

**RISE AND GROWTH  
OF  
INDIAN LIBERALISM**

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**RISE AND GROWTH  
OF  
INDIAN LIBERALISM**

**[ FROM RAM MOHUN ROY TO GOKHALE ]**

*Being the Thesis approved for the Ph. D. degree of the University  
of London in Political Science.*

BY

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## PREFACE

I may express my thanks to the Government of Baroda for their giving me an opportunity of working in London University. His Highness the Maharaja Saheb has been a distinguished Liberal leader and one of our nation-builders. His practical contributions are very well-known: but the world will be delighted to know that his contributions to our national thought are equally substantial. H. E. Sir V. T. Krishnamachari, the Dewan Saheb is also a Liberal administrator and a constructive statesman in Indian politics to-day. I am very thankful to His Excellency for his keen interest in my work. I am equally grateful to Prof. Harold Laski who was always one unfailing source of inspiration to me in London. I may also be allowed to thank Prof. Morris Ginsberg and Dr. Gooch for their interest in me.

*Baroda,*  
*12-11-38.*

M. A. BUCH.

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# RISE AND GROWTH OF INDIAN LIBERALISM

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## INTRODUCTORY

THE story of Modern India may be read either from the point of view of facts or of thoughts. There is a perpetual action and reaction of facts upon ideas and ideas upon facts. The experiences of a nation, like those of an individual, necessarily give rise to reflection; and reflection in its turn contributes not a little to the moulding of events.

I propose to study the origin and growth of Indian social thought in the last fifty years. The rise and fall of different schools of thought, the successive emergence of different points of view, the inter-relations and conflicts between these diverse schools and points of view, all this falls within the purview of this book.

There is a logical movement in ideas : thesis gives rise to antithesis; and then both are subsumed under a wider synthesis. The corrective of the one-sidedness of one theory is nearly always to be found in its succeeding theory; and thus we progress gradually to fuller and more comprehensive theories.

Hence an analytic and descriptive survey tends to become

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inherently a critical one. The sacred duty of the author is to stand apart as a detached observer of the whole drama and to let the drama unfold itself in its own way. The more objective his attitude the more likely is his success in his work. He has to transcend his personal likes and dislikes; he has to divest himself of his passions and prejudices. His preconceived views, his *a priori* notions more often become a hindrance than a help.

Such a detachment is easy enough in physical and mathematical sciences. But in social matters it is hard to cease to be oneself. It is not possible, perhaps, it is not quite desirable to eliminate the ego altogether from one's version. The author's viewpoint consciously or unconsciously dominates his whole work. It determines his selection and grouping of facts, his greater emphasis upon some factors, the relative neglect of others.

But a scientific attitude demands impartiality. In most cases personal or party bias strongly colours the whole version: and therefore we get a number of party pamphlets but very few sober histories. Indian thought has also a number of exponents; but very often the books which come out are able but biased versions, representing one narrow point of view. There we witness the heat and fervour of a lawyer out to establish his case at all costs; we do not witness the broadmindedness, the cool detachment, the anxiety to get at truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth of a judge.

The main purpose of this thesis is : first, to analyse the thought of each one of the representative schools of thinking in modern India individually; secondly, to study the inter-relations of the different schools; thirdly, to view the thought as a whole; and fourthly, to fix, to assess the value of each of these schools, from the point of view of a broader and more detached philosophy of life.

As Spinoza says: " When I applied my mind to politics, so that I might examine what belongs to politics with the same

precision of mind as we use for mathematics, I have taken my best pains not to laugh at the actions of mankind, not to groan over them, not to be angry with them, but to understand them." To look at treason, war, revolution in the dry light of a cold philosophy may not be easy; but it is just this attitude that is expected from a scientific student of men and affairs, of thoughts and events.

But I do not propose to write a book on "Politics treated in a geometrical order," as Spinoza has given us "Ethics treated in a geometrical order." My method here is not the deductive method which derives the whole body of science from a few self-evident propositions. The proper method in this case is historical. Ideas, like organisms, do not grow in the void; they are essentially instruments evolved for the specific purpose of meeting a concrete situation. Hence if we have to understand a theory at all, we must take into full consideration the specific situation in which it arose. It is no use passing categorical judgments upon past theories and institutions, accepting some as unqualifiedly true or good, and rejecting others as equally unqualifiedly false or bad. To criticise a theory or an institution we must first understand it, and to understand it we must try to take a sympathetic view of it, to see how inevitably under the pressure of particular facts it arose, to judge how far it was an adequate response to the needs of the age or the occasion, and to determine then its inadequacy from the point of view of a later period or a different situation, and thus to sum up both its contribution and its limitations. The whole process is a historic process; and the historic, social context is all-important in determining the relative value or validity of each of these phases of thought.

Such a treatment has of course its essential justification in the historic nature of all theories, the precise way in which they owe their origin and shape to their social context. But it has other incidental advantages also. As Prof. Laski points out in his inaugural lecture on politics, it enables us to distinguish

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between the immediate need and the eternal good, the accidentals and the essentials of a theory. It is a valuable source of political illumination. It enables us not to exaggerate the originality or significance of the theories of our own times, because the same ideas have appeared again and again in the history of thought. It thus gives us a certain balance, sobriety, tolerance. It shows us that there are no whole truths or whole errors, either in the past thought or in the present; but there are almost always in all views which had a considerable amount of influence at any time, important principles, mingled it may be with questionable assumptions.

India had little freedom, social, political or religious for nearly a thousand years, before the advent of the British; and social thought does not grow and prosper, where there is neither liberty of thought, nor of speech, nor of association. But things have changed since the assumption of the sovereignty of India by the Crown (1858); and India's thought since then is the response of her age-long intellect and character to the new political, social and economic situation that now confronts her. It is largely conditioned by British thought and institutions. The main problem of India appears to be now the construction of a freer and more rationalised Hindu society, now the attainment of better and more liberal administrative and political institutions, now the realisation of economic, fiscal, and political freedom, called Swaraj. Fundamentally, it is the effort on the part of the medieval type of Indian mind and social organisation to adjust itself to a new complex environment offered by the world to-day. The problems which occupy our thinkers are the precise nature of our goal, the type of the nationality and the state we are to evolve, the technique of social changes in general and of nation and state building in particular, the place of different castes and classes and groups in a new and reconstructed state and society, the precise nature of the economic organisation which would suit India, the re-orientation of religious and philosophic ideals demanded by the world forces to-day, and the exact place India should occupy in the

society of nations and the contribution she should make towards the culture of the world.

The Indian problems, however, do not remain merely local problems; they tend to develop in their essentials the common characteristics of political problems everywhere. Thus indirectly we are brought face to face with the same problems which are agitating the minds of the great thinkers of the world to-day. What is the exact goal of a State, national sufficiency or membership of a wider international society? Is force going to remain the one method of removing our interstate differences and deadlocks? What is the right attitude of a group of advanced States towards the so-called backward peoples of the world? And what should be the right attitude of the comparatively advanced classes towards the backward classes in a society? How is the harmonisation between group and group, nation and nation to be attained? What is the exact nature of social justice? And how is that ideal of social justice to be achieved in a war-ridden world? What is the right relationship between man and machine? What is the exact nature of freedom which we ought to or which we can realise in the complex conditions of to-day? How shall we reconcile and transcend the standing conflicts between man and woman, capital and labour, nation and nation? Is the future form of government going to be democratic or autocratic? Shall we have efficiency or liberty? Questions like these are knocking persistently at our doors; and how shall we answer them?

I shall, therefore, undertake a series of studies dealing with Indian thought about Indian problems during the British period. Two main schools stand out as representative of the Indian social thought from 1833 to 1917. The first current may be broadly called "Indian Liberalism." It is at first purely religious liberalism, it then develops into social liberalism and it culminates in political liberalism. The general attitude of the whole school is in the direction of an all-round progress on modern lines. It stands for a radical revision of all Indian ideas

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theories, beliefs, institutions in the light of reason. It is therefore essentially a rationalistic school. It stands for the acceptance of the advanced Western thought and practice, as a basis of Indian social reconstruction. This is its second characteristic. Thirdly, it stands for the progressive application of the ideal of liberty to the whole religious, social and political life of India.

Contrasted with this is a rival current of thought which may be called "Indian Nationalism." It is also called "revivalism." It takes its stand above all on the indigenous Indian culture. 'National reconstruction on national lines' this is its fundamental cry. It therefore violently reacts against the invasion of Christianity and Western rule in India. Its opposition to the Western ideals and its strong insistence on a revival of the ancient Hindu ideals mark it off definitely from the other school. This movement of Indian or Hindu nationalism also passes through three phases: the religious nationalism of the Arya Samaj; the cultural nationalism of Vivekananda and the militant political nationalism of Tilak and B. C. Pal.

It is here considered desirable to allow each school to develop itself before the reader's mind, largely through the words and thoughts of its best exponents. An attempt is made to do the fullest justice possible to each school and to bring out as adequately as possible the exact working of the mind of each of these schools. In working out each school, I shall, therefore, merely try to understand the circumstances which helped the rise and growth of these systems of thought, the personalities which gave a characteristic direction to them, and above all the precise nature of their thoughts and feelings.

It is assumed here that there is always some justification for every theory which becomes dominant in the minds of considerable bodies of men for a considerable time. It represents at least one point of view: and unless we fully understand that point of view we cannot go beyond it. Each school is therefore allowed a full say: and the rival schools are allowed to fight each other in

their own way. There is thus a clash of opposite theories; and eventually we pass on to a fuller statement in a new theory which takes into account the essential truth in each of the previous rival theories and temporarily occupies the whole field.

I do not take the Protagorean view of truth and say that there are as many truths as there are thinkers; and each thinker is perfectly right from his own point of view. Truth must be assumed to be one and essentially objective; but its nature is complex; and it therefore appears different to different thinkers. It is the task of the author to look at truth first as it appears to each of the great representative systems of thought in India, and then finally, to look at it steadily, critically, impartially as a whole, and to sum up objectively India's position as far as possible.



**THE BACKGROUND :**  
**FUNDAMENTAL FACTORS IN INDIAN HISTORY**

## THE BACKGROUND : FUNDAMENTAL FACTORS IN INDIAN HISTORY

### 1. THE BIOLOGICAL FACTOR.

It is clear that the national mind—which is merely the minds of the individuals grouped in a particular way and working in a particular direction,—cannot be treated, any more than the individual mind, in the Lockian fashion, as a *tabula rasa*, a blank tablet, on which we can write anything we like. It is conditioned by two factors: heredity and environment. But certain it is that in a sense and to some extent, the national mind is a natural datum; it cannot be made into anything or everything. This biological factor in a people's composition we may call "race." It is the material stuff, the primordial substance of a people.

The Indian people is a composite ethnic product made of four main types: (a) the Indo-Aryan; (b) the Dravidian; (c) the Scythian; and (d) the Mongol. The Turko-Iranian race is mainly to be found in the North-West Frontier province; while the remaining types are to be found more or less pure or mixed all over India. The Indo-Aryan is to be found mostly in the north, while the Dravidian element is prominent in the South. Indian history is a record of a series of waves of immigration from the North: the Aryan, the Hun, the Bactrian, the Scythian, the Tartar, the Afghan, and the Mongol. The latest and most important immigration is from the sea; but the Europeans do not propose to settle here.

## 2. A LAND OF CONTRASTS.

The second important factor which goes to the making of a nation is its environment. In considering the present nature of our national character and its future possibilities, attention, therefore, is to be given to the historical and traditional factors in the situation as they have come down to us from the remote past.

The first fact which impresses itself upon the mind of the observer is the phenomenon of diversity. India is a house of many mansions. The contrasts in her climate; the variety of her flora and fauna; the multiplicity of her races, languages, religions; the infinite diversity of social customs in the matter of marriage, dinner, dress, manners; the gradation of various levels and stages of culture; these lend a peculiar picturesqueness to the Indian scene.

India stretches from north to south over two thousand miles, and from east to west over nearly one thousand nine hundred miles. She covers  $28^{\circ}$  of latitude and  $40^{\circ}$  of longitude. There are places which are quite arid deserts; and the minimum of rainfall is three or four inches; while there are other places where rainfall is seven or eight hundred inches in a year. The amazing variety of climates is matched by an equally striking variety of her flora and fauna, and by an even more striking variety of her peoples.

I have already noticed the racial contrasts; everywhere we encounter contrasts in pigmentation and facial characteristics. The same fact of contrast comes out vividly in the multiplicity of languages. People speak nearly 200 distinct dialects, all belonging to four great families of human speech—the Munda or Kolarian, the Dravidian, the Indo-Aryan, and the Indo-Chinese. The Dravidian languages—Tamil, Telugu, Kanarese, Malayalam—are spoken by nearly 60 millions of men in the south. The Indo-Aryan languages, Bengali, Hindi, Marathi, Gujerati,—are spoken by nearly three-fourths of the Indian population.

There are followers of many world religions in India; but the large majorities of the people are Hindus; a substantial part of the population follows Islam; while there are thousands of followers of Sikhism, Jainism, Zoroastrianism, Christianity and a number of Jews.

The particularism of Indian life comes out equally prominently in the number of Native States. These nearly seven hundred principalities lend a peculiar charm to the Indian political scene. India—except on a few occasions when a paramount power asserted itself—is always full of small states which are compared “to a swarm of free, mutually repellent molecules, in a state of incessant movement, now flying apart, and again coalescing.”

Indian society is divided into a number of castes and sub-castes; and we do really witness “an ethnologic pageant epitomising the gradual growth of civilisation through centuries of time.”

India is thus a veritable “museum of cults and customs, creeds and cultures, faiths and tongues, racial types and social systems.”<sup>1</sup>

No wonder then that some observers are honestly struck by the fact of diversity and contrast in this country. Hence we find many European writers describing India as a geographical expression, a collection of countries or a continent. Sir John Strachey even went further and said that the first thing to realise about India is that there is no such country at all.

### 3. FUNDAMENTAL UNITY OF INDIAN CIVILIZATION.

If most of the European scholars are lost in the immensity of the country and the variety of her climates, races, religions, and languages, most of the Indian and some of the European scholars are equally impressed by the underlying unity of India. The diversity is apparent and strikes one at once; the unity is deeper and reveals itself only to the eye of a shrewd observer and thinker. Indian history appears to be a record of conflicts and battles, and wars on a common theatre; but it is really the

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history of a single civilisation, of a single cultural entity called at one time Aryavarta or Bharatvarsha, and at another time, India or Hindustan. Even a sceptical observer like Risley or a critical thinker like Sir Vincent Smith has admitted it. "Beneath the manifold diversity of physical and social type, language, custom and religion, which strikes the observer in India.....there is a certain underlying uniformity of life from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin."<sup>2</sup> (Risley) The civilization of India "has many features which differentiate it from that of all other regions of the world, while they are common to the whole country, or rather continent, in a degree sufficient to justify its treatment as a unit, in the history of social and intellectual development."<sup>3</sup> (Smith)

In what sense then is India one? There are many kinds of unity, and of each kind there are various degrees.

There is in the first place, an unmistakable geographical unity. India is marked out by nature to be a clear-cut region; the barriers which divide her from the outside world—the lofty ranges of mountains on the one side, and the vast sea on the other—are more real than any which separate any of her parts from each other. Chisolm supports this view; "There is no part of the world better marked out by Nature as a region by itself than India, exclusive of Burma. It is a region indeed full of contrasts in physical features and in climate, but the features that divide it as a whole from surrounding regions are too clear to be overlooked."<sup>4</sup>

Secondly, there is an equally clear cultural unity. India is predominantly Hindu India; and the cultural oneness of Hindu India is established beyond a shadow of doubt. There is a common sacred language, the Sanscrit; a common religious literature; a common body of laws. The institution of pilgrimages was one of the most important unifying agencies throughout the ages. Thus a common consciousness was maintained even in those days of slow and ineffective communications. Great saints and scholars used to roam about the whole country, preaching a common faith, and spreading a common religious atmosphere.

It is true that the absorbent power of Hinduism has met two checks—one from the Muslim and the other from the European. The Hindus wrote *Allopanishad* and tried to incorporate the Muslims into their fold; but the strong anti-polytheistic and anti-idolatrous attitude of Islam and also the superiority complex of a conqueror's mentality have prevented this fusion.

But although there has been no fusion, each community has exercised a certain amount of influence over the other; and as a result of it, we are now evolving a more composite unity in India.

