

SURVIVAL OF HINDU CULTURE

SOME CHINKS IN THE SOCIAL ARMOUR

By KAILAS NATH KATJU

OUR ancient culture, ancient traditions and way of life make a strong appeal to us these days. It is right that they should do so. I have, however, often wondered why they did not enable us in the past centuries to safeguard our freedom and protect ourselves from external aggression. A culture and way of life which tolerates the continuance of an alien rule for hundreds of years must be definitely deficient in important elements essential for the maintenance of a people's political integrity and national consciousness.

That this ancient culture—call it Hindu if you will—possesses admirable qualities is clear from the very fact that it has assisted the people to preserve their individuality and prevented their total social extinction. It is a trite observation that while many old communities, famous in ancient history, have perished and their glories lie embedded in old ruins, Hindu society has in spite of political subjection continued to hold its own in face of heavy odds. Loss of political liberty—if it continues for over a long term of years—leads on to a total degeneration of the subject people. That catastrophe we have escaped in India. The old social structure, despite many vicissitudes caused by foreign domination, has withstood four-square all the winds that have blown against it. It must have some peculiarly cohesive qualities inherent in its very core, otherwise it would have under the pressure of many external impacts totally disintegrated.

ABSORPTION OF CULTURES
The caste system is said to be the pivot of this social organisation. If that be so, then that system must have fundamentally good resisting powers. It is true that during the last millennium the Hindu community has lost a large number of people by conversion, forcible or otherwise, yet the masses have stood by their faith and their beliefs, and in spite of persecution have survived all their ordeals, and today they present to the world a community of over three hundred million people proud of their ancient heritage, their philosophy of life and their understanding of the inner meaning of the universe. The Aryans in the plenitude of their political power showed remarkable gifts of absorption of cultures and civilizations differing from their own. They adopted alien gods into their own pantheon, and their own philosophy and outlook on life were materially affected by those with whom they came in contact. The very cult of "Bhakti" which is now so distinctive and so predominant in our religious life is of doubtful Aryan origin. But somehow when there were torrents of aggression from abroad in the middle ages, Hindu society bowing to the will of the foreign aggressor seemed to have withdrawn itself like a tortoise in its own shell and would not allow any great infiltration into its vital organs. Those who preferred other beliefs and other modes of thought went out of this body, often on good terms, but leaving no regrets behind. It is just like the mighty Indian rivers, the Ganga, the Brahmaputra and the Mahanadi, from which, when they enter into the delta, bifurcate numerous small channels, but the main stream flows on steadily towards the sea undiminished of these slight partings.

Still the question remains as to what were the defects which did not prevent the people of India from losing their political freedom and independence. Now that we are opening a new era in our national story, this question assumes

great significance so that while preserving all that is glorious and intrinsically precious in our social organisation, we may discover its defects and remodel it to avoid the possibility of another catastrophe in future.

SPIRITUAL PRE-OCCUPATION
Many comments have been made upon this topic. It has been justly said that the cult of "Bhakti", of religious devotion to a personal god has made the Hindus, concurrently with their belief in the doctrine of Karma and their passionate longing for an absorption into the ultimate reality, indifferent towards things mundane. It is a matter of supreme indifference—so it is said—to a devout Hindu whether he is ruled by his own kith and kin or by aliens because he believes that the entire world is an illusion, and he should be in constant search of his god through religious meditation or ritual devotion, and what he desires is that he may be left free to worship as he chooses, and pursue his religious life in his own way. "Give unto Caesar what is due unto Caesar" may well apply to a devout Hindu.

Then again, the old social structure while it was peculiarly cohesive left the duty of its protection and preservation not to the people in general, but only to a section of them. The Brahmin was supposed to be wedded to honourable poverty and his main task was the preservation and dissemination of knowledge. The king is honoured as his own country, so the wise saying goes, the learned man is honoured everywhere. And then came the wealth-producing class. They produced it and amassed it and paid their taxes and the doctrine of Raj Bhakti pronounced in the books under a different context altogether, was taken advantage of by this class to serve without question their political masters, whoever they may be for the time being. The working class had neither any political nor national consciousness and was taught, and very likely ultimately came to feel, that to serve others was for them the ordained duty. To the ruling class, the Kshatriyas, was assigned the duty of defence, but even in their case the feudal system exposed the whole structure to terrible collapse in the event of timidity, cowardice or deliberate treachery and self-seeking of the ruling families. If the Raja surrendered, did the whole of his people without any struggle of their own.

