To be one of his regular sepoys was to be a king."

It is not for a moment contended that anarchy and misrule had always prevailed in India. There have indeed been periods when justice has attained a high level, and when there was ample security for life and property; but those periods were long before the advent of the British, and the only significant comparison is that between the anarchy and lawlessness which characterized India in the sixteenth century and the general prevalence of law and order to-day. British justice has in some senses never been popular in India; its forms of procedure are perhaps unsuited to the country, it has sometimes imposed on the people ideas alien to their own, and its main instrument (the Indian Sub-Inspector of Police) has generally been regarded as an oppressor. It is, nevertheless, indisputable that security of life and property exists in British India to a degree which is perhaps rare outside the British Commonwealth.

Item 3: Nationality

Perhaps the most important effect of British rule in India has been the creation of the idea of nationality and of the conception of India as a whole. We have

seen in earlier chapters how this new idea was first fostered by the influence of a uniform system of law and administration, and then nourished on those great classics of English liberal literature to which educated Indians in the latter half of the nineteenth century were so deeply attached. It is true that there has been a setback in recent years and that the communal issue now threatens to split India into two nations. This, however, is a change which has only taken place since Britain began to hand over the reins of authority. It cannot alter the fact that Britain found India a congeries of warring races and peoples, with no bond of unity, no feeling of common interest or loyalty, and certainly no conception of an India; and that by the time Britain began to hand over power in 1919, the idea of India was one for which many hundreds of thousands of people would have been prepared to die, and the sense of Indian nationality had become the dominant factor in Indian politics.

Item 4: Political Development

Linked up with this creation of a sense of nationality is the development in India of Western political ideas. The idea of equality before the law, the acceptance at least in theory of democratic principles, the adoption of representative institutions and the belief in the right of a country to govern itself—these are all alien plants which did not flourish in India before the time of the British, and which have required the utmost care and attention to prevent them from withering away in an uncongenial soil. It is, of course, open to the political philosopher to doubt whether democratic and representative institutions are necessarily better than autocracy or oligarchy, but the people of Britain, of U.S.A. and of India, who at least profess to believe in the

superior virtue of democratic institutions, can hardly refuse credit to Britain for having introduced those institutions, and the ideas underlying them, in a country which was not at all favourable for their reception in the first place.

Item 5: The Impact of Science

Nor is it only in the political sphere that the British have infused Western ideas into India. In the early stage of Aryan civilization, the ancestors of the modern Hindus made great contributions to knowledge in all spheres; thereafter ensued a period of stagnation lasting over many centuries, in which nearly all the intellectual energy of India seems to have been spent in the somewhat unprofitable task of commenting on ancient texts, unmoved by the urge to strike out in fresh directions. How far such a static condition of knowledge is an inevitable result of excessive priestly domination is a question about which individual opinions will differ; the undisputed fact is that when the British went to India, that country was almost completely cut off from the current of modern scientific knowledge. Neither the great discoveries of the seventeenth-century mathematicians, nor the remarkable advances made by the physicists and the chemists had seriously begun to influence Indian thought. India, which had once held such a commanding position in the world intellect, had fallen far behind. To-day the position is far different. Once more India has been caught up into the current of modern thought, the application of the scientific method to the problems of life is everywhere taken for granted, and there is perhaps no field of scientific research to which she has not richly contributed. Once again the country is intellectually alive. It is not contended that this change in India is due entirely to

the British or has been brought about mainly by any conscious planning on their part. It is simply that Britain has provided the channel through which the stimulating influence of modern Western thought has galvanized India into this new intellectual life. Everywhere in India to-day a new spirit is pulsating and animating the minds of thinking men; it is the spirit not of the East but of the West, a spirit based not on the age-long Indian acceptance of things as they are, but on the conception—new to India—of man as the master of his fate. That Britain has engendered this new spirit is surely an item on the credit side of her balance sheet.

Item 6: Irrigation

So far we have dealt with intangibles—we must now come to more concrete items, and first amongst them must be irrigation. Irrigation canals are not indeed a new feature of India; there were many of them in the early Moghul days, but by the time the British took on the business of government, the canals, like so many other Moghul institutions, had become sadly neglected. In the early days of the Company, ancient canals were reconstructed and fresh canals excavated.