Thirdly, we have attempts at an administrative and political unification from time to time, with more or less success. The ideal of a *chakravartin*—an all-India emperor was always there, firing the ambition of aspiring rulers like Yudhishtira, Chandragupta, Asoka, Samudragupta and Harshavardhan. The Muslim—the Pathans first and then the Moghuls—also tried to bring the whole of India under one rule; and they came very near this ideal under Akbar and Aurungzeb. But it was reserved for the British to achieve the hegemony of the continent.

Fourthly, we have attempts at genuine national unification made by the Indian National Congress under the leadership of men like Dadabhai Naoroji and Mahatma Gandhi.

#### 4. THE GEOGRAPHICAL FACTOR.

The physical environment is one of the most important factors in the shaping of national character. Man is a child of nature; and he is dependent to a very great extent upon nature. The land, its size and shape, its coasts and frontiers, its resources and their distribution, its rivers and mountains and forests, and its climate, together make up his outer physical environment.

The vastness of India and her immense population make for division rather than unity. The history of such a country is bound to be very intricate one; its development is expected to be

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a slow and tortuous affair.

India's bountiful nature easily supplied man with all the necessaries of life, and gave him that leisure, that freedom from economic worries, which was a favourable condition for the growth of literature, arts, philosophy.

It may be that this very munificence has proved to India not only her blessing, but also her curse. It made phenomenal progress possible in the beginning, but it made continuous progress difficult by making man slow and inactive.

In the same way her climate could be also equally favourable or reverse. It is generally more equable than in Europe or Africa for example; and this also made plain living and high thinking possible by enabling man to reduce his wants. But the high temperature prevailing in the plain combined with humidity certainly lowers people's vitality, produces a sort of laziness, makes them less fit for the arduous work of life, and renders them easy victims of tropical diseases like malaria, plague, and hook-worm.

Buckle has remarked that everything in the East is on a large scale, the lofty mountains, the giant rivers, the vast forests, the cataclysmic storms and floods; all this produces a sort of helplessness in man, and makes him an easy victim of external tyrannies, whether of nature or man.

An agricultural country like India is dependent for her prosperity upon the regularity of her rainfall. But rainfall in India is rather irregular; and this erratic factor of climate exposes the country again and again to failures of harvests and consequent famines.

Forests, rivers, and mountains have also played a great part in the shaping of the Indian mind. The *ashramas* or hermitages of the Rishis were virtually forest universities. In these solitudes remote from the haunts of men, dependent for existence

on the spontaneous gifts of nature, the ancient sages surrendered themselves to Nature and to God and developed that sense of the infinite and the pantheistic temper which has been India's lasting possession.

#### 5. LIMITATIONS OF THE GEOGRAPHICAL FACTOR.

It is easy therefore to deduce the peculiar Indian easy-going temperament and even the relative absence of economic efficiency, the lazy submission to tyranny and the want of scientific aptitude of the Indian people, from geographical facts. The fact is that the physical environment is certainly not a given, constant unalterable sum of forces, determining a people absolutely from without. If it is true that the environment makes man, it is at least equally true that man makes his environment. The physical factors influence a man by entering into him and becoming a motive of action. This fundamental fact of mind completely refutes the theory of geographical determinism. Like the flora and fauna of a place, man is a part of nature; but he can react upon his environment, while a plant or an animal cannot. The geographical environment merely gives a people a series of possibilities, any one of which may be selected or developed at any moment of their history. As society progresses, the human factor asserts itself more and more.

It is therefore dangerous to make predictions about a people on the basis of such geographical facts. Montesquieu's proposition that climate is the cause of the immutability of religion, morals, manners, and laws of oriental countries is receiving slow but sure refutation at the hands of time. It is the same with Macaulay's observation that wherever banana grows, there is usually little civil liberty. A nation's history cannot be deduced from a few geographical facts in this summary fashion. The geographical environment merely means a series of opportunities and a series of handicaps. It is for the genius of a people to overcome these handicaps as far as possible by art and science, and to take as full an advantage of its opportunities as it can.



In India it must be confessed that man in the past has sadly neglected the use of Nature's gifts. Nature has made the country one and undivided, capable of being economically self-sufficient and politically independent. Her natural boundaries give her a sort of external unity in relation to the rest of the world; and the strong natural fortresses could have been made use of to protect her liberty against the outside world. The irony of it is that endowed so favourably by nature, for the realisation of oneness and autonomy, she has stubbornly refused to be one and independent. "The history of India is a continuous and complete denial of its geography."

But the tropical luxuriance of the climate has proved fatal to the manly and hardy qualities of every people that has settled down in it. The Hindus gave way to the Pathans, and the Pathans gave way to the Moghuls, and their place is taken by the hardy islanders from a colder place.

Marked out by Providence to be one of the richest countries of the world, she has chosen to be one of the poorest. Endowed by nature with every article of use and luxury, she has chosen to remain a hewer of wood and drawer of water, a dependent in her own house. India has been thus the victim not of a geographical fate, but of her own inertia.

#### 6. LIMITATIONS OF THE BIOLOGICAL FACTOR.

Neither territory nor race, neither the physical nor the biological factor is a rigid determinant of a people's destiny. Yet we are asked by Mr. Curtis to believe that the peculiar racial composition of the Asiatic peoples in general debars them from attaining true independence. As Shastri says: This is a revival of the doctrine of caste, without its spiritual sanctions.

Now race is more or less a mysterious factor, and the precise laws about it are not known. The fusion of races may as well make for progress and prosperity; it is not necessarily a

handicap in our way. The contact of different races is often a fruitful source of new ideas and new culture. The heterogeneity of the composition of the Indian people does not in any way conflict with their essential aspirations.

There is nothing in the primordial stuff of which the Indian people are made, which makes them unfit for free and unfettered growth in economic or political sphere. The Hindus as well as the Muslims in the past had been founders of empires. The truth is that the idea of race has proved mischievous in the hands of designing imperialists. In the present state of our knowledge, it is rash to lay down any precise relation between race and culture. No race has a monopoly of certain moral, intellectual, or physical qualities. No race always connotes a certain set of immutable psychological characteristics. No race probably represents one single pure stock; and the precise nature of its composition and the relative value of the various strains which have entered into it cannot be exactly known. The surprising development of the Japanese first, then the Turk, and now even the Negro has upset the calculations of these race-purists. As Jean Finot says in *Race Prejudice*: "The history of civilization is only a continual come and go of peoples and races. All, without distinction of their biological characteristics, are summoned to this great struggle for life wherein we fight for human progress and happiness. All the ethnical elements can take part in it, all can contend for places of honour in it. Such is the general import of our biological and psychological equality, which remains intact underneath all our superficial divisions."<sup>6</sup>

#### 7. MAN—CREATOR AS WELL AS A CREATURE.

The character of a people is not a fixed, rigid thing, given once for all. It is neither the outcome of the outer environment nor of pure heredity. A people, by thought, has been able to modify its racial composition, and its geographical environment. If the mind of man has been able to mould these basic material factors often to its ideas, it is even freer with regard to

its social and political institutions, its religious and philosophic ideas. These constitute the spiritual superstructure of a people, "connecting all the members of a national community by ties and connections as fine as silk and as firm as steel."

These great things are the creations of a people; but they are the creators of that people also. Man builds up a system of law and government; and this system of law and government then reacts upon him. In them, to a very great extent, the deep and abiding national traits of a people are reflected. The present character of people and its future character are inevitably linked with its past; and although character is never completely fossilised and there may be always surprises in store for us, no people can altogether shake off its past.

It is, therefore, very important to inquire what is the exact nature of the religious, philosophical, and social heritage of the Indian people and the part it is likely to play in the shaping of their national present and future.

### 8. THE HINDU PHILOSOPHIC OUTLOOK.

There are two great social and religious systems which have come down to us from the past: Hinduism and Islam. India has a population of nearly 350 millions, out of which about two-thirds are Hindus and about one-third are Muslims. The medieval economic and political system is common to both; while the two systems differ very much as regards some of the fundamentals of life; although this opposition is considerably toned down by the inevitable influence, for good or evil, exerted by each upon the other, during a period of common stay in the same country, for nearly a thousand years.

It has been said by Max Muller that the Hindus are a nation of philosophers. Religious and philosophic ideas are universally operative in the daily life of an ordinary man in India to an extent which would surprise a European. The huge dimen-

sions of nature, and its large-scale operations in India must have soon developed a sense of vastness, immensity, infinitude: Fortified against earthly cares and worries by a generous Providence, man's mind abandoned itself and even lost itself in the vastnesses of nature. The eternal puzzles the "whence" and the "whither" of man, the "how" and the "why" of the Cosmos began to trouble and agitate the reflective, wondering soul of man. Man wedged in between an infinite God and an infinite nature lost his balance and became soon merged in the infinite. No wonder that life here and now ceased to be a scene of joyful activity and play and became a mere moment, an episode in an eternity of existence, with an infinite series of past lives after and an equally endless series of future lives before. Man looks before and after; but that before and after in the case of the philosophic Hindu is a very long before, and a very long after. Man's activity which is normally interpreted as the expression of his fundamental impulses leading him on to the satisfaction of his desires and the fulfilment of his aims, is now regarded as the forging of fresh chains which bind a man to earthly existence. Freedom becomes the one end and aim of all living; and freedom means freedom from *samsara*, the great series of births and deaths in which we are all implicated. Life is merely an opportunity to get rid of life. Time is merely a ladder by which we rise to timelessness. Life ordinarily means striving and striving means bondage. To get rid of bondage we must stop activity; and to get rid of activity, we must suppress all longings, all desires.

Such is the essence of Buddhism; and it was the philosophic Hinduism at one period. The antithesis of the One and the Many, of the Infinite and the Finite may appear meaningless to a layman: but the irony of it is that man's age-long effort is to find a way through the mazes of this controversy, which is not merely an academic one to these peoples, but the very matter of life and death. The old Eleatics like the Hindus argued in the same fashion: If the one is real, how can the many be real? If the infinite is real, asks the Hindu, how can the finite be real?

Only the infinite can satisfy the infinite hunger of man; there is no happiness, the Upanishads say, in the finite.

The doctrine of *Karma* the application of the causal law to human acts and their consequences, soon developed into the doctrine of *kismet* or fate, under the influence of the above theory. If the events of this world have no importance, if all life, all apparent reality is a mere illusion, if the past deeds of our past lives inevitably lead us on from one act to another, one life to the next, what is the use of exerting ourselves? The spirit of resignation soon takes possession of the mind of man and makes him a silent, helpless spectator of the comedy or tragedy of his national existence enacted before his very eyes.

“ The East bowed low before the blast  
 In patient deep disdain;  
 She let the legions thunder past,  
 And plunged in thought again.”

#### 9. CASTE.

The most characteristic social institution of the Hindu is caste. Caste is partly, at any rate, the expression of the above outlook on life, which pictured existence as a round of miseries, to be acquiesced in rather than to be fought against and therefore considered all effort for betterment of our lot here as meaningless. Man's birth in a particular group or family is not a mere accident; it is the outcome of his past *karma*. What is the use, therefore, of rebelling against the operation of destiny?

Caste determines a man's profession, his marriage, his social position, his destiny. No effort, no capacity, no aptitudes would be of any avail to enable a man to go from one caste to another. Mutual exclusiveness - the spirit of don't-touchism is the very essence of caste. Complete rigidity characterises the system.

Hindus are divided at present into nearly 3000 watertight

compartments. Originally caste-system might be an attempt to fuse different races-the conquerors and the conquered-without obliterating or affecting the essential characteristics of the ruling race. Later on it might receive extension in the interests of the principle of division of labour and the resulting individual and social efficiency. Thus we have race castes, and functional castes and sectarian castes.

This great organisation may have been instrumental in developing a certain specialisation in learning, arts, crafts, military science. It was certainly responsible for the perpetuation of the Hindu social system, by the resistance it offered to outside influences. It certainly represents a social ideal and enables the members to form an effective organisation which punishes the recalcitrant, helps the poor and the needy, and keeps alive a certain communal spirit among them.

But in its present degenerate form, it has proved a veritable curse of Indian life. It fosters division and consequent petty-mindedness. It has given us an aristocracy of birth not of merit. It has rendered the free adaptation of individual talent and capacity to particular social work for which it is best fitted, impossible. It has stifled initiative, self-confidence, and the spirit of enterprize. It prevents the growth of a nationality and the development of a democratic State. It has created the untouchable problem. It may have encouraged a certain resignation and peace of mind, but this peace has been the peace not of life, but of death.

#### 10. FAMILY.

Another characteristic institution of the Hindus is the joint family. This institution also brings out the typical merits and demerits of our social organisation. It is a family "joint in food, worship, and estate." It consists of a body of kinsmen, who dwell under the same roof, hold common meals, offer common worship, and own and enjoy property in common. The elder member exercises the right of management as the representative of the

family and administers the property as its accredited agent, for the common good of the family.

Now such a family, like the caste, represents a small communistic society, where the ideal of every man or woman, according to his or her needs, prevails to some extent. The ideal of co-operation, of solidarity, of each for all and all for each, of the strong helping the weak, the young protecting and respecting the old, the old guiding and training the young, and all offering a common front to the good and the evil which the world may have in store for them is undoubtedly a noble ideal. Under the operation of this ideal, the unchecked reign of competition with its inevitable tendency to send the weak to the wall is modified. The family protects the young wife, the helpless orphan, the decrepit old parents. The family is thus a mutual assurance society. It enables old healthy traditions and the culture of the departing generations to be successfully embodied in the rising generations, and thus ensures the perpetuation of the hereditary skill, learning, trade and business secrets. A joint family is, above all, favourable to the ideal of agricultural production as well as other rural home industries.

But there is the ~~other side~~ to the shield. It was an excellent institution under the old conditions of living. But when the bonds between man and man are relaxed, when the spirit of sweet reasonableness deserts the family, then it ceases to be an organic union with a common animating spirit and life behind, but a mere conglomeration of atoms. It is then that we find the Hindu home to be a scene of distractions, wranglings, confusion. It is then that the idlers become mere drones, and the unproductive class a mere drag on the family. It is then that the unchecked growth of population which it encourages brings on poverty and starvation. It fails to nourish and strengthen and develop the best that is in each; and each becomes a barrier to the other's growth and advancement; and the result is all-round stagnation. Individual initiative, personal energy, freedom to shape one's own destiny: these are the mainsprings of economic and social prosperity

of an individual as well as a nation; and the institution which tends to crush these native springs of life in man and society has undoubtedly outlived its usefulness and is therefore doomed to eventual disappearance.

## II. VILLAGE COMMUNITIES.

Indian institutions in the medieval period were all designed, more or less, to perpetuate the old order and to resist all outside influences. Caste, the joint family, and lastly the village community were all so many outer defences of the Hindu community against adverse influences. The basis is common blood in the first two cases; but the village community is united by a tie of a common place and therefore common interests. The village was a self-sufficient and autonomous economic and social unit.

India is an agricultural country. Directly or indirectly nearly eighty per cent of the population is dependent for its existence upon agriculture. India means above all Village India. There are hardly 750 towns with a population of ten thousand, and less than 30 towns with a population of 100,000 and upwards, in such a big country.

In this primitive community production was for use and not for profit. The farmer used to grow all the food necessary for the village population. From him each of the artisans—the carpenter, the smith, the barber—received his traditional share of grain. The system of barter prevailed; there was no money economy. From generation to generation, life used to move on in these isolated communities in the self-same fashion, largely unaffected by the political vicissitudes of the country.

Sir Charles Metcalf's description seems to be quite correct. "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 forming a 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."

### 12. ISLAM

The growing particularism of the Hindu social life, born of the spirit of caste made the Hindus an easy prey to the first great onslaught from Islam. The Hindu could not translate the cultural unity of India into a concrete, lasting political organisation. The Muslims had one superb advantage over the Hindus; they were a casteless community. The faith of the Muslim is a simple faith which can very easily be understood by the masses. Islam had much in common with Hinduism; yet their social systems were quite distinct from each other. In Islam all men are equal; in Hinduism, we meet with endless divisions and sub-divisions each one cut off from the other by rigid, impassable barriers. Islam was a fiercely monotheistic religion; Hinduism tolerated and even encouraged the worship of numberless gods and goddesses. Islam stood for a pure worship of the One; Hinduism set up images and representations of gods and goddesses everywhere.