Mediaeval history of India bears out the correctness of this analysis. The misfortune of it was that it was wholly contrary to the noble and manly Aryan doctrine propounded in the Vedas that it was shameful for an Aryan to live as the subject of an alien and that freedom was his birth-right. But the noble doctrine enshrined in our scriptures, both divine and profane, was kept locked up in the breasts of learned pundits. I doubt whether even they realised the significance of what the teaching was with all its implications. Most of the caste system was absorbed in the rituals of religious services and for others the mystery of life had a strange attraction. So when the crisis came and the Rajas fell or surrendered or melted away, the house of liberty crashed as it were a house of cards, and we suffered immeasurably.

RECONSTRUCTION
Now, in this hour of great deliverance from foreign rule when we are unfurling the banner of the Indian Republic, let us resolve to profit by our past experience and by our mistakes. This great Republic is broad-based not on the strength of particular individuals or sections or groups in the community but of the people as a whole. It is their strength which will sustain it against external aggression or internal disturbance and it is their will which will uphold this independence wherever and howsoever imperilled.



SENSE OF CITIZENSHIP

KEY TO ALL ROUND PROGRESS

By LADY NYE

IT is obvious that before we ask the people to fight for upholding this independence, we must have a land and a social and political structure worth fighting for. If in a social organisation any group is singled out for perpetual abject service of others, then a mere change of masters may even appear seductive to many. I sometimes hear people say that adult franchise is rash and indeed a dangerous experiment—we might have proceeded more cautiously. I do not share this view. It was of national importance that every citizen of the great Republic should be made to feel right from the start that not only is he equal before the law but that he partakes equally in the political freedom and government of the country. It is only this consciousness which will rouse him to heights of sacrifice whenever any emergency arises.

Adult franchise is the most potent instrument for the removal of disabilities which disfigure our social structure in the past. In the Bhagwat Gita it is emphasised that the caste system is really founded upon a functional basis. We departed from the ancient doctrine when we made it a matter of birth. Brahmin is he who acts and works like a true Brahmin and not merely one who is born of Brahmin parents. Even in class society will instinctively be divided into groups according to the duties assigned and work done by the component parts. The State may ensure free education and equal opportunity for growth to every citizen, yet instinct and natural capacity will point out his particular field of social endeavour to each citizen. The most distinctive and welcome feature of our constitution is that it ensures this equality while preserving, as I see it, the functional basis of the caste system. In future the Kshatriyas will be those who will be enrolled as soldiers of India and the wealth-producing class will comprise those who do this job not for personal advantage but for the benefit of the community.

WESTERNIZED MIDDLE CLASS
There is much lamentation these days over the plight of the so-called middle classes. Looked at closely this description covers only the English educated middle class. It is a very overlooked class, this middle class, as at present constituted, is largely foreign to our ancient social structure, and is the product entirely of British rule in India. It had its origin in the English education which the British rulers imparted for more efficient administration and for securing the co-operation of capable Indians in a subordinate capacity in the governance of the country. The middle class as such had no roots in the soil. In the earlier days when Western influence was over-powering this middle class was totally cut off from its own countrymen, and though during the last 50 years under the influence of leaders of great renown it began to take pride in the cultural heritage of India, yet a great gulf continued to divide it from the masses. It was not a weak-progressive section of the community. It served foreign masters or co-operated with them in other ways through professions called learned and business vocations. Paradoxically it produced leaders who ultimately destroyed the foundations of British rule in India. Yet in the main it was entirely dependent for its sustenance upon the continuance of that rule, and that rule now having disappeared, it finds itself cut off from its moorings, drifting hither and thither in sore distress. I apprehend that as the masses of the people come into their own, these distresses may increase rather than diminish, and the English-educated middle class must therefore readjust itself to its present environment. Rajaji said the other day very wisely that it should turn increasingly to manual labour. That is one way. The other is that it should cease to aspire to the position of a ruling bureaucracy and dissolve itself into various functional groups according to the capacity of its members. That process has happily already begun and in a few years there will almost be a complete reorientation of our social economy.