In the next phase, the Government officials responsible for public works began to think more in terms of railways than of canals, but later on the old zeal for canals returned and the period of great construction began. It has been said that by the end of the nineteenth century "India possessed far and away the greatest system of irrigation in the world." Since then, however, much more has been done, and at the present day thirty-three millions of acres of land in India are irrigated by State irrigation works. Sir T. Vijayaraghavachariar, the distinguished author of an Oxford

pamphlet on Indian Affairs, after telling us that "the agricultural prosperity of the Punjab is really a creation of British rule," states that the annual value of the crops raised by these irrigation canals is eleven hundred crores of rupees. In British money this amounts to over eight hundred million pounds—somewhere about a third of the total national income of India. If this were the only achievement of the ruling power, to have increased national income by thirty-three and a third per cent as a result of one form of State activity alone is no mean achievement.

Item 7: Communications

Up till about the middle of the last century, communications in India were primitive and the country was in this respect perhaps a century behind Britain. As one writer puts it:

> "Down to 1858 Indian communications were but little removed from the static conditions in which they had lain from time immemorial. Travel was possible on foot, on horse-back, borne on men's shoulders, in dooly or palanquin, carried down-stream by the force of the current on a river-boat, painfully forced up-stream either by the wind or towed by men upon the bank. Much of the country was still jungle. None but military roads were metalled, and rivers were crossed much more often by ford or ferry than by bridge. It is hard for the present generation to realize how slow and inactive life was kept by such a system. Twenty miles was a great distance. Men lived and died in their villages, knowing nothing, save by vague and inaccurate hear-say, of what was going forward even in the chief town of the province."

In the middle of the century, however, Dalhousie

brought his boundless energy and organizing genius to bear on this problem, and a great epoch of development of railways and telegraphs began. Like all pioneers, he had to face much opposition, and we are told by a modern historian that he "insisted that such benefactors as outstanding public engineers, though neither in red coats nor among the 'heaven-born' civilians, should be knighted." The new impulse given by Dalhousie did not end with his passing. A new Governmental tradition had been established, and henceforth the men of the Public Works Department began to contribute greatly to the material prosperity of India. It was, indeed, thanks mainly to the efforts of these men that effective measures against famine began to be possible, and it is not without significance that the one terrible famine of modern times—that of 1943—coincided with a period when war conditions had produced hopeless dislocation of transport. Like Imperial Rome, the British in India have proved that the development of communications is the foundation of good government and the harbinger of prosperity.

Item 8: Public Health

Public health is still so far from satisfactory in India that it goes against the grain to write of the British achievements in this sphere, and yet to ignore them would be entirely unrealistic. Britain has brought to India not merely Western medical science, but also the belief that for every illness there is a cure if we could only find it—a belief which is perhaps the foundation of all public health measures. For our purposes it will be sufficient to deal very briefly with three aspects of public health, namely, those relating to cholera, smallpox and malaria.

Cholera is a preventable disease and in a perfectly

run community would be non-existent. Its incidence is therefore not a bad index of the efficiency or otherwise of the Public Health services. A study of the quinquennial figures of cholera mortality shows that the campaign against the disease has been progressively more effective. Sixty years ago there were over four hundred thousand deaths per year from this disease—for the twenty-five years from 1897 onwards the annual mortality was between three hundred thousand and four hundred thousand; while in the quinquennia since 1921, only once has the annual average exceeded two hundred thousand. Every District Officer knows how he has had to cajole and even bully people into taking the simplest precautions against this dread disease—and the improvement may therefore be claimed as a triumph for the administration.

In the case of smallpox the story is even more striking—there has been an almost steady diminution of annual deaths from one hundred and sixty-two thousand about seventy years ago, to forty thousand just before the war. Here, too, this result has been achieved by steady administrative pressure.

Equally remarkable results have been achieved in respect of malaria, which is still nevertheless the greatest scourge in India. The tea estates of Assam and Dooars —formerly the most malarial parts of India—have provided the battle-ground for the most spectacular modern fight against malaria, and it was publicly stated a few years ago by that great expert, Sir Malcolm Watson, that the anti-malaria work done on tea estates of Assam compared favourably with that anywhere in the world. This work was planned very largely by British planters and British medical officers and may fairly be claimed as a great contribution by the British to India.

Item 9: Modernization

The last important item on the credit side of the British balance sheet, like the first few items, is to some extent imponderable. Britain, in less than two hundred years, has converted India from a medieval to a modern State. The world to-day thinks of India as a land of the bullock-cart and the spinning-wheel, but it is also a land of great mills, steel works and factories. During the war it has become a mighty arsenal, and its industrial output has contributed not a little to the victory of the United Nations. Official statisticians classify India as the eighth great industrial country in the world, and it is no exaggeration to say that intellectually and industrially, India is now more or less ready to take her place in the modern world. Whether she is politically ready or not remains to be seen. The main items to the credit of the British in India have been enumerated above. They are heavy and beyond dispute. Britain has clearly been a giver as well as a taker.