Under the circumstances, there could be no genuine amalgamation between the Hindus and the Muslims. The greatest of the Muslims—Akbar—tried to weld together the two communities; but he failed. The times were not ripe for a genuine unification between these great communities. But if a genuine unification could not be effected, the arbitrary unifications of the type attempted by Aurungzeb were foredoomed to failure. Every such attempt was immediately followed by a tremendous reaction; and society went into greater disintegration than ever.

### 13. GENERAL SURVEY

Such is the history of India and its social life in a nutshell, before the advent of the British. The causes of failure of both the Hindus and the Muslims were many; but the fundamental cause was

the absence of a genuine spirit of nationality. The Mahratta Empire went to pieces for the same reason. The attempt at establishing a purely Hindu empire was rather belated. The Muslim tried to swallow up the Hindu; but he could not. Culturally Hinduism always remained a very powerful force. The Hindu tried to swallow up the Muslim; he was perilously near the success; but in the mean time a Power with a broader ideal behind it had entered the Indian scene. The lesson of Indian history is very plain. India during all these ages is demanding unity and is ready to offer her all to the power which gives her unity. The Hindu tried and failed; the Muslim tried and failed; will Britain *really* succeed when the greatest indigenous attempts have failed?

✓ The vastness of the country, the multiplicity of its population, the influence of a hot climate, the spirit of Hindu Philosophy with its doctrines of Karma and the illusory nature of the world, the exclusiveness and rank particularism of the caste system, the isolation and backwardness characteristic of an agricultural population, the multiplicity of languages, religions, social customs, the standing antagonism between the high-caste and low-caste, the Brahmins and non-Brahmins, the age-long conflict between the Hindu and the Muslim; these are some of the forces which make for division, for discord. They are the centrifugal forces of Indian life; they make the task of a real and lasting unification exceedingly difficult.

But they do not make it impossible. The geographical factor has been and can be successfully fought. The effective communications of the twentieth century have reduced the power of distances; and the new forces which are at work for more than a hundred years in India have completely altered the whole situation. The great experiment in this vast laboratory of political and social science has begun; and its success will depend upon the capacity of the Indian mind to face facts squarely and to rise to the full height of its great opportunities.

The influence of religion and philosophy in making the

Hindu a docile puppet in the hands of foreign powers is grossly exaggerated. The Hindu religion and philosophy laid down four great aims of human life: Dharma (duty), Artha (wealth), Kama (desire) and Moksha (salvation). The Hindu was never asked to sacrifice his all at the altar of eternity. He had to go through three stages of life—the student's, the householder's, the retired man's—before he could become a *sannyasin*. The qualifications laid down for even the study of the Vedanta—the highest philosophy of the Hindus, were so rigid that only very few extraordinary men could possess them. The arduous spiritual discipline required of a *sannyasin* was not meant for all. Even in the philosophy of Shankara, the world is treated as real for all practical purposes. Berkeley in the West interpreted matter as a mind dependent entity or an idea; and Kant maintained the empirical reality of the world, while making it transcendently ideal. The Western world, since Berkeley, Kant, and Hegel, has made remarkable progress even in the world of matter. It was the same with India. Properly interpreted, the philosophy of the Hindus gave ample scope for the realisation of their highest worldly ambitions.

Under the influence of that philosophy, the Hindu mind achieved remarkable triumphs in the secular sphere, in the past. The Hindus laid the foundations of mathematical and mechanical knowledge. "They measured the land, mapped out the heavens, traced the course of the sun and the planets through the zodiacal belt, analysed the constitution of matter and studied the nature of birds and beasts, plants and seeds." In arts and industries, India was second to none even up to the eighteenth century. The Hindus also have been—and so also the Muslims—excellent soldiers, great generals, and conquerors, and founders of empires. Sir John Woodroffe writes "An historical survey of India shows that she has produced all varieties of human character. India which is religious also produced...the Charvakas and Lokayatas, materialists and sensualists who denied the existence of God, reviled the Vedas and the priests as frauds and cheats, sought

enjoyment only in life, leaving at death as many debts as possible. India which produced ascetic defamers of women in the style of the Christian Fathers also worked out a scientific scripture of Eroticism—the Kama Shastra, wrote sensuously conceived literature, carved recondite obscenities on its temples, and painted similar scenes for the incitement of its passions. The same India which in the person of the *Sannyasi* fled from the world to the forest also glorified that world in sumptuous art. India was meditative and yet gave birth to men of action celebrated as warriors and statesmen, and a people who governed themselves practically and with success." As Mr. Bartholomy Saint Hilaire said: 'In no country in the whole world has communal autonomy been so developed.' It was, Professor Monier Williams said, self-government in all its purity: "The Hindu Kings were not autocrats. Their will was as much subject to the general Dharma as were the people...Until almost the close of the eighteenth century, India was renowned for its artizanship and industries. The wealth of Ormz and of Ind was proverbial."

#### 14. NO BLIND DETERMINISM.

It is necessary to remove these misconceptions about India's past, because they put us completely on the wrong track about the influence of its culture upon its present status, and future possibilities. Civilization has its ups and downs everywhere. India which was once on the top of the wave has now gone down. There is no dark over-arching fate over her destiny making it permanently impossible for her to assert herself against the heavy odds which overwhelm her to-day. The so-called "slave-mind" of the Indian people is certainly not the inevitable outcome of its racial composition, of its geographical environment, of its perverse philosophy and religion. It is merely the outcome of rather certain unfavourable circumstances in the past. The Hindu has been the victim of ignorance, of age-long oppression—social, political, religious, and economic—of grim poverty, of a narrow and exclusive

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caste system. But there are signs that he is slowly but surely awaking from his deep slumber and once more becoming conscious of his position and responsibilities in the world to-day.

**SOCIAL AND CULTURAL TRANSITION:**  
**1757 - 1885**

## SOCIAL AND CULTURAL TRANSITION

1757-1885

### i. RISE OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE IN INDIA.

The years 1757 and 1857 are memorable years in the annals of India. Roughly speaking the whole nineteenth century witnessed the transition of India from a medieval economy to modern life. India has been accustomed to invasions, changes of dynasties, wars, and conquests. But the new power which now appears on the scene is in many ways unique. In one way it always remains and wants to remain altogether foreign; the European does not want to settle in India. In another way it more completely enters into the very life and civilisation of this country than any previous foreign power. In this double fact lies both its strength and its weakness. The previous empires were more or less military occupations affecting the surface of Indian life. The vast mass of population entrenched behind the isolated and self-contained village and the formidable caste system remained largely untouched by the rise and fall of dynasties at great centres of Indian life. These empires were essentially tax-collecting agencies; they allowed the main currents of Indian life to flow in the old channels. Culturally indeed there was considerable give and take between the Hindu and Muslim systems. Yet the main framework of ancient Hindu society remained unshaken.

Now in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the Euro-

pean appears and slowly takes possession of this vast country. It is best to throw a veil over the beginnings of empires. The Clives and Hastings have to do a lot of rough work; and they often forget the great distinction between right and wrong. The early years of the Company's rule are certainly a dark page in the history of the relationship between Great Britain and India. The story of these years can be read in Torrens' "Our Empire in Asia" or Wilson's "Sword and Ledger." In the words of Lala Lajpat Rai, "Hindus were played against the Muhammedans and *vice versa*, Jats against Rajputs, Mahrattas against both and so on. Treaties were made and broken without the least scruple; sides were taken and changed, without the least consideration of honour or faith. Thrones were purchased and sold to the highest bidder. Military support was purchased and given like merchandise. Servants were induced to betray their masters, soldiers to desert flags, without any regard to the morality of the steps taken. Pretences were invented and occasions sought for involving states and principalities in war and trouble. The one object in view was to loot, to plunder and to make an empire. Everything was subordinated to that end...the history of British Conquest in India is a continuous record of political charlatany, political faithlessness and political immorality. It was a triumph of British 'diplomacy.' Empires can only be conceived by the Napoleons, Bismarcks, Disraelis, Richlieus, and Machiavellis. They can only be built by the Clives, Hastings, Wellesleys and Dalhousies. The Burkes and Gladstones cannot do that work, nor can the Morleys, though they may connive at others doing it, and might accept it as a *fait accompli*."<sup>1</sup>

But this is only one side of the story. The English are said to have conquered India in a fit of absence of mind. The transformation from a company of traders to one of the greatest empires the world has seen, is truly a marvellous phenomenon. It was all a drift in the characteristic English way from what seemed to be one blunder to another. Again and again the instruction from home was to cry halt: and yet by what looks



like a natural process, the empire went on swelling till the whole of India and Burma became integral parts of this great political fabric.

## 2. PROCESS OF EMPIRE-MAKING.

The early Governor-Generals were busy with the work of conquest and consolidation. The greatest work of the century was to bring the whole of India under one power, one administrative, legal, and economic system. The English were certainly unlike the great barbarian hordes which occasionally swept over this country from the North under Timur or Nadir Shah and then passed away. To represent the whole process of empire-building as one long loot is to miss the meaning of it altogether. Force and fraud are often instrumental to some extent in laying the foundations of empires or big fortunes. But it is not possible to build up such a huge political structure and to work it efficiently for a long period by sheer force and fraud. You can terrorise or deceive some people for all time or all people for all time. But you cannot terrorise or deceive all people for all time.

To repeat, the essential purpose of the century of British rule in this country is to bring the whole of this vast country under one central power. That was partly the object of the greatest rulers in the past—of Yudhishtira, of Asoka, of Samudragupta, of Akbar. That object was achieved for the first time by the British.

India divided into so many states, small and great, meant the perpetuation of a state of war, even of anarchy. The work of Hastings and Wellesley and Dalhousie lay above all in establishing one paramountcy over the land. That was why the non-interference policy never succeeded; it meant a state of perpetual instability, of disequilibrium.

✓ The history of India from 1757 almost up to 1883 is largely the history of the gradual growth of the British Empire in India through wars and treaties and conquests. The system of subsi-

diary alliances was only a clever trick by which the process of conquest was a little disguised: the policy of annexation of Dalhousie was more logical but less diplomatic. The policy of splendid isolation was accepted only to be given up under the pressure of forces from all sides; and so the Empire grew, step by step, till all India became one single, consolidated unit.

### 3. FUNDAMENTAL CAUSE OF THE FAILURE OF THE HINDUS AND THE MUSLIMS.

An unbiased study of historical facts teaches us in an unmistakable fashion that Great Britain in the nineteenth century made two very important contributions to the cause of civilization in India: these are the establishment of the *Par Britannica* and the unification of India. To understand the precise significance of these, it is very necessary to remember the exact situation of India in the eighteenth century at the death of Aurungzeb and the consequent break-up of the Moghul Empire. Might then was right. There was a chaos of conflicting powers. Adventurers rose, set up independent principalities, ruled for a time over these and again disappeared. Poor, innocent populations had to submit meekly to the ravages and exactions of either the conquering hordes of some more or less well established power or of roving bands of marauders. All over India there was a floating population of fighting people, who sold their arms to the highest bidder. Agriculture, industry trade could not flourish in these conditions. Here and there, the genius of a man like Hyder or Tippoo could now and then set up fairly orderly and progressive petty empires. But they could not last long. Here and there there were the strivings of a budding nationality asserting itself against the forces of particularism and disruption. This is the meaning of the great Mahratta and Sikh efforts at empire-building. But behind the Hindus there was no singleness of purpose, no one governing idea; and there was the powerful factor of caste. A Hastings and a Clive in spite of all their unscrupulousness and moral weakness never thought of setting up their own little kingdoms

independent of Great Britain. Why not? There was a steady and an undeviating allegiance to their nationality. Such a force was never operative among the Indians of the eighteenth century; and although there was the idea of a Hindu revival behind the great effort of Shiwaji and the Peshwas, there was no cementing force of nationality. Hence the intrigues between the rival factions of Madhoojee Sindhia and Nana Fadnavis; hence the distrust and jealousy among the Mahrattas and Brahmin Peshwas; hence the differences between the Rajputs and the Mahrattas at the battle of Panipat; hence the attempts again and again at setting up independent principalities, whether Hindu or Muhammedan; hence the spectacle of Hindu sepoy fighting on the side of a Muhammedan power; and both Hindu and Muhammedan sepoy easily fighting their own co-religionists as members of the Company's army.

Neither the Hindus nor the Muhammedans were able to build up a stable social and political system on the basis of the principle of nationality. Autocracy, personal rule, prevailed everywhere; and while such an autocracy or a personal rule of a great man like Akbar or Balaji Peshwa might achieve wonders for a time, it was sure to be followed by a reaction, a division after the death of that able dictator. This was the root weakness of all medieval oriental despotisms; and this gave an immense advantage to the British over them. Great Britain is in a way unique in the world; and in virtue of her tradition embodied in a permanent, stable political system, organised on the basis of the principle of nationality, she established her superiority over the rival warring powers.

India at that time badly wanted internal peace and security; and to guarantee that peace and security it was necessary that there should be one single Power in the whole country; and that Power, whatever may be its lapses and shortcomings in actuality, did stand for peace and security. The great lesson of eighteenth century history in India is that order is heaven's first law; and

only on the basis of order, can true liberty grow. It was because Great Britain brought this gift of internal peace and stability that she won. The conquest of India by Britain is not the conquest of mere brute force; it is not the conquest of mere duplicity and cunning; it is the conquest of a socially superior system over a decaying and disintegrating culture; the conquest of the principles of order and unity as the very basis of social life over the rival principles of disunity and chaos.

#### 4. THE EMPIRE NOT THE RESULT OF A PLAN.

The most astonishing thing about this empire is the way in which it grew—there was no deep-laid planning, no conscious design behind it. It seems that a higher purpose, a divinity shaped the whole fabric from beginning to end. The British are not considered a logical people; they are not guided by abstract theories or *a priori* principles. But they have proved themselves masters in the art of applying temporary expedients to temporary difficulties. Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof. This is their policy—this is their nature. They have therefore virtually drifted into an Empire.

One result of this is that the present provinces are pure administrative divisions; they are not based on any principle of cultural or linguistic unity. Bombay Presidency, for example, is a modern creation; and it included such various peoples as the Sindhis, the Gujeratis, and the Deccanis, and the Kanarese.

In the same way, the whole system has grown in a haphazard fashion. Now one policy is tried and now another; mistakes are made and then corrected; Governors are sent and then recalled; but in course of time, the British are able to evolve, largely under the pressure of immediate facts and day-to-day necessities, a truly wonderful administrative structure in this country. From trade they slowly drifted to empire, from a state of complete irresponsibility in the beginning, through a state of partial responsibility, to a state of more complete responsibility;

and from a system entirely autocratic-because it was a lineal descendant of the Moghul- to a system more or less representative of the peoples and princes of India to-day. Such is the story of India as we move from 1774 (the Regulating Act) to 1784 Pitt's India Act); from 1784 to 1813, 1833, 1853 (the great Charter Acts), from 1858 (the Government of India Act) to 1893, from 1893 to 1909 (Morley-Minto Reforms); from 1909 to 1917 (Montague-Chelmsford Reforms) and from 1917 to 1937 (the New Constitution). New principles are slowly introduced at each stage, their working is then tested and examined; and almost imperceptibly the great transition is made from the autocratic system of the past to the constitutional system of to-day or to-morrow.

##### 5. CONSTITUTIONAL LANDMARKS.

A glance at the constitutional development of India during the century shows us in a clear and unambiguous fashion the slow cultural changes taking place in India during this time. For the changes have been deliberately adopted with reference to the existing circumstances. The Battle of Plassey in 1757 gave Clive the key to the supremacy of India. The English began from the north, while the French had begun from the south; this was one strategic advantage which they enjoyed over the French. In 1765, Clive gets the Divani of Bengal from the Delhi Emperor-it means the *de facto* control over that very rich province. In 1774, the British Government was rather perturbed at the anomalous nature of the whole situation and proceeded to systematise the whole business; British India was unified; the Governor of Bengal became the Governor-General of India. Power was now centralised in this newly created Government of India-which now meant the Government by the Governor-General assisted by his executive council. And above all, this Act laid the foundation of the Indian judiciary. This was called the Regulating Act; it was the first attempt on the part of the British Parliament to undertake the responsibility involved in the Company's acts in India.