Lastly I would emphasise the importance of the closest social contacts throughout the country among the people of India. Too much stress is laid on inter-marriage or even inter-dining. In India inter-caste marriages were pretty frequent because most of our subsidiary castes originated in the inter-caste marriages. Manu enumerates about 500 subsidiary castes—but this factor of inter-caste marriage was never a vital factor in our social organism. It was economic self-sufficiency and deep mutual social sympathies resulting from the well-ordered working of the caste system that proved the great preservative of the race. Modern conditions immensely facilitate social contacts among the people all over India. This must be encouraged to the maximum extent by the use of a common national language, not only for inter-provincial contacts but for official and social purposes in India as a whole. The place that the English language came to occupy in the social life of English-educated middle class in India should now be occupied by a common national language in the social and economic life of the entire people en masse throughout India and in every unit of it. That should be our goal.

The foundation of freedom has been well and truly laid. May God grant that this and the succeeding generations build a stately mansion thereon and preserve it in future in all its splendour and guard it against all dangers.

ONCE asked one of my many wise Indian friends which, if any, of the qualities of the people of England he would like to import into this country. His answer came promptly and emphatically "their sense of Citizenship".

The fact that this quality is not very apparent among the people of India cannot be said to be their fault; it is the fault of circumstances. For a sense of Citizenship is surely a sense of having a share of the responsibilities of the Government and administration of your country. It must have been difficult to feel that sense of sharing when the ultimate control lay in the hands of the Government of another country.

Two years ago that difficulty was removed, and though many speeches have been made and many articles written on the subject of the responsibilities of independence, I sometimes wonder how many of the ordinary men and women of India have realised their part in those responsibilities. Your leaders are under no illusion about the weight of responsibility which came with independence and have shouldered their burden in a way that deserves the respect and admiration of us all. But the burden of citizenship cannot and should not rest on the leaders alone. In fact, without the co-operation of each one of us no democratic government can hope to achieve the maximum good for the people of the country.

In an effort to prevent this from becoming just one more theoretical eulogistic exhortation on the subject, I propose briefly to analyse some of the ways in which we can give practical effect to what I believe, with many of us is a half-formed but none the less sincere desire to accept our responsibilities.

INFORMED OPINION
Perhaps one of the strongest forces towards the betterment of a country's administration is informed public opinion. To contribute to that is within the reach of all of us, but I wonder how many have bothered to acquire the necessary background of information and knowledge? To hold opinions is a favourite pastime of most men and women of every country and to enjoy airing them is not uncommon, but to gain the knowledge that might make those opinions either worthwhile or constructive is far more rare. How often have I heard it said: "Our hospitals are terribly overcrowded—something

Believe me the standard of living of some of the western countries are so rightly proud did not fall from Heaven nor was it the gift of some miraculous Government; it was the combined effort and will of every citizen to create that standard, not only for himself and his own family but for the nation to which he belongs.

If on this great day I have taken the opportunity to appeal to you in this way, it is only because my desire to see this country and its people prosperous, healthy and happy is as sincere as that of any proud Indian citizen or of the many English men and women who are wishing you well to-day.

THE CONSERVATIVE CASE

PRACTICAL APPROACH TO POLITICS

By IVOR THOMAS

THE Conservative approach to politics is essentially empirical; that is why the British Conservative Party has a continuous history from the reign of Charles I three centuries ago whereas other parties with a more academic approach have been destroyed by events.

In no matter do Conservatives display this empirical attitude so much as in regard to freedom and democracy. There have been philosophers, notably Hegel, who have taught that the essence of freedom lies in co-operation with irresistible world forces and before long they reach the astonishing paradox that a man is most free when he is most determined. Hegelianism has led directly to both Marxian Socialism and to Fascism, whose adherents may oppose each other bitterly but who would introduce substantially the same kind of society as far as the ordinary, unphilosophical man is concerned.

Conservatives are entirely opposed to this metaphysical notion of freedom and democracy. Our attitude is entirely practical. For us freedom is the right to choose freely in thought, word and deed, and the Conservative attitude to democracy has never been better expressed than in the famous formula of Abraham Lincoln, "Government of the people, by the people, for the people".

Direct government of the people by the people is possible only in very small societies, too small to exist as nation-states or multi-national states in the modern world; but the essence of democracy is still preserved through the discovery of representative government, one of the great discoveries of all time, that is, indirect government of the people by the people through representatives elected at free elections by the whole body of the people and accountable to them after a due period.