CHAPTER XXI

EPILOGUE

IN the last two chapters we have tried to state fairly the main debit and credit items in the account of the British transactions in India; and in the earlier chapters an attempt has been made to give the background against which the accuracy of those entries can be judged. We must inevitably have exaggerated some items and understated others; but we believe firmly that any impartial accountant studying these transactions will have no difficulty in deciding on which side the balance lies, and in answering those four questions which were posed in the second chapter of this book as criteria for deciding whether Britain has given India a square deal or not. We shall not answer them ourselves, for to do so would be an usurpation of the functions of the reader.

It is, however, impossible to end this book without a statement of the author's own conclusions on the work of the British in India. According to his reading of history there have been two great empires which can reasonably be described as liberal, in the sense that they have combined with reasonable regard for their own interests, care for the welfare of the people over whom they ruled. The Roman and the British Empires alike were characterized by a genius for organization, a spirit of tolerance and an absence of the desire to interfere and dictate. Of both it could reasonably be claimed that, in spite of occasional lapses and injustices, on the long-term view they have exercised a beneficent influ-

ence. After a bad twenty years' start Britain began to acknowledge her responsibilities in India in the last quarter of the eighteenth century and set herself to lay the foundations of peace and orderly development, and for more than a century she discharged, not unfaithfully, the functions of a trustee. After the Great War, Britain began to recognize that the conception of trusteeship for India was becoming out of date and must be succeeded by the idea of partnership. She began to take steps to prepare India for that new role, and in 1942, through the medium of Sir Stafford Cripps, offered India not merely partnership, but the right to take away her share in the business altogether if she so wished. In the course of their long association Britain has done well by India.

This does not mean that complete self-government should be any longer delayed—it is the firm belief of the author that India has now reached a stage at which nothing but full self-government can make further progress possible. A foreign nation can carry the people whom it rules to a certain stage of development; it can establish law and order, build railway lines, fight disease and lay the foundations of economic development. Thereafter comes a stage when further advancement depends on the dynamic impulse which only the people of the country themselves can supply. That stage in Indian history has now been reached and it is right, therefore, that Britain should seek to withdraw. It is for India now to take up the torch of progress and prove her claim to a great place in the councils of the nations. Whether she will march side by side with the British Commonwealth or strike out a lone trail for herself is for India to decide; but those who, like the author, have shared, however humbly, in the labours of Indian administration and have sought to do their

best for the country in which they worked, cannot but hope that the long association of the two countries will not be severed, and that Britain and India will continue to work together, on the basis of voluntary association, to their mutual benefit.

INDIA, 1945-46.

To the Reader

If you are a subscriber to a circulating library you may like to be advised of our new books as & when published. A card to the Editor giving your name and address will ensure that you receive these particulars regularly

ROBERT HALE LIMITED
18 Bedford Square London w.c.1

About the Author . . .

MR P. J. Griffiths was born in 1899, graduated at Cambridge, and went to India in 1922, as a member of the I.C.S. He worked in the service for 15 years, the majority of his time being spent in Bengal. He is, perhaps, best known for having been a most successful magistrate in the Mindanapore district during the terrorist campaign—a post in which three of his predecessors had been assassinated. Ever since his retirement from the I.C.S. in 1937 he has been a member of the Indian Legislative Assembly representing the European community and is now Leader of the European Group in that Assembly.

For some years he has held, and still holds, the post of Political Adviser to the Indian Tea Association, and during the war has also acted as Honorary Adviser to the Government of India. More recently he has held a special appointment under Mr Casey, Governor of Bengal, to organise publicity in connection with food campaigns in that province. With such varied experience of different aspects of life in India, Mr Griffiths is unusually qualified to understand and to write about India and its problems.

Mr Griffiths paid a short visit to this country in 1944 and was so impressed by the number and variety of questions put to him during his tour of the country about India and British intentions and responsibilities that he wrote a short pamphlet, "Are We Humbugs," with the purpose of answering some of the questions. He is also author of several other pamphlets, including one written in 1944 about the Bengal famine, called "The Indian Food Scarcity—Its Causes and Lessons."

ROBERT HALE LIMITED
18 Bedford Square, W.C.1