Pitt's India Act of 1784 kept alive the outward form of

the authority but introduced a radical change in the character of the supreme authority in England. Political power passed from the Court of Directors to a new body called the Board of Control, which was to consist of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Secretary of State, and four Privy Councillors. This act also laid down drastic provisions for the prevention and punishment of the corruption and oppression which had become rampant among the Company's servants. The attack on Clive and the impeachment of Warren Hastings, coupled with Pitt's Act, were all great gestures which had enormous moral value; their supreme lesson was "that Asiatics had rights and Europeans obligations in India." "All that we value in the growth and progress of British India to-day, was rendered possible only because of the radical reformation in aim and in temper, in personnel and in morals, which conscientious and determined critics of the East India Company forced upon it between 1770 and 1790."<sup>2</sup>

Then followed the Charter Acts of 1793, 1813, 1833, and 1853. In 1833, a Law member was added to the Executive Council of the Governor-General. This was the nucleus of the present Legislative Assembly. In 1853, six new members were added to the Governor-General's Council for purposes of legislation. This was a further development of the Indian Legislature.

In 1858, the Company's Raj came to an end. The Government of India Act of 1858 substituted for the Board of Control and the Court of Directors, a Secretary of State for India and a Council. The Proclamation of the Queen to the peoples and princes of India fittingly ushered in a new era in the relations between the two countries.

"We hold ourselves bound to the natives of our Indian territories by the same obligations of duty which bind us to all our other subjects, and those obligations, by the blessing of Almighty God, we shall faithfully and conscientiously fulfil.

"And it is our further will that, so far as may be, our subjects of whatever race or creed, be freely and impartially,

admitted to offices in our service, the duties of which they may be qualified, by their education, ability, and integrity duly to discharge.

“ It is our earnest desire to stimulate the peaceful industry of India, to promote works of public utility and improvement, and to administer its government for the benefit of all our subjects resident therein. In their prosperity will be our strength, in their contentment our security, and in their gratitude our best reward.”

The Indian Councils Act of 1861 for the first time introduced non-official element into the Central Indian legislature. Moreover, the Act provided for the establishment of legislative councils for Bombay, Madras, Bengal, and some other provinces. These legislative bodies were, after all, merely advisory bodies; but they were the nuclei from which the Parliament of the future would grow.

#### 6. THE CIVIL SERVICE.

The organisation of a civil service was more necessary for the administration than the organisation of legislatures. Clive and Hastings both realised that power without responsibility is an unmitigated course and laid the foundations of an efficient service. Lord Cornwallis shut out Indians from all responsible and high positions completely, in order to raise the level of these services and to make Englishmen learn and do the work themselves and not rely completely on and make use of their Indian official subordinates. But the demands of work increased; and Lord William Bentinck found it necessary to appoint qualified Indians to some higher jobs. The Charter Act of 1833 laid down the famous principle: “No native of the said territories, nor any natural born subject of His Majesty resident therein, shall, by reason only of his religion, place of birth, descent, colour in any of them, be disabled from holding any place, office or employment under the Company.” The despatch added “that the object of this important enactment is not to ascertain qualification, but to remove dis-

qualification. Its meaning we take to be that there shall be no governing caste in British India. Fitness, wholly irrespective of the distinction of races is henceforth to be the criterion of eligibility."

The Proclamation of the Queen in 1858 confirmed this principle. The Indian Civil Service Act of 1861 introduced the principle of open competition for the highest civil appointments. But Indians had to appear at the Civil Service Examination under rigid age conditions in England and come out successful against the best talents of English Universities. In 1879, the Statutory Civil Service came into existence; the recruitment to the first of these was to be through the open competitive examination held in London.

I will quote the substance of Prof. Thakore's picture of the work of the Civil Service during this period. "The first generation ( i. e. up to 1850 ) were the road-makers and the bridge-builders...They created the land-revenue and the judicial systems and knew the people of their district in their various social grades as thoroughly as it is possible for foreigners to acquire such knowledge. They were lonely men, separated from one another, with little of Europe in their bungalows and their tents. They were exiles in the full sense of the term, but lives with absorbing occupations which evoked every ounce of faculty and required every second of time, and they lived dedicated lives. If the roots of the British conception of state and administration have gone deep into the soil of India, if medievalism be really going to be uprooted hence and modernity to be really going to grow up to a long and vigorous prime, it is they who have created the miracle, their husbandry, their faith, and their devotion.

"The second generation ( upto 1880 ) saw the cutting of the Suez Canal and the replacement of the sailing vessel by the steamer, and with these began the invasion of India by the Memsahib...And the Gymkhana and clubs as well as European



homes now invaded the mofussil. The spread of the railways tended more and more to bridge the chasm that in the past had separated the mofussil and the capital, and the vogue began of hill stations and of long and frequent furloughs. Codes came to be drawn up, departments grew up fast, secretariats directed all and wanted to know more than all. The individual was dwarfed, the system throve... The written record of the work grew in bulk and improved in quality. The departments multiplied, the system grew and improved from the secretariat point of view, until to own logical development and perfection became an end in itself...

“ The *corps d'elite* (in the third generation from 1880-1910 ) became more and more self-conscious, more impatient of criticism as intelligent criticism increased, retired within its shell, and became a caste of white Brahmins, more exclusive than any caste had ever been in India...Jingoism held increasing sway in England from about 1875 onwards for the rest of the century, and many of this third generation, of our rulers here, were jingoes.....And finally, the average of ability, vigour, vision, and understanding was certainly lower than in the second generation, for the best talent of England was no longer attracted to India.”<sup>3</sup>

## 7. EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS.

From the very beginning, the East India Company was slowly becoming conscious of its responsibilities to a certain extent towards the people of India. Their motives were of a rather mixed type. There are three main currents in educational activity: the one is directed by the Government, the other by missionary effort, and the third by the people themselves. The missionaries wanted to spread Christianity; their object was not always immediate conversion, but they thought that if people were educated enough, they would be able to see the beauty of Christianity for themselves. The Government could not carry on the huge work of detailed administration in every department by means of the foreign agency; hence with the growth of administration, there was

an increasing demand of English-educated people. The new system that had to be worked was Western; and the English would not learn the vernacular languages to the extent that was desired. English therefore soon became the language of the courts and offices; and the demand for English education increased. There was also the desire to spread light and dispel ignorance among the benighted peoples of India.

The Hindu College in Calcutta was founded in 1817, largely under the influence of Raja Ram Mohun Roy; and the missionaries started Serampore College in 1818. The question of introducing western education in India was taken up seriously by Lord William Bentinck's Government. There was a controversy between the Orientalists and the Anglicists; and Macaulay—a member of the Governor-General's Council—threw his weight decisively in favour of English education. "A single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia." And he asked whether they should countenance at the public expense: medical doctrines which would disgrace an English farrier, astronomy which would move laughter in girls at an English boarding school, history abounding with kings, thirty feet high and reigns thirty-thousand years long, and geography made of treacle and seas of butter." Raja Ram Mohun was equally emphatic in his advocacy of the claims of the new learning. "If it had been intended to keep the British nation in ignorance of real knowledge, the Baconian philosophy would not have been allowed to displace the system of the schoolmen, which was the best calculated to perpetuate their ignorance. In the same manner, the Sanskrit system of education would be the best calculated to keep this country in darkness, if such had been the policy of the British Legislature."<sup>4</sup>

This was the real beginning of the great revolution, ushered by the British into Indian life and institutions. The Indian Universities came into existence after the despatch of Sir Charles Wood in 1854; and the number of B. A.'s and M. A.'s went on swelling year after year.

Nothing has more decisively influenced the current of Indian life in a certain direction than this spread of English ideas in an eastern society. The contact and even occasionally the clash of two great cultures—the one in its state of decay, and the other in its state of bloom, so different from each other—has proved to be one of the turning-points in the history of Asia and even of the world.

The Indians had come under a common government and a common administrative system. Now they began to come under the influence of a common culture and develop therefore a common political and cultural consciousness—which was different from the old Hindu, or the Muslim, or Hindu-Muslim consciousness. Language is one of the many ties which link together diverse people in a common fold; and now the people of the different parts of India could exchange their thoughts with one another through a common medium. English language may be a foreign language, but it is the language which continues to be employed at all national conferences and congresses. But more important than this is the creation of a common intellectual atmosphere all over India. The same ideas and feelings were inspired in the Indian mind all over the country by this new culture. The B. A. of the Calcutta University is very much like the B. A. of the Bombay and the Madras Universities in his intellectual outlook and equipment. The significance of a common administrative and educational system in the creation of an all-India consciousness cannot be over-emphasised.

The nature of the content of the new culture in its relation to Indian life is even more important. It would not be possible to exult over the spectacle of India coming under one foreign rule and made to accept one foreign language, if that rule were the rule of barbarians, if that language were not the vehicle of great ideas. It is therefore necessary to emphasise the precise character of this rule and of this language, if we are to form a critical judgment with regard to their effects upon India.

The English language is a language of the modern world-of the new European culture. At first its teaching gave a terrible shock to the whole people of Asia. It roused us from our dogmatic slumber of ages. It sent a new life into our nerves and made us altogether changed beings. It gave us new ideals of liberty and nationality, of equality and progress, which we had not dreamt of for ages. It gave us a new thirst for freedom, for self-government, for democratic institutions. It roused our social conscience and made us keenly alive to the anomalies and absurdities of our decaying social institutions. It roused our religious conscience, and we began to shake off the dust which had gathered thick upon our creeds and religious practices. It gave us new eyes, new ears, new powers of judgment, criticism, and evaluation. It sounded the death-knell of mere authority in every department of life: and it tried to substitute critical reflection for a blind submission to accepted ways and usages. In this sense Britain has brought not peace, but a sword. She has set children against parents, pupils against teachers, community against community, labour against capital, woman against man, the ruled against their rulers, the radical and progressive against the orthodox and conservative everywhere.

The Indian mind, which was cribbed, cabined and confined for centuries, suddenly became free. It had moved in the same old grooves for years; now it acquired a consciousness of undreamt-of possibilities and began to move on uncharted waters, unpathed shores. History, literature, logic, philosophy, science, the arts, religion; each of these great departments of human thought put on a new life and began to develop on new lines of its own. In one word, change had come with a vengeance and whatever else change may mean, it at least means life.

#### 8. ECONOMIC TRANSITION.

Political changes very often go hand in hand with economic changes: but in the India of the nineteenth century, this was true

to an extent that it was never true before in Indian history. The new invader has brought with him a new economic civilisation: civilisation based on machine-technology, mass production, and the capitalist ownership and management of economic goods and services. The story of this economic transition of India may be summed up in one phrase; it is a transition from a society based on status to a society based on contract; it is a transition from village economy to a national or international economy: it is a transition from small-scale production to a large-scale production. The transition has only begun; but this seems to be its main trend.

The great change which has come over the economic and consequently the social and political organisation of Europe in the early part of the nineteenth century through the introduction of the steam-engine and the telegraph came over India in the latter half of the same century. The railway has become a great instrument in the hands of the newly established imperialism in India. Its primary services to the empire are its material assistance in the military consolidation of vast and far-flung Indian territories and the capture of the Indian market for British manufactured goods. India was a big agricultural country, producing raw materials; Great Britain was establishing herself as a great manufacturing country in need of raw materials from abroad and a safe and stable market for her ever-increasing quantity of finished goods. The cutting of the Suez Canal and the appearance of the steam-ship made it easy for trade to move quickly on the sea from Europe to India and India to Europe. The whole nature of foreign trade changed; it was no longer confined to a few costly and rare articles; it could adequately handle and move vast masses of bulky and cheap goods from continent to continent. The railways carried the same process further; they facilitated the transport of goods from the interior to the ports and from the ports to the interior. The vast masses of newly created capital in Great Britain began to find a safe, sure, and fruitful instrument in the railways as well as some of the other industries like jute, or tea, or indigo which could

be worked on a large scale by means of much capital.

The supreme service of the railways, with their adjuncts, the Post and Telegraph, was to convert India into one economic unit. The internal trade barriers, customs walls soon disappeared; the diverse systems of currency soon gave way to one single uniform system of paper currency and coinage all over India. India had become one market; local village economy slowly broke down before the pressure of the new forces. The spectacle of a glut of foodstuffs lying idle in one place and a severe famine at a slightly distant place became a thing of the past. The whole character of famines underwent an alteration; it is no longer a case of food-famine; it is a case of scarcity of money, of purchasing power.

The railways have also been instrumental in effecting a certain amount of unification in Indian social life. All sorts of people—high caste, low caste—could now travel in the same compartment; and some of the scruples of the orthodox people as regards food, drink, and touchability melted away. The isolation and exclusiveness of the old life are disappearing; and labour is also becoming more mobile, slowly shifting to places where it finds the best market. The movement of local and national leaders and of specialised scholars in Philosophy, Economics, History, Oriental Studies, Science to different centres in India once every year to attend their respective conferences, congresses, assemblies and councils has now become a permanent feature of Indian public life; and this rapid intercommunication between thinkers and scholars in the different parts of the country and the resulting organisation of unified thought and action are due above all to this marvellous improvement in communications witnessed by the nineteenth century.

The railways were a part of a great economic transition that has taken place in India during the last hundred years. Such transitions are always bound to have temporarily unpleasant consequences for many trades and industries and especially for the workers. But in India the transition was rather too sudden.

And there was little time for industry to adjust itself to the new situation. The transition besides was forced upon India in the interests largely of the British capitalist; hence India could only curse the doubtful blessings of the new Raj.

The result, therefore, of the sudden entry of cheap, machine-made products into the Indian markets, facilitated by the adoption of the doctrine of free trade by Great Britain, the revolution in communications, and the industrialisation of England, led to the gradual destruction of indigenous industries in India. "Had strategic or economic conditions permitted the change ( i. e. the introduction of railways ) to be more gradual, it is conceivable that greater powers of resistance might have been shown by the native industries, that the lessons of the West might have been taught before destruction was inevitable, so that labour might have drifted to other occupations as well as agriculture."<sup>5</sup> "The external trade of the country has grown at the expense of the internal, resulting in an unhealthy and one-sided development of the country's resources. Roads, railways, telegraphs, the construction of the Suez Canal, and every improvement of the means of transport both by sea and land have contributed to the difficulties, and in many cases to the ultimate discomfiture of the Indian artisan. The attention of the Government has been almost entirely directed to the opening of the land, to provision of irrigation, assistance has in more than one case been given directly to the efforts of English manufactures to exploit Indian markets, while the industrious artisan has been left seriously alone to combat as best as he can the growing difficulties of his position."<sup>6</sup>

The whole economic environment however has radically changed. The perpetual insecurity under which all classes laboured in the unsettled times of the eighteenth century has disappeared. The country became organised as one solid well-knit unit; and it was now linked up with the main currents of the world's economic system. The social system of the Indians also is slowly modifying itself in response to the needs of the new age. The power of

religious ideas or of the caste-system tends to relax more and more. With greater freedom, with growing intelligence, with a more complete security and a more settled society, with a thorough-going revolution in communications, it has become possible for India to restart her economic life on a new foundation. The first cotton-mill in India was established in 1838; and in 1853, a Parsee merchant started a mill in Bombay; in 1875 there were nearly 50 cotton-mills in India, and to-day we have hundreds of mills for the production of yarn and cloth by steam power, scattered all over the country. Thus we have made a start in industrialisation and this movement promises to develop considerably in the near future.

#### 9. ESTABLISHMENT OF ONE SYSTEM.

Summing up, it may be said that a new era has set in India. Great Britain's conquest of India from 1757 to 1857 is one of the outstanding facts of this century. For India, it was both a loss and a gain. She exchanged a number of mutually conflicting indigenous powers for one single foreign power. Some critics emphasise the word "indigenous" and "foreign" and think that it is a great catastrophe, a long humiliation for Indian people. Others emphasise the words "mutually conflicting" and "one" and find that it is decidedly a change for the better. Be that as it may, India's awakening is no doubt due to the electrifying touch of an altogether different civilisation. For good or evil her fortunes are linked with Great Britain for a hundred years and more. Great Britain has brought the whole country under one single system *culturally once more*, and thus brought about a certain all-India consciousness. Great Britain has thrown open the doors of a new culture and has thus roused the latent consciousness of India to her own peculiar needs and problems. I shall now narrate the story of the efforts of Indian thinkers to adjust their lives and institutions to a new environment, and the new environment to their own culture especially in the social and political spheres.