We believe that the system of representative government evolved in the Anglo-Saxon world and widely adopted elsewhere, whereby government is exercised by ministers responsible to a parliament consisting of representatives elected by the people and answerable to them for their conduct, is the finest expression of democracy that the world has ever seen; and we are not sanguine that any improvement on it is likely to be seen.

We recognise that the efficient working of this system calls for a tolerance, restraint and understanding which may not always be displayed. We emphasise also that the conception of the "mandate" is a fundamental misconception of democracy, the conception, that is to say, that once a party gains power at an election it is entitled to do anything it pleases until the next election, at any rate if it has slipped into its election programme a suitable covering phrase.

According to our ideas, a government and parliament have the duty of keeping in continuous touch with the people. Contact between them cannot be confined to general elections, but public opinion should make itself felt on government and parliament continuously by means of correspondence, the Press and other organs.

In Great Britain we have had many examples of the way in which public opinion between elections has forced governments and parliaments to act contrary to their original intentions; and it is only in the past four years that we have had a Minister openly boasting, "We are the masters now". The Conservative idea is that govern-

ments and parliaments should always be the servants of the people, continuously attending to their wishes.

This being our conception of democracy, it will be understood that we regard the so-called People's Democracies of Eastern Europe and Asia as being parodies of democracy. There can be no true democracy where more than one party is not allowed to exist, where any opposition to the Government is not permitted, where the censorship of opinion is ruthlessly exercised, and where free elections are not held. We regard the use of the term "democracy" in this connection as being dust deliberately thrown into the eyes of the world. We regard its use as being propaganda purposes only, and do not suppose that the persons in the Kremlin who control these puppets really suppose them to be democracies in the European or American sense.

ECONOMIC DEMOCRACY
There is, however, one claim that must be taken more seriously. In our own country there are socialists who, while subscribing to the general principles of democracy outlined above, assert that political democracy (in this sense) will not be complete until it is supplemented by what they call economic democracy.

If all they mean is that no one must be influenced in casting his vote by personal economic considerations, or that good candidates should not be deterred from standing for parliament on account of their lack of means, we are in agreement with them. The secrecy of the ballot ensures the former desideratum, and various Acts of Parliament limiting election expenditure, supplemented by Conservative Party rules, now ensure the latter.

It is the rule, for example, that no person interviewed by a Conservative Association with a view to his candidature may be asked how much he is prepared to subscribe to the party funds. As one who has had experience in both parties, I am bound to say I find the Conservative practice much healthier than the Labour. As a Conservative I have not been asked to subscribe a penny to my Association's funds.

We Conservatives retort that a system of complete socialism, in which all independent incomes are made inapplicable, would be incompatible with parliamentary democracy as we have known it, in as much as members would be afraid of voting according to their convictions for fear of the economic consequences. This is also already a reality among Socialist members, a large number of whom feel obliged to vote as they are told in all circumstances because they cannot afford to do otherwise. This turns representatives into delegates and makes a mockery of parliamentary democracy.

Some Socialists mean by "economic democracy", however, more than the ability to stand for Parliament irrespective of means. They twist the word to give endorsement of their proposals for the nationalisation of all the means of production, distribution and exchange. They assert that only such a system can be called an "economic democracy".

We Conservatives believe this to be a misuse of language, which pays tribute, however, to the place held by democracy in the human mind. We retort that if there is any meaning in the phrase "economic democracy", it would be far better applied to the system of private enterprise, which is based on "consumer's choice". Under the system of private enterprise, the consumer is entitled to spend his income as he pleases, after the payment of moderate taxes, and this we regard as being real "economic democracy". If the term democracy can be used in this connection.

Under Socialism, a very large slice of personal income is first of all taken in taxation (because the expenditure of the State is so much greater under Socialism than under private enterprise), and then the consumer's freedom to spend what remains is limited by a vast complex of controls and rationing. This we regard as being the antithesis of democracy.

AT THE DAWN OF
THE REPUBLIC OF INDIA
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The National Employment Service, through its Employment Exchanges, places the right man or woman in the right job. Its Training Schemes prepare candidates for work involving technical skill.
On this historic day, the Employment Service pledges itself anew to the continued service of the nation and seeks its increased support.
Issued by the Directorate-General of Resettlement and Employment, Ministry of Labour, Government of India, New Delhi