# **RELIGIOUS LIBERALISM**



## RELIGIOUS LIBERALISM

### I. HINDU SOCIETY IN ITS DECLINE.

Hindu society had sunk to almost its lowest point during the eighteenth century. With a few intermittent periods of revival, it had become a huge, static, fossilised organisation. The customary morality and customary respectability were still there; patient acquiescence in all sorts of evil was there; but there was no life, no capacity for progress. The Brahmins maintained a rigorous control over people's lives; and all power of independent thinking and activity had gone. The caste system, with its endlessly growing ramifications, its increasing rigidity in matters of inter-dining, of marriage and other customs, stifled in its death-like embrace the lives, hopes, and aspirations of individuals and classes.

Early marriage i. e. the marriage of boys between the ages of ten and sixteen and of girls between six and ten, had become almost universally prevalent among the Hindus. The result was that thousands of young girls became widows before they had ever seen their husbands, or arrived at physical maturity. These widows in the higher castes were not allowed to remarry; and their lot was exceedingly miserable. The Kulins of Bengal used to marry a number of wives; and a Brahmin in Bengal who had married a hundred wives was considered a model of respectability. Polygamy prevailed among many sections of Hindus, and also among Muhammedans.

The position of women in general was in many ways pitiable.

The purdah was a striking characteristic of both Hindu and Muhammedan domestic life. High caste women could not come out of their apartments and show their faces to the outside world. "There the woman lay, condemned to a life-long prison a helpless, prostrate and pathetic figure, with enfeebled health, her naturally keen senses dulled through inaction, without the light of knowledge illumining her vision, steeped in ignorance and prejudice, groping in the dark—a martyr to the conventions of the society in which she had been born."<sup>1</sup>

Equally hard was the lot of the lower classes—called now the depressed classes—the *Shudras* or helots of society. They were 'untouchables;' even their shadow would pollute a high-caste Brahmin. They had to stay apart in a segregated locality, and were debarred from the ordinary privileges of attending a school or using the village wells, or mixing in any way with the high-caste Hindus.

## 2. FIRST EFFECTS OF ENGLISH EDUCATION.

Under these circumstances it is not surprising to find an extraordinary enthusiasm in the first generation of English-educated men for British rule. The Bengalee Babu was the first to receive new education: and he was the first to rebel against the effete forms and mummeries of orthodox Hinduism. A little draught however, as usually happens, intoxicated the brain: and deeper draughts were necessary before the Indian mind could become sober again. The young men of Bengal were as yet initiated only in a few English authors and their education largely consisted in the repetition of a few English phrases. But the chattering of a few English idioms soon became the fashion of the day: and it was considered a mark of culture and scholarship. The first result was that a mood of superficial thinking and thoughtless acting came upon them. The old beliefs and customs which were the only basis of social order and stability soon lost their hold over the batches of young men who came out year after year from the Hindu College. The young mind felt giddy under

the influence of the new ideas, lost its bearings, developed an atmosphere of radical doubt with regard to all things in heaven and earth, looked at orthodox customs with contempt and threw them lightly aside as so much rubbish, and so fell an easy victim to the glamour of a few practices which they associated with the refined western life. As a rule, "education neither stimulated the intellect to originality, nor influenced the heart to profound impulse. On the other hand, with the increasing knowledge, there was an increasing progress of self-indulgence; scepticism had extensively infected the rising generation, and strict morality was ceasing to have any hold on young Bengal. The industrious student of Shakespeare and Milton in the Hindu College could scarcely spell his name in the mother tongue. Sanskrit, Persian, and Arabic held in such supreme reverence but a few years before, as the only source of wisdom, were looked upon with unconcealed contempt. They were barbarous, unwholesome, unfashionable"<sup>2</sup> It is so easy to fall, and so difficult to build up a new morality. The old morality appeared as a series of meaningless restrictions and nothing so delighted the wild imagination of these half-baked youths as to kick them aside. The forms of Western civilisation could be easily copied; but the spirit of that civilisation took time to percolate. The break-up of the old order therefore brought as its immediate consequence an era of loose living and superficial thinking. The contact with the West meant to them freedom—freedom to eat what they like, drink what they like, act how they like, and think how they like. "It meant the introduction of European luxuries of food and drink, the free and easy ways of the West, the abolition of social discipline, the exactions of Brahmin priests and impecunious relatives. Excessive indulgence in the use of alcoholic liquors characterized the educated community; concomitant vices showed themselves, and premature mortality began to rage among the rising generation. The emancipation of women began to be talked about, and here and there the doors of the zenana were flung open. Men before they had learnt to humor the gentler sex, felt a trenchant desire to be introduced

into the company of the female relations of their neighbours. Third-rate English novels illustrated the questionable benefits of such promiscuous communion.....Impurity of character among the educated classes became proverbial, philosophers of the sceptical and agnostic school, scientific opponents of religion and morality, the apostles of Utilitarianism, the materialistic professors of nescience, and so-called positivism, overspread the land with their teachings. The ancient scriptures of the country, the famous records of the spiritual experiences of the great men of numerous Hindu sects, had long since been discredited. The advancing tide of a very mixed civilization, with as much evil as good in it, the flood of fashionable carnality, threatened to carry everything before it.”<sup>8</sup>

### 3. THE CHRISTIAN MISSIONARY: HIS FAILURE IN INDIA.

The first phase of the new education was thus destructive. There was a headlong rush from one form of life to another, from a life rigidly hemmed in by all sorts of restrictions in every petty detail of life to a life of wanton self-indulgence. Freedom is a charmed word: it carries with it all sorts of associations in all sorts of contexts. The blessed word ‘freedom’ always first means negative freedom: it means an end of a life of restraint; it means immunity from inhibitions. The age of sophisticism often supervenes the age of dogmatism, the human mind recovers its freedom from the tyranny of a customary morality and customary religion: but it falls a victim to the more destructive tyranny of its own whims. The era of unchartered freedom tires sooner or later: and the mind once more begins to pine for a new order, a new discipline.

The Christian missionary had early appeared on the scene and was busy partly fomenting this work of destruction of the old order and partly trying to help the construction of the new. Three forces were let loose upon Hindu society at a time when it had reached a very low level of life, where mere meaningless and

even mischievous routine reigned supreme: Western education, Western administration, and Christianity. The moment the eyes of some Hindus were opened to the absurdity of their customs, they were offered a new substitute gratis on the spot, imported from the West. If Hinduism is a mass of superstitions, there was no reason why the Hindu should fly from religion to irreligion; there was ready for him a new faith which would solve all his problems and meet all his needs. This new faith had the advantage of being associated with the new masters of Hindustan; it was the faith of the men who had given the world that splendid literature and science, which had begun to fascinate the mind of the Hindu; it was sponsored in India often by men like Duff, Carey, Wilson, who were remarkable for their enthusiasm for Christianity as well as for their character. There was a flood of propaganda over the country; schools were started, colleges were opened, sermons were preached everywhere; the Bible was translated into the vernaculars and copies were freely circulated among the people. The Christian missionary saw his opportunity: he found here a field almost waiting for a general movement for reform on modern lines: and he did not spare money or energy in trying to scatter the seeds of his faith wherever he could. But the Hindus had been developing for a thousand years a technique of safeguarding their culture behind a series of almost impregnable fortifications. A great virile community, when it found that it had not the necessary vitality or resources to rally against the Muslim invaders, retired within its own shell and developed various defences behind which it could maintain successfully its own existence against all outside attacks. The one problem of the Hindu community since the Muslim advent was throughout the maintenance of the *status quo*; it wanted to live; and it lived by converting itself into a purely defensive and therefore also a rigidly static organisation.

The Christian missionary, therefore, failed: he failed in spreading his influence either upwards or downwards, for he could not convert either the higher castes or the lower castes which constitute the masses of India. One of his great blunders was to insist upon the literal acceptance of his faith rather than upon the spread of a

spirit of finer morality among the people. The people saw his failure not so much in his inability to make conversions and swell the number of Christians in India as in his inability to fire the few people who came under his influence with the zeal of a higher and nobler ideal of life. If the thinking Hindus had seen the emergence, under the influence of Christian propaganda, of a new and more attractive type representing a finer morality than the one which the old society had put forth, they would have slowly but surely succumbed to its influence. They would have confessed that, whatever theoretical recommendations the new creed had or had not, its influence upon life was decidedly for the better. Such a conviction would have gone far in slowly dissolving even the granite of prejudice. The Christians can never win in India by opposing one dogma to another; they can only win by putting forth a higher species of humanity before the imagination of the Hindus. The Hindu has gravitated wherever he has found a sweeter atmosphere, free from the lusts and fears of worldly life, and pervaded by a devotion to some higher power. He does not cease to be a Hindu but he absorbs in that way a new way of living. But if it comes to wrangling, to intellectual debates, the Hindu is not a fool and is not slow to perceive the weaknesses of the rival system offered to him as the ideal substitute for a decrepit Hinduism and then he turns the table very easily upon his opponent and scores a dialectical victory. Christianity committed a blunder in attacking Hinduism from without, without trying to understand it from within. It committed the blunder of mistaking the age-long forms for the essence of Hinduism and imagined that if these forms went, Hinduism would disappear altogether. And Christianity committed the further blunder of offering itself as a finely woven and securely founded intellectual system rather than as a new and a nobler way of life. The orthodox Hindu often feels unmitigated contempt for animal food and spirituous drink: and he saw that the acceptance of Christianity by Hindus only meant an orgy of meat-eating and wine-drinking. No wonder that he was disgusted with the whole process and turned to his own creed with a greater self-confidence and self-satisfaction. Here is a



record of the evidence of the actual impression made by Christian missions: "But their own Trinitarian orthodoxy was so bigoted, their teachings were so intimately akin to the exploded farrago of Hindu dogmatism, their intolerance was so excessive, so unsympathetic, their denunciations of the national religion were so violent and sweeping, that as religious men and reformers, they shared very nearly the same criticism which fell to the lot of the less enlightened apostles of the native faith. And what is worse, neither the missionaries nor their converts showed any inclination to protest against the tide of corrupt civilized self-indulgence, which upset the character of the rising generation. One of the newspapers of the time characterized Dr. Duff's pupils as well as other free-and-easy young men of the time as 'cutting their way through ham and beef, and wading their way to liberalism through tumblers of beer.' "4

#### 4. CHRISTIANITY AS A STIMULUS.

But the zeal of the Christian missionary was not wasted altogether; it bore fruit of a different kind from the one he contemplated or desired as his immediate objective. The indirect consequences of human movements are often more important and far-reaching than the direct consequences. Christianity was undoubtedly a new and a different gospel; and Christianity appeared in India at a time when Hindu life was reaching fast its apogee. Christianity was associated with the Western people and their civilisation in general; and it is not easy to distinguish the exact nature and consequences of either in relation to the life and ideals of Hindu society. But what really matters is not what Christianity is, but how it was presented to the mind of India; and the Christian missionaries had to make ceaseless attempts to compare Hinduism with their own faith and to bring out the characteristic weaknesses of the former and the characteristic strength of the latter. This attempt could not but arouse a new spirit of inquiry among thoughtful Indians and set their minds thinking about the exact nature of their own faith as well

as the exact nature of the rival faith offered to them. It set a problem to orthodox Hinduism and confronted it with a challenge which could not be ignored. The great contribution of Christianity as well as of Western civilisation in general to Indian life consists in shaking its faith in the finality of its own current solutions of all questions. The assumptions upon which the Hindu life had securely rested for a thousand years were questioned in a spirit sometimes of ridicule, but often of seriousness which could not but tell upon the Hindu mind. There was in those times a glamour and a fascination for everything western and the new movements were rousing strange and mysterious hopes of a transformed existence for Indians among those who were slowly coming under their influence.

The Indian thinker, profoundly perturbed by the new attack, began to shake his head seriously and ask himself the questions which he had avoided so far: What is Hinduism? Is essential Hinduism the same as the current mass of prejudices and ceremonies called popular Hinduism? What has Hinduism done so far for the Hindus? And if it has failed, why and to what extent has it failed? What is Christianity? Can you draw the same line between the essential and the superficial Christianity? Is it in any ways superior to Hinduism? Has it better authority? Is its speculative construction sounder and more reliable? Is its influence upon the lives of people higher and nobler than the influence of Hinduism? Are European civilisation and Western philosophy different from Christianity or the same as Christianity? And how far do they offer hopes of a better existence to the Hindus?

##### 5 RAJA RAM MOHAN ROY: HIS PERSONALITY.

It was in this atmosphere of intellectual and practical unsettlement that the first liberal movement in Hindu thought, known as "Brahmoism" was started. Raja Ram Mohan Roy, the pioneer of this movement, was a truly remarkable man. He

was born in 1772, in Bengal, of a Brahmin family, and he died in Bristol in 1833. His was a multiple personality and he was a genuine Hindu only in the sense that a genuine Hindu is necessarily a cosmopolitan—a citizen of the world. He was the founder not only of a reform movement in Hinduism: but he was the true pioneer of the modern age in India. The Indian then had the one problem facing him: how to adjust and reconcile the three great cultures—the Hindu, the Muslim, and the Western. The Raja first faced this problem which faces the Indian even to-day; and he tried his best to evolve a creed on the basis of these three cultures, which would eminently suit India and lead her by slow and peaceful transition from the chaos and darkness and inertia of medievalism into the world of to-day. The most curious thing about the Raja was his complex personality with at least three different faces: and to some extent it is a mystery to-day whether he should be taken as a Hindu or a Muslim or a Christian, because in a way he was all three in one. Critics have been able to trace four distinct elements which went to the make-up of his personality and which reappeared as a vital part of his life and creed. In fact, he was from first to last a Hindu Brahmin; he was born a Brahmin and he kept the *Upavita*—the sacred thread as the outer mark of his orthodoxy; he tried to interpret and assimilate into himself the highest elements of Islam, Christianity, and Modern Rationalism, or Humanism, and transformed them all into a single creed which he found in the ancient Upanishadic philosophy of his own community. Thus in him India is re-born not as a slavish repetition of orthodox Hinduism, nor as an apish imitation of Christianity or Islam or Humanism but as a genuine revival of a pure theistic and rational humanitarianism, inherent in essential Hinduism, under the influences of these apparently conflicting cults and creeds. Ram Mohun Roy is truly the key to Modern India, which is bound to be a composite structure resting upon these four great cultures. India will be nearer its realization when she is able to hold in perfect balance and to unite into one intergral creed these divergent and yet complementary strands in her culture.

The Raja's inner development is interesting, because it throws some light on the situation which confronted a thinking Indian even so early as the later part of the 18th century. He began to see Hinduism from the point of view of Islam even when he was a young boy; and his mind took up a definite stand against idol-worship and polytheism even in those days. It is said that he had a hot discussion with his father on these points and he had to leave his paternal home for some time. He published a Persian treatise called "A Gift to Monothesisists," in which he argued against the idolatrous superstitions of all creeds and asks the followers of all religions to return to the pure doctrine of One God. In 1811, he inherited his father's estate and could afford to settle in Calcutta and devote himself to the life of a zealous propagandist of his convictions. He published some of the Upanishads with their translations and in 1820 a book called "The Precepts of Jesus—The Guide to Peace and Happiness." He took up the cudgels against Trinitarian Christianity and became one of the distinguished followers of Unitarianism. His was thus a truly versatile mind, a mind which did not shrink from the arduous effort of studying the great religions in their originals.

A sympathetic study of the various faiths of mankind in a spirit of detachment and with the one object of finding out the truth upon which the future life of India and of humanity could securely rest, convinced him of the need of a purer faith which should bring together on a common platform men of different creeds and enable them to unite in attacking the common troubles of humanity. The result was the foundation of the Brahmo Samaj—a Society of the Worshippers of One God of all religions and all humanity.

#### 6. THE BRAHMO SAMAJ: ITS RISE AND GROWTH.

The Brahmo Samaj represents the first serious reaction of the Hindu mind to the spirit of Christianity and Western civilization. Its object was to divert the current of superficial educated

Hindus from Christianity to their own faith, and to check the development of a spirit of scepticism and atheism among the Hindu intelligentsia and of the loose, irresponsible methods of living which were sapping the vitality of that day. There was an appeal made from orthodox Hinduism with its chaotic mass of beliefs and practices to a purer Hinduism which was as life-giving, as consonant with reason, as conducive to progress as any other. It attempted this object by taking a stand on all those elements of a universal religion which were present in Hinduism, but which tended to be obscured or ignored during his times. Admiration for Christianity, however, remains too patent in Ram Mohun Roy and still more so in Keshub Chundra Sen, and the Brahma Samaj sometimes appears as a Christian branch of Hinduism or a Hindu branch of Christianity. The movement on the whole is less in the direction of Christianising Hinduism than in the direction of rationalising and liberalising Hinduism in the light of modern science, Western deistic and theistic philosophy, and Christianity, and Islam. Brahmaism is the first serious attempt to place Hinduism on a basis of reason in order that it may supply the necessary stimulus to an all-round progress to Hindus, without ceasing to give them the necessary spiritual satisfaction and without cutting them off completely from their past.

The Brahma Samaj passes through three stages: the earliest stage is represented by Ram Mohun Roy; the second phase is represented by Debendra Nath Tagore; and the third phase is represented by Keshub Chundra Sen. There is, indeed, a fourth stage which is called the Sadharana Brahma Samaj: it represents a protest against certain tendencies of Keshub Chundra Sen. Ram Mohun Roy in fact is a composite representative of the whole modern Indian movement, social, religious, and political; but the notes of rationalism and cosmopolitanism are on the whole most marked in his thought. Debendra Nath Tagore to a certain extent recoils against the heterodoxy of the Brahma Samaj and tries to revert to the purest form of Hinduism as represented in the Upanishads. His is a purely religious movement intended to purify Hinduism as a relationship between man and God and

to deepen it. Keshub Chundra Sen has both the notes present in him: religiosity as well as rationalism: but his religiosity is a curious brand, now and then swinging violently towards Christianity of a refined type. In his hands the Brahma Samaj becomes largely an attempt to fit Christianity into the Hindu moulds of thought and feeling. The Brahma Samaj to-day is not anxious to show its departures from Hinduism so much as its affinities to and rootage in Hinduism.

### 7. AN ATTACK ON AUTHORITY.

The Brahma Samaj and its variants live more as a spirit, a new tradition than as an organization. Its main value lies in its attempt in the first place to introduce certain rational and modern elements of Christianity into Hinduism without too much disturbance. If Christianity can ever be acclimatised in India, if rationalism can ever be perfectly reconciled to religion in general and Hinduism in particular, it will be in some such form as Brahmaism. The form of Brahma Samaj may not be there: but the spirit of the Brahma Samaj will be always there in those refined versions of Hinduism.

The first service which the Brahma Samaj renders to the cause of truth is the challenge that it throws to the principle of blind authority in matters of religion. Religious beliefs ought not to be palmed off on a gullible humanity by priests or by books however sacred they may be. The Hindu mind had so far allowed itself to be treated as a child-mind, on which one had merely to write certain characters as priests did in the name of religion and they are bound to be received in a spirit of perfect submission by it. This attitude on the part of the Hindu mind is contradictory not only to the spirit of reason in us, or the spirit of progress in us, but also to the genius of Hinduism itself. No wonder then that religion ceases to be the inspiration of God and becomes a blind routine, because once the spirit of criticism is hushed, the human mind has to swallow all the nonsense that may be foisted upon

it as scriptural teaching. Ram Mohun Roy was the first in Modern India to raise the standard of revolt against the tyranny of the priesthood, the tyranny of the so-called religious scriptures, the tyranny of mere dogma as such. Bacon and Descartes and Luther, in different ways, struck hard at this root principle of medieval society and started the modern world on its great task of reconstruction on the basis of reason. Ram Mohun Roy is called the bridge between the old world and the new in India, largely because of the stand he took on this principle of rationality.

He knew too well the historic part played by revelation in the past and the utter helplessness of the average mind in matters vital to man's spiritual life to dispense with the scriptures altogether. The original scriptures of the great historic faiths are the revelation of the Universal Reason; they are not the arbitrary products of priestcraft. But later on all sorts of absurdities have crept into each faith, and unless they are removed, man can never emancipate himself from the tyranny of gross superstition. The first assumption of Raja Ram Mohun Roy is that there is a Universal Reason at work in nature and in society; and that religions in their pure and pristine form are the expression of that reason in man. The task of reason to-day is to disentangle the elements of permanent and universal truth in each faith from the mass of accretions which has gathered round them and to return to them as the basis of our new religious life. There is here a call for the individual judgment of man not to allow the priesthood to intervene between itself and truth, but to make its own independent effort to find out the elements of permanent value in one's own faith; and in this effort the study of the scriptures of other faiths becomes of vital importance. Raja Ram Mohun Roy virtually trusted that the science of comparative religion and the application of rational and philosophic criteria to the early Hindu scriptures would enable Hindus to find out for themselves the basic truths not only of their own religion but of all religions.

Ram Mohan Roy made the distinction which Rudolf Eucken has made famous, the distinction between the characteri-

stic religion and the universal religion. Each religion is a historical product; it is, therefore, full of national and local peculiarities. But there is an inherent tendency on the part of each historical religion to move towards a common pattern or a universal ideal, even while it continues to be a specific embodiment of a common, universal religion.

The criterion which Ram Mohun Roy consciously or unconsciously applies in this process of distinguishing between the universal and the particular, the essential and the accidental, in each religion is the Benthamite criterion of utility interpreted as the greatest good of the greatest number. The scriptures, therefore, can only supply the religious data and it is for the intellect of man to draw a line between the permanent and the temporary in them on the basis of the application of the principles of reason and utility.

Debendra Nath Tagore started with the belief in the infallibility of the Upanishads; but when doubts attacked his mind about this infallibility, he took a strange course, sent four of his students to Benares for inquiry, and on the basis of their report, withdrew his faith from the absolutely authoritative character of any scripture as such. The basis of the faith is shifted from authority to intuition or personal experience: and the use of that intuition enabled him to select certain passages from the Upanishads and make them the basis of Brahma doctrine and practices.

Keshub Chundra Sen also believed in intuition as the one way of finding out religious truth. He maintained that God communicates truth to various great men or prophets at various times and that all these scriptures are very valuable as sources of insight left to us by the past. The result was that he would allow a certain measure of authority to be associated with every great religious teacher and prophet; and would ask the Brahmos to accept the scriptures of all people as their scriptures. Latterly, he developed the doctrine of *adesha* and gave occasional pronouncements on matters of faith and social reform on the basis of his doctrine that a great man or a gifted man—such as he was—



receives inspiration from God now and then, and that the results of these messages should be considered authoritative. The Brahmo Samaj as a whole would not accept this version of revelation, because it would make the whole body dependent upon the religious fiat delivered by one man; and a part of the Brahmo Samaj seceded and set itself up as the body known as the Sadharana Brahmo Samaj.

#### 8. THE NEW THEISTIC IDEAL AND THE ATTACK ON IDOLATRY.

What then are the basic ideas which this combined use of reason and revelation, the intuition of individuals and the intuition of the great prophets, points to as the essence of Hinduism? The Brahmo Samaj, starting from a basis of common humanity and one universal cosmic nature, arrives at the conclusion that a comparative study of different faiths in their pristine purity reveals that there is one God and one God only and that God is the God not only of Hindus but of all humanity. This God is a personal God who should be worshipped by all members of this Brahmo association "not under or by any other name, designation or title used for and applied to any other particular Being or Beings by any man or sort of man whatever."<sup>5</sup> Thus the idea of the Deity defined as "the Eternal, Unsearchable and Immutable Being, who is the Author and Preserver of the Universe" was freed from all local or tribal or national associations. Only such a God can attract to Himself the unqualified and enthusiastic worship of all men without distinction of colour, caste, nation, or religion. The Brahmo Samaj was thus meant to be a church, open to all. The idea was to draw "men of all religious persuasions and creeds"<sup>6</sup> together on a common platform of worship and contemplation of one God with a view to promote "charity, morality, piety, benevolence, and virtue."<sup>7</sup>

Here a new start is made in the religious and social history of the Hindus in the direction of establishing a universal faith and a universal morality on the basis of one universal God. The Hindus were theists before the time of Raja Ram Mohun Roy and

the Hindus are theists after his time; and it certainly cannot be claimed that he introduced theism for the first time among the Hindus. But the theism of the Hindus, in general, is never very sharply marked off from pantheism on the one hand and polytheism on the other. The theism of the Brahmo Samaj, however, deliberately distinguishes itself from either of these poles of Hindu theological thinking and practice. The Hindu metaphysical genius delights in losing both nature and the self of man in a cosmic deity and the cosmic God in the Absolute of the Vedanta. But Ram Mohun Roy emphasises with the school of Ramanuja and the Vaishnavas the essentially personal character of God, in the interests of a genuine, healthy ethical and religious life. The factor of personal devotion and worship assumes with the Brahmo Samaj definite importance: and the path of Karma, or morality, is definitely accepted as the one necessary road to the realisation of the highest destiny of the soul. A God so defined now ceases to be a God of the Hindus merely but is a God of all; this is what is meant by the 'Universalism' of the Brahmo Samaj. Further, a sharp line is now drawn between the worship of one God and the worship of many gods and goddesses. The Brahmo Samaj definitely repudiates the existence of gods and goddesses. The theistic tendency of Hinduism is clearly shown to be contradictory to either the pantheistic tendency or the polytheistic tendency. The Brahmo Samaj is decidedly Hindu Unitarianism which can make common cause with the Muslim and the Christian Unitarianism.

Raja Ram Mohun Roy tried his best to purify the conception of God by removing from it all idolatrous associations. His crusade against image-worship is a part of his campaign for the restoration of the ideal of a genuine spiritual monism among the Hindus. If there is only one God, if the (other) gods and goddesses are the products of superstition, if the one God is common to Hindus and non-Hindus, the case for image-worship of God as one of the numerous deities, or as one of the *avatars* (or incarnations) automatically falls to the ground. But Raja Ram Mohun Roy took up the severe iconoclastic attitude of Islam and would not allow a material repre-

sentation of the immaterial God in any shape or form. "Invite me to an idolatrous ceremony!"<sup>8</sup> he said to Debendra Nath. Idol-worship thus becomes a sin and a degradation, an object of measureless contempt to a Brahma. The Raja points out that idol-worship and polytheism have gone hand in hand in India, that the worshippers of different gods clothe their deities with special individuality and are often found to quarrel with the worshippers of other Hindu gods and they often take the symbols or images as gods themselves. "Locality of habitation and a mode of existence analogous to their own views of earthly things, are uniformly ascribed to each particular god. Thus, the devotees of Siva, misconceiving the real spirit of the scriptures, not only place an implicit credence in the separate existence of Siva, but even regard Him as an Omnipotent Being, the greatest of all the divinities who, they say, inhabits the northern mountains of Kailasa, and that he is accompanied by two wives and several children and surrounded with numerous attendants. And so tenacious are those devotees in respect to the honour due to their chosen divinities that when they meet in such holy places as Hardwar, the adjustment of the points of precedence not only become occasions of the warmest verbal altercations, but sometimes even physical blows and violence. Neither do they regard the images of those gods merely in the light of instruments for elevating the mind to the conception of those supposed beings; they are simply in themselves made objects of worship. For whenever a Hindu purchases an idol in the market or constructs one with his own hands, or has one made under his own superintendence, it is his invariable practice to perform certain ceremonies called *Pran-Pratishtha* or the endowment of animation, by which he believes that its nature is changed from that of the mere materials of which it is formed, and that it acquires not only life, but supernatural power. The mysterious process is now complete and the god and goddess are now esteemed the arbiters of his destiny and continually receive his most ardent adoration

"At the same time the worshipper of images ascribes to them at once the opposite natures of human and superhuman

beings. In addition to their supposed wants as human beings, he is seen feeding or pretending to feed them every morning and evening; and as in the hot season he is careful to fan them, so in the cold, he is equally regardful of their comfort, covering them day by day with warm clothing and placing them at night in a snug bed. "9

In this way, a great Hindu takes up very seriously cudgels against one of the important practices of popular Hinduism, and disposes of the usual arguments brought forward by the champions or apologists of image-worship of the Hindus. It is, therefore, not quite proper to say that Hindus do not confound the symbols with the thing symbolised, the image with the deity it is supposed to represent. It is not wholly correct to say that polytheism is a mere form behind which there is a spirit of pure monotheism; for the orthodox Hindu has a distinct conception of the individuality of every deity he worships. If it is further argued that image-worship is a mere help, and a necessary help to the imagination of the masses in enabling them to visualise God, the Raja asks, how is it that every Mussulman from the highest to the lowest, every Protestant Christian of Europe, and many followers of Kabir and Nanak are able to worship God without the assistance of consecrated objects?

Nor is the Raja prepared to accept that the idolatry of the Hindus is a harmless practice, calculated to do much good and no harm. His main objections are not derived from a sounder theology, but from a sounder ethics and a sounder sociology. The whole cult of Krishna and Kali worship is cited in proof of the gross immorality of the idolatrous practice of the Hindus. Not only is Krishna pictured as an embodiment of the principle of free love but his devotees often imitate him and practise the grossest and most shameful indecencies in the name of religion. The worship of Kali is often accompanied by human sacrifices, the use of wine, criminal intercourse, and licentious songs. Are not these ceremonies, so much bound up with polytheism and idol-worship, subversive of every principle of morality and decency?

Ram Mohun Roy saw that polytheism and idolatry were not the genuine parts of pristine Hinduism, that they were opposed to the principles of other great religions, that they had neither theoretical justification nor any practical utility, and above all, that they were calculated to promote every species of immorality and, therefore, to bring about further the degradation of Hindu society. "My constant reflexions on the inconvenient, or rather injurious, rites introduced by the peculiar practice of Hindu idolatry which more than any other pagan-worship destroys the texture of society, together with compassion for my countrymen, have compelled me to use every possible effort to awaken them from their dream of error, and by making them acquainted with their scriptures, enable them to contemplate with true devotion the unity and omnipresence of Nature's God."<sup>10</sup>

#### 9. CASTE.

The Raja was not primarily a metaphysician or a theologian, but a sincere, rational humanitarian. He was, therefore, more interested in the social implications of the theological attitude than in their academic or speculative truth as such. The conception of God and the methods of approach to Him are the outcome of a certain state of mind; and they, in turn, react on that state of mind and serve to perpetuate it. The real thing which matters is a healthy state of mind both in the individual and the society; and it was one of the objects of the Raja and the Brahmo Samaj to attack the current ceremonialism of the Hindus in order to bring about a better and purer state of mind.

They demanded, therefore, a radical revision of Hindu ideas in all directions. A theological reconstruction was supposed to bring about a social reconstruction, and a social reconstruction was supposed to help the theological reconstruction. The Brahmo Samaj, therefore, under the Raja, directed its offensive soon against the whole custom-bound mentality of the Hindus; and if there was one institution more than any other which typified that attitude and became the most powerful fortification against all possi-

bility of reform and change, it was the caste-system of the Hindus. The Raja quoted the *Mahanirvana Tantra* in favour of his view that caste should cease to form the basis of Hindu society. "There is no discrimination of age and caste or race in the *Saiva* marriage. As enjoined by *Siva*, one should marry a woman who has no husband, and who is not 'sapinda', that is, who is not within the prohibited degrees of marriage." Caste, he considered, a great barrier to the economic advance and political unification of the country. "I regret to say that the present system of religion adhered to by the Hindus is not well calculated to promote their political interest. The distinction of caste, introducing innumerable divisions and subdivisions among them, has entirely deprived them of patriotic feeling, and the multitude of religious rites and ceremonies and the laws of purification have totally disqualified them from undertaking any difficult enterprise. It is, I think, necessary that some change should take place in their religion, at least for the sake of their political advantage and social comfort."<sup>12</sup> The Raja himself crossed the ocean and dined with Europeans in disregard of petty caste-restrictions.

Debendra Nath Tagore followed this up, threw away his sacrificial thread, appointed a non Brahmin to the ministry of the Samaj and dismissed Brahmins, who stuck to their threads, from the ministry. But Maharshi Tagore went back to some extent: and the work had to be vigorously pushed forward by Keshub Chundra Sen. Inter-caste marriages were encouraged. His own daughter's marriage with Cooch Bihar was an inter-caste marriage. Free inter-dining is practised by the Brahmos; and the offices of their church are thrown open to all members of the community, irrespective of caste.

The Brahmos point out that even if the four original castes are founded on a natural division of aptitudes and occupations, there is no justification for a hard and fast crystallisation of these groups into mutually exclusive compartments. There is no reason why they should not inter-dine, inter-marry, and allow full scope to talent, when it varies from father to son, to develop in its proper

direction. " Even in caste-ridden India, religious teachers like Kabira, and the pariah saints of Southern India have arisen from the lowest castes. Some of the highest teachings of the Upanishads proceeded from Kshatriya teachers. The great Buddha and the founders of Jainism were Kshatriyas and so was Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, and some of the other Sikh gurus. Some of the ablest preachers of Vaishnavism in Bengal have been Vaidyas and Kayasthas; Keshub Chundra Sen was a Vaidya and Swami Vivekananda was a Kayastha. The great founder of Christianity was only a carpenter's son, and in free Christendom, in Europe and America, the ablest preachers, the profoundest thinkers, the acutest politicians are continually rising from the lowest ranks. In the face of all this, who will say that there is any naturalness, any Divine sanction, in even the primitive four-fold division of castes? There will always be, as there has always been, transfers from one class to another, promotions and degradations which will show unmistakably, the ignorance and shortsightedness of those who would keep the ever-growing soul of man in artificially made fetters?

" Besides, who is to decide which of the numerous existing castes belong to which of the original castes; and if the redistribution according to *guna*\* and *karma* † be thought desirable, who is to carry out this redistribution? The reconstruction of our society will undoubtedly follow the line of impartial recognition of virtue and ability, irrespective of the accidents of birth, which at once agrees with the declared policy of our rulers and the verdict of the collective reason of the human race.

" It is said that the different castes of India have so long been separated from one another and represent so many different grades of intellectual and moral progress, that at least in the present state of Indian society, the commingling of the different castes will lead inevitably to a deterioration of the higher castes. But the Indian castes are not such real unities as the argument implies. Individuals and families in a single caste differ so much in

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\* Qualities. † Actions.

respect of intellectual and moral character, that taken as a whole, it is difficult to say whether a particular caste is high or low. Have not whole families of Brahmins been simple, unlearned priests from time immemorial? If the Brahmins have shown certain exceptional virtues, are not certain vices such as egotism, arrogance, mendicancy, and want of self-respect found among them in a superabundant degree? In the same manner, are not the Kshatriyas peculiarly liable to being irritable, overbearing and oppressive? On the other hand, there is a good deal of spiritual culture among some of the so-called lower castes. In respect to purely intellectual culture also, are not cases of keen intellectual and great mental powers, among the classes from which they were least expected, growing more and more numerous and showing that the doctrine of heredity, as commonly accepted, is much overstrained? Every individual shows a 'variation' inexplicable by his pedigree. Immanuel Kant was the son of a poor and simple saddle-maker: and yet he constructed a system of philosophy which is a wonder of the world. Whatever may have been our differences in the past, a common system of education is now happily levelling up these differences and raising us to a moral platform from which love, sympathy, co-operation, and unity appear to be things higher and more valuable than all other things. When will those pernicious distinctions which are sapping the very life blood of our nation be at an end, and India rise as a strong, united nation fit to fulfil the high destiny which Providence has ordained for her? There cannot be a surer truth than this that high destiny cannot be fulfilled without the utter destruction of the supreme root of all our social evils, the caste-system. "18

#### 10. POSITION OF WOMAN: CRUSADE AGAINST SUTTEE

Another crying evil of Hindu society which the Brahmos attacked was the undignified position which women occupied in the Hindu society. Here also the Raja deserves the lasting gratitude of his countrymen by starting his fierce campaign against the one hundred and one wrongs to which woman has been subjected in



the name of religion. The root assumption upon which the whole treatment of woman was based, is the supposed inferiority of woman to man. The Raja's bold and uncompromising stand on every principle which commended itself to his reason, even against the heaviest odds of custom and prejudice, masquerading as religion, comes out perhaps best in connection with his fight for a free, equal, and self-respecting womanhood. He sums up one of his appeals on behalf of the fair sex in the following trenchant words.

“ Women are in general inferior to men in bodily strength and energy, consequently the male part of the community, taking advantage of their corporeal weakness, have denied to them those excellent merits that they are entitled to by nature and afterwards they are apt to say that women are naturally incapable of acquiring those merits. But if we give the subject consideration, we may easily ascertain whether or not your accusation against them is consistent with justice. As to their inferiority in point of understanding, when did you ever afford them a fair opportunity of exhibiting their natural capacity? How then can you accuse them of want of understanding? On the contrary, Lilavati, Bhanumati are celebrated for their thorough knowledge of all the Shastras. Moreover, in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad of the Yajurveda, it is clearly stated that Yajnavalkya imparted divine knowledge of the most difficult nature to his wife Maitreyi, who was able to follow and completely attain it.

“ Secondly, you charge them with want of resolution, at which I feel exceedingly surprised, for we constantly perceive, in a country where the name of death makes the male shudder, that the female, from her firmness of mind, offers to burn with the corpse of her deceased husband; and yet you accuse those women of deficiency in point of resolution.

“ Thirdly, with regard to their trustworthiness, let us look minutely into the conduct of both sexes and ascertain which of them is the most frequently guilty of betraying friends. If we

enumerate such women in each village or town as have been deceived by men, and such men as have been betrayed by women I presume that the number of the deceived women would be found ten times greater than that of the betrayed men. Men are, in general, able to read and write, and manage public affairs, by which means they easily promulgate such faults as women occasionally commit, but never consider as criminal the misconduct of men towards women. One fault they have, it must be acknowledged, which is, by considering others equally void of duplicity as themselves, to give their confidence too readily, from which they suffer much misery, even so far that some of them are misled to suffer themselves to be burnt to death.

“ In the fourth place, with respect to their subjection to the passions, this may be judged of by the custom of marriage as to the respective sexes, for one man may marry two or three, sometimes even ten wives and upwards, while a woman who marries but one husband, desires at his death to follow him, forsaking all worldly enjoyments, or to remain leading the austere life of an ascetic. ”<sup>14</sup>

The Raja was specially concerned to remove the most shameful blot upon so-called Hinduism, viz. the compulsory immolation of wives on the funeral pyres of their husbands. The Raja started an agitation to prove that the custom of *suttee* had no warrant in the Hindu scriptures and was opposed to all considerations of humanity. He wrote pamphlets, sent petitions to the Government, and organised a committee to see that no force was employed on these helpless widows. His agitation served to strengthen the hands of the Government in putting down by legislation this heartless sacrifice of India's womanhood, at the altar of a false ideal. The Raja always exposed the weaknesses of the logic of those advocates of Hinduism who tried to glorify and defend every existing custom, however atrocious it might be to the best instincts of humanity. In a petition from him and his friends, he writes: “ Your petitioners are fully aware from their own knowledge and from the authority of eye-witnesses, that cases have

frequently occurred where women have been induced by the persuasions of their next heirs, interested in their destruction, to burn themselves on the funeral piles of their husbands; that others, who were induced by fear to retract a resolution rashly expressed in the first moments of grief, of burning with their deceased husbands, have been forced upon the pile, and there bound down with ropes and pressed with great bamboos until consumed with the flames; that some after fleeing from the flames have been carried back by their relations and burnt to death. All these instances, your petitioners humbly submit, are murders according to every Shastra, as well as to the common sense of all nations."<sup>18</sup>

The movement for emancipation of women was thus inaugurated by the Raja : and it was continued with the same zeal by his successors in the Brahmo Samaj, especially Keshub Chundra Sen. Debendra Nath Tagore was more keen on re-establishing a purer Hindu religious life than on social reform movements. But Keshub Chundra Sen threw himself with heart and soul into the movement. The Adi Brahmo Samaj ( of Debendra Nath Tagore) called the ceremony of marriage *Bhararpana*-making over charge, instead of *Sampradana* or giving away. The father is now not supposed to give away his daughter to the bridegroom, but he made over the charge to his bridegroom. This was a change for the better. Secondly, the Brahmo marriage insisted on *Sammati-grahana*, that is, the consent of the bride and the bridegroom had to be secured to the marriage. Marriage, thus, ceases to be a mere contract between the parents and guardians on both sides, and becomes a direct understanding between the two parties—the bride and the bridegroom. Here is a distinct recognition of the independent personalities of the husband and the wife. This novel feature of the Brahmo marriage started the idea of the age appropriate to marriage, because a deliberate approval on the part of the girl as well as her partner implies that they are both grown-up human beings, capable of fully understanding the implications of marriage and voluntarily going into it after their conscious acceptance. Keshub Chundra Sen consulted the leading medical men of the country and arrived

at the age of fourteen as the minimum marriageable age for girls and eighteen as the corresponding age for boys. The Brahma marriage soon developed into a special type of marriage distinct from the normal orthodox Hindu marriage. It did not accept the idolatrous ceremonies of the Hindu marriage. It stopped child-marriages, and encouraged widow remarriages and marriages between members of different castes. It stopped bigamy and polygamy, and, thus, at one stroke tried to effect a number of most valuable changes. The legal recognition of this form came in 1872, which set the seal of approval upon it; but the law demanded a formal declaration on the part of the marriage parties that they "did not profess the Hindu, Mahomedan, Christian, Parsee, Buddhist, Sikh or Jain religion."

These reforms, however, acquire a real meaning only when the parties to the marriages possess the necessary judgment and education to make real use of them. Hence the demand for female education. It was clearly perceived by the orthodox Hindus that women could be kept in their place of inferiority only so long as they were not properly educated. It was equally perceived by the Brahmans that education was the real key to women's emancipation. Keshub Chundra Sen opened a Girls' School, after his return from England. In 1876, the first Indian girl passed the entrance examination of the Calcutta University. This education movement has since slowly spread all over India.

## II. THE RAJA'S SERVICES TO INDIA.

The Raja's services to India are manifold. The Raja's personality was a complex <sup>one</sup> personality, with many facets, ~~and his~~ <sup>his</sup> contributions to the cause of India are ~~(equally)~~ rich and many-sided. In India, religion overshadows everything; and the Raja rightly attacked the Indian problem at its roots. Religion nowhere is a mere personal concern between man and his God; but in India it is more intimately bound up with every phase of individual and social life. Hinduism—orthodox, popular, customary

Hinduism continues to be the basis of the Hindu life and organisation upto to-day: and in India, if any vast social or political or economic revolution is to be accomplished, it will have to start from the very basis of Hindu life and work its way outwards and upwards.] The Raja knew it; and the Raja, too, being born a Hindu and a Brahmin in those early days of the British Raj, could not sever this intimate connection that exists for a Hindu Brahmin between the religious and metaphysical beliefs and the social usages. The social structure of the Hindus is to be taken as a whole: you cannot touch one vital part without touching and affecting the rest. The Raja's attempt to rationalise the whole scheme of living and bring it into line with modern ideas took full account of this fact of the inter dependence of the various parts of Hindu social life and their ultimate dependence on what the Hindus have learnt to consider their faith and the faith of their fathers.

The Raja's religious liberalism is, therefore, not only implicitly but also explicitly, a social and political liberalism also. He, thus, became the founder not only of the Brahmo Samaj, but also of the Social Reform School of Ranade, and the Political Reform Movement of the early Indian National Congress. In fact, his religious liberalism was meant to pave the way for the social and political reform movements in the country.- The Raja's was not essentially a metaphysical type of mind, pursuing truth for truth's sake, and passionately working up theories in the interests of the intellectual ideal of consistency: his mind was essentially practical, practical in his religion as well as in his social and other activities. He was moved not so much by the theoretical unsoundness of Hinduism as it was practised then, as by the glaring anomalies and cruel iniquities of the Hinduism of his time. It may be that he was "above all and beneath all a religious personality. The many and far-reaching ramifications of his prolific energy were forthputtings of one purpose. The root of his life was religion. He would never have been able to go so far or to move his countrymen so mightily as he did but for the

driving power of an intense theistic passion."<sup>16</sup> But this religious passion did not drive him to construct beautiful theological schemes and rest there; nor did it drive him to seek peace in solitude and in contemplation of God and pursuit of truth. He was relentlessly driven by his religious passion to find out for himself as well as for his countrymen a purer creed, to fight a ceaseless war against religious and social absurdities, which sheltered themselves behind the ranks of Hindu religious orthodoxy. "His mind moved more and more from theory to practice, from doctrines to institutions, from polemics to reform. His greatness was in the fact that he was an outstanding exception to the verdict of the philosophic historian that would keep apart for ever the man of theory and the man of practice."<sup>17</sup>

His greatest contribution to India is the fight that he started against medievalism in all its shapes and forms. The European founded the Empire not so much by the Battle of Plassey as by the conquest of Raja Ram Mohun Roy. The Raja stood like Mahadev\* of old to let the Ganges of Western culture come down with a torrential crash upon his giant head, in order that thence it might find a peaceful way of penetration into the Indian soul. Can India afford to shut herself for ever in her isolation, cut off from the progressive currents of the Modern World? The Raja discovers the spiritual meaning of the British Raj, of Western Civilisation, and of Christianity, in himself, and makes the trumpet-call to the rest of sleeping India to wake up and to take possession of the rich heritage of modern culture that was knocking at her doors. As Tagore puts it: "Raja Ram Mohun Roy inaugurated the Modern Age in India. He was born at a time when our country, having lost its link with the inmost truths of its being, struggled under a crushing load of unreason, in abject slavery to circumstances. In social usage, in politics, in the realm of religion and art, we had entered the zone of uncreative habit, of decadent tradition, and ceased to exercise our humanity. Through the dynamic power of his personality,

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\* The Great God.

his uncompromising freedom of the spirit, he vitalized our national being with the urgency of creative endeavour, and launched it into the arduous adventure of self-realization. He is the great path-maker of this century, who has removed ponderous obstacles that impeded our progress at every step, and initiated us into the present era of world-wide co-operation of humanity."<sup>18</sup>

To India, the Raja felt that the assimilation of the spirit of Western culture was the step to the re-awakening of her old self, the rediscovery of her glorious past. The Raja was not lost in the glamour of the forms of Western civilization; he never ceased for one moment to be a loyal and loving son of his own country. He looked beyond the forms and trappings of Western culture and felt that this new spirit of modern civilisation was but a clue to the recovery of our lost ancient culture. And he was truly a prophet because he could look beyond both the West and the East to a dream of a wider brotherhood of man and man, nation and nation. As a true unifier, "he paved the way for the re-assertion of India's inmost truth of being, her belief in the equality of man, in the love of the Supreme Person, who ever dwells in the hearts of all men and unites us in the bond of welfare."<sup>19</sup>

Such was Raja Ram Mohun Roy, the man who heralded the new age and welcomed the new culture to India, seeing in it with a prophetic vision the promise of a brighter day not only for India, or Asia, but for the whole of humanity. His limitations are the limitations of his age: and the easy synthesis which he saw did not anticipate for a moment the hard conflicts which were to come—the conflict between the old and the new, the forces of orthodoxy and the forces of progress, the Hindu and the Muslim, Indian nationalism and British imperialism, bourgeoisie and proletariat. Little did he dream that when he demanded Western education and Western institutions, he was closing the era of deep sleep for the millions of his countrymen and opening the floodgates of religious, social, economic anarchy for his country. But that is the fate of prophets who are destined to lead humanity to new paths: and if they could have seen too far ahead, they

could not perhaps have given the lead with their usual confidence and force. Miss Collet sums up his contributions in a passage which has become a classic.

“ Ram Mohun Roy stands in history as the living bridge over which India marches from her unmeasured past to her incalculable future. He was the arch which spanned the gulf that yawned between ancient caste and modern humanity, between superstition and science, between despotism and democracy, between immobile custom and a conservative progress, between polytheism and theism. He was the mediator of his people, harmonizing in his own person, often by means of his solitary sufferings, the conflicting tendencies of immemorial tradition and an inevitable enlightenment.

“ He embodies the new spirit which arises from the compulsory mixture of races and faiths and civilisations—he embodies its freedom of inquiry, its thirst for science, its large human sympathy, its pure and sifted ethics, along with its reverent but not uncritical regard for the past, and prudent ‘disinclination towards revolt.’ But in the life of Ram Mohun Roy we see that the secret of the whole movement is religious. He was a genuine outgrowth of the old Hindu stock, in a soil watered by new influences, and in an atmosphere charged with unwonted forcing power, but still a true scion of the old stock. The Raja was no merely occidental oriental, no Hindu polished into the doubtful semblance of a European. Just as little was he, if we may use the term without offence, a spiritual Eurasian. If we follow the right line of his development, we shall find that he leads the way from the orientalism of the past, not to, but through Western culture, towards a civilisation which is neither Western nor Eastern, but something vastly larger and nobler than both.

“ Ram Mohun Roy thus presents a most instructive and inspiring study for the New India of which he is the type and the pioneer. The European and Asiatic streams of human development, which have often tinged each other before, are now approaching a con-



fluence, which bids fair to form the one ocean river of the collective progress of mankind. The nearing dawn of these unmeasured possibilities only throws into clearer prominence the figure of the man whose life-story we have told."<sup>20</sup>

## 12. CONTRIBUTION OF THE BRAHMO SAMAJ TO THE CAUSE OF INDIAN FREEDOM.

India's struggle has been described as a battle for Swaraj. If this expression is properly understood, it very aptly and comprehensively describes the nature of India's fundamental problem during the whole nineteenth century and to-day. Swaraj means freedom from all externalism, whether in religion, or society, or politics or economics. This fight has gone on for more than a hundred years with apparently varying immediate objectives, but really one ultimate objective. In this fight, there are two major phases: the one we call Liberalism, and the other we call Nationalism. The Brahmo Samaj is the pioneer movement in the great struggle to rationalise all our institutions under the influence of Western culture. It was primarily a struggle to realise freedom in one sphere of life, viz. the religious. Religious freedom has to develop into social freedom and that develops into political and economic freedom. But the essence of the movement is always the same: it is a fight for Swaraj, a fight for freedom.

It is not a paradox but a simple truth that with Raja Ram Mohun Roy the great struggle began. The greatest tyranny under which the Hindus were groaning in his time was the tyranny of blind custom, of a selfish and bigoted priesthood. How could we expect anything in the way of conscious progress from the millions of Indians who were denied the elementary right to think for themselves in all vital matters in the name of religion? The human soul was crushed under the pressure of dogma—from which all meaning had departed. The worship of tradition had gone too far and had resulted in a complete paralysis of the mind of man and consequently of his life. The Liberals—religious, social and political—in India have always considered the advent of the

British as Providential, because they were the divinely chosen agency to rouse Indians from their attitude of mechanical submission to usages and conventions which were dignified by the name of religion. Idolatry and ceremonialism bound up with it may be right or wrong; but that attitude of mind, which in the name of common sense and ancient Hinduism could spurn them aside as so much mischievous nonsense, was something very much needed in those days. Caste sets up a tyranny in a way greater than the tyranny of a State: and the opposition which it offers to any progress or reform, is simply inconceivable. The Raja did the greatest service to the cause of freedom in India in showing that rare courage of mind and wisdom in repudiating this institution of artificial divisions and subdivisions of a naturally single society. He demanded the elementary right of purely independent judgment in the religious and social sphere and, therefore, asked the Hindu not to take too seriously the religious and social beliefs and institutions palmed off upon him in the name of caste and priesthood.

He had to attack, to some extent, the authority of the Scriptures, because the castes were supposed to be rooted in the Scriptures, and idol-worship was based on the Scriptures, and the worship of many gods and goddesses had its authority in the Scriptures, and the cruel immolation of helpless widows was supposed to be supported by the Scriptures, and the unmitigated tyranny of the Brahmin priests was founded on the Scriptures. The Raja started as a sceptic when he said that men were divided into four classes: those who deceive, those who are deceived, those who both deceive and are deceived, and those who neither deceive nor are deceived.<sup>21</sup> In this rationalistic mood he was prepared to condemn all religion as the work of designing priestcraft and condemn all Scriptures as a tissue of falsehood. "Most of the leaders of different creeds, for perpetuating their names and enhancing their reputation, have declared some special beliefs in the form of pure truths resting on miracles and have in a way so attracted the majority of the people towards them, that these helpless people bound in obedience and servitude, having wholly lost the eye and heart of percep-

tion, consider it sinful to distinguish between actual goodness and apparent sins in the execution of the orders of their leaders."<sup>22</sup> The Hindu religion, thus, had become a mass of religious restrictions "which sometimes become sources of prejudice one against another and causes of physical and mental trouble." The root of the disease was the inertia of the Hindu mind fostered by all the social and religious agencies. Tradition had become a mere deadweight on Hindu society; and it was the most paramount need of the times to raise this banner of revolt against the dominance of mere tradition and of blind authority.

A supernatural revelation resting for the interpretation of its nature, extent, and authority upon a hereditary priesthood may be a necessary basis of religion and morality in the early days of a society when its mind is not fully developed, but the sooner it gives way to the authority of reason the better. "Some people argue that the Almighty Creator has opened the way of guidance to mortal beings through the medium of prophets or leaders of religions. This is evidently futile, because the same people believe that all things in creation, whether good or bad, proceed from the Great Creator, without any intermediate agency, and that the apparent causes are the means and conditions of that (i. e. their coming into existence). Hence it is to be seen whether the sending of prophets and revelation to them from God are immediately from God or through intermediate agency. In the first case, there is no necessity of an intermediate agency for guidance to salvation, and there does not seem any necessity of the instrumentality of prophets or revelation. And in the second case, there should be a series of intermediate agencies. Besides, what one nation calls a guide to faith another calls a misleading to an erroneous way."<sup>23</sup> Here is the Raja in the rôle of a pure Rationalist, who makes short work of the arguments of orthodoxy in favour of supernaturalism.

But the Raja, later on, tried to reconcile the dictates of individual reason with the authority of revelation, which may be considered the collective reason of mankind. The limitations of

individual reason became clearer to him and he felt the necessity of a revelation in some form. "When we appeal to reason as a surer guide, we soon find how incompetent it is alone, to conduct us to the object of our pursuit. We often find that, instead of facilitating our endeavours or clearing up our perplexities, it only serves to generate a universal doubt, incompatible with principles on which our comfort and happiness mainly depend." <sup>24</sup> He confessed that "the reasoning faculty which leads men to certainty in things within its reach, produces no effect on questions beyond its comprehension."

The Brahma Samaj started this great inquiry as to the ultimate nature and basis of religious belief and the respective claims of reason and revelation, personal intuition and the intuition of the sages. The Raja made use of the Scriptures to prove the unscriptural character of idolatry or polytheism or *suttee*. Debendra Nath advanced further and boldly declared that the Scriptures were not infallible and would accept only those portions of the Scriptures which would recommend themselves to his religious and rational nature. "The doctrines of the Brahmors or spiritual worshippers of God are founded upon a broader and more unexceptionable basis than the Scriptures of a single religious denomination on earth. The volume of Nature is open to all, and that volume contains a revelation clearly teaching, in strong and legible characters, the great truths of religion and morality. Now, as the Hindu religion contains notions of God and human duty which coincide with that revelation, we have availed ourselves of works which are the great depositaries of national faith, and which have the advantage of national associations on their side, for disseminating the principles of pure religion among our countrymen." <sup>25</sup> The difference, thus, between the Raja and his followers as Max Muller put it, is this: To the Raja the Vedas were divine, therefore they were true. To the Brahmors who succeeded him, the Vedas were true; therefore they were divine. The principle of discrimination introduced by the Raja was bound thus to deprive the Vedas of all divine and infallible character.

Keshub Chundra Sen here marks a reversion to the old Hindu doctrine of personal intuition. According to him the voice of God asserting itself through the soul of man is the ultimate authority in matters of religion. This *adesha* theory of his was used by him to cover some of his retreats, especially the marriage of his daughter at a very young age with Cooch Bihar. But the theory is a time-honoured theory which appears again and again in the history of thought. As soon as "there is a contact of divinity with humanity, flashes of light instantly burst into view, and illumine, enliven and inspire the soul." "The voice of God," he says, "is a clear communication of wisdom, a quickening influence, an overpowering impulse." "It is the Spirit's voice audible to the spirit's ear. The whole thing is spiritual. There is neither sound, nor language, nor gesture. It is the language of the heart. Neither Hebrew, nor Greek, nor Sanskrit, nor English, but the plain vernacular of the heart, natural instincts and feelings." 26

The doctrine of intuition, however, is different from the usual Hindu doctrine of intuition which generally refers to the capacity which the human soul has for a direct realization of God. Keshub's theory is a theory of individual conscience through which God directs the individual to specific acts as right acts, and warns him against certain other acts as wrong ones. "When thou art about to do something wrong, is there any admonition or remonstrance from within, anything that tells thee not to harm thy neighbour, not to speak untruth, not to cause thy wife and children to starve, not to torture an innocent man? If so, whence comes the warning? Unquestionably from thee, O Lord." 27 Inspiration, thus, ceases to be the property of a few great men: it ceases to be an exceptional mood of exaltation of a few blessed souls. There is no man so humble that it does not come to him nor any moment so prosaic that it may not visit us then. "We must not regard inspiration as God speaking by fits and starts, but as a perpetual breathing of His Spirit. It may be realised in individual conscience now and then, here and there, by this man or that man,

but the spirit of God is ever working in us, and the glowing current of His inspiration knows no rest."<sup>28</sup>

Thus, we have here in the Brahmo movement, the emphatic assertion of the right of individual reason to accept or reject whatever it thinks proper and the equally emphatic rejection of the right of any tradition or supernatural revelation as a source of authority. We have an emphatic rejection of the infallible character of any sacred writing as such. Thirdly, we have an emphatic assertion of the rights of individual conscience to determine in its own way what is right and what is wrong. The Shastras ( or divine revelation ) are not thrown overboard as a mass of heresies and superstitious nonsense, but the claim to determine what portions of them are inspired and what other portions are rubbish, belongs to the individual reason. ( The scriptures of other religions also receive this recognition to some extent; and nature is supposed to be an equally striking revelation of God's designs. But in the matters of theory, the voice of individual reason, in a way, is recognised as the ultimate authority, and in matters of conduct, the voice of individual conscience is recognised as a final authority.

What does this imply? It implies a perfect revolution in the Hindu outlook on life. The movement tends to develop an intense individualism: but such an individualism was urgently needed as a protest against the complete disappearance of the individual's sacred right, and the imperative duty in the last resort to use his best judgment in all matters of truth and falsity, rightness and wrongness, in the supposed dictates of the Scriptures. ( The individual's autonomy is asserted: and this autonomy is bound inevitably in the long run to destroy completely the absolutism of the Vedas and the autocracy of a selfish priestcraft.

The enunciation of this principle hitherto dormant in the whole Indian life, and its bold application first in one sphere and then in another, mark the beginning of a radical change in Hindu life and ideals. This principle is the germ of a far-reaching revo-

lution in India, in every sphere of life. It was a challenge to the whole old order of things partly religious, partly feudal; and the doom of this order was a matter merely of time. The fight for freedom is essentially a fight for the fullest freedom of the spirit of man; and that fight began when the Raja invoked the voice of reason and Keshub invoked the voice of conscience against all the external impositions of an arbitrary society. The Hindu Scriptures may be full of the profoundest wisdom: but before they are accepted by a Hindu as final and authoritative, they must receive the seal and sanction of the Hindu's intellect and conscience. This was a privilege which no Hindu could part with except on the pain of parting with his essential manhood, his real personality. )

The Raja, however, did not merely enunciate the principle, but began to apply it boldly in the religious and the social sphere. His fight against idolatry and polytheism is really the beginning of India's fight for freedom. (The Raja started the same work in India which Mahomet started in Arabia. His fight against the compulsory burning of the widow will be always recorded not only in the history of India but in the history of the world as a great fight for the freedom of Indian womanhood.) His fight against the medieval methods of education showed his determination to make the new principle which he enunciated real: for men can use their individual reason against an irrational social order only if they are properly educated on modern lines. Like Bacon, the Raja demanded that education, if it is to be fruitful and effective, should shake off its medieval and scholastic character and become an education in the methods, ideas, and results of modern sciences. The Raja thus laid the foundations of modern Indian nationalism by insisting that a free State postulated free Society, and a free Society postulated the free individual, and the freedom of the individual means his intellectual capacity to form well-formed judgments about all affairs of his State, and his moral capacity to stand courageously by them

The whole movement inspired by the Raja rested upon two

ideals—the ideal of truth and the ideal of freedom. The emancipation of the individual from the bonds of ignorance and prejudice and superstition led up to his emancipation from the shackles of arbitrary authority of the Scriptures, of the priesthood, and of the caste. There was no fanaticism in his love of Hinduism nor in his love of India. There was a genuine cosmopolitanism in his creed; he desired the triumph of the same ideals of liberty and rationality for all peoples. He considered the British Government in its relation to India from this point of view and considered it a blessing to the people of India in those days. “Finding them (the British) generally more intelligent, more steady and moderate in their conduct, I gave up my prejudice against them, and became inclined in their favour, feeling persuaded that their rule, though a foreign yoke, would lead more speedily and surely to the amelioration of the native inhabitants.”<sup>29</sup> But he fought the anomalies of the British as bravely as he fought the anomalies of Indian society. His memorial to the Supreme Court with regard to the Free Press is considered “the Areopagitica of Indian History.”

“31. Your Majesty is well aware that a Free Press has never yet caused a revolution in any part of the world, because, while men can easily represent the grievances arising from the conduct of the local authorities to the supreme Government, and thus get them redressed, the grounds of discontent that excite revolution are removed; whereas, where no freedom of Press existed, and grievances consequently remained unrepresented and unredressed, innumerable revolutions have taken place in all parts of the globe, or if prevented by the armed force of the Government, the people continued ready for insurrection....

“35. It is well known that despotic Governments naturally desire the suppression of any freedom of expression which might tend to expose their acts to the obloquy which ever attends the exercise of tyranny and oppression, and the argument they constantly resort to is, that the spread of knowledge is dangerous to the existence of all legitimate authority, since, as a people



become enlightened, they will discover that by a unity of effort, the many may easily shake off the yoke of the few, and thus become emancipated from the restraints of power altogether, forgetting the lesson derived from history, that in countries which have made the smallest advances in civilization, anarchy and revolution are almost prevalent—while on the other hand, in nations the most enlightened, any revolt against governments, which have guarded inviolate the rights of the governed, is most rare, and that the resistance of a people advanced in knowledge, has ever been—not against the existence but against the abuse of governing powers.”<sup>30</sup>

Comparing the Muslim and the British Raj in India, the Raja pointed out that the natives of India had access to the highest positions under the Mahomedans irrespectively of their faith: but under the British, this valuable privilege is altogether lost. There was, however, compensation in the secure enjoyment of civil and religious rights; “but if these rights that remain are allowed to be unceremoniously invaded, the most valuable of them being placed at the mercy of one or two individuals, the basis on which they have founded their hopes of comfort and happiness under the British Power will be destroyed.”<sup>31</sup>

The Raja was a child of the eighteenth century and had unbounded enthusiasm about the possibilities of the future development of humanity, under the inspiring guidance of the ideals of liberty and rationality. These were magic words in those days, calculated to bring about an early millennium in human affairs. Like the great Revolutionaries of France, the Raja was a passionate advocate of the liberties of oppressed people everywhere. When he heard the news of the people of Naples crushed back into servitude by the Austrians, he wrote: “From the late unhappy news from Europe, I am obliged to conclude that I shall not live to see liberty universally restored to the nations of Europe, and Asiatic nations, especially those that are European colonies, possessed of a greater degree of the same liberty which they now enjoy. Under these circumstances, I consider the cause of the

Neapolitans as my own and their enemies as ours. Enemies to liberty and friends of despotism have never been and never will be ultimately successful." <sup>32</sup> As the poet says :

"...whatever wrong is done  
To the humblest and the weakest 'neath the all-beholding Sun,  
That wrong is also done to us."

The Raja's enthusiasm for the passing of the Reform Bill in 1832 deserves to be noted. He wrote : " The nation can no longer be a prey of the few who used to fill their purses at the expense, nay, to the ruin of the people, for a period of upwards of fifty years ... As I publicly avowed that in the event of the Reform Bill being defeated, I would renounce my connection with the country ... Thank Heaven, I can now feel proud of being one of your fellow subjects." <sup>33</sup>

The Raja naturally, therefore, dreamt the same dream of political freedom for his countrymen. He welcomed most enthusiastically the co-operation and leadership of Europeans in the task of educating and elevating India and wished that if the government continued to be liberal, the connection between India and Great Britain might continue for a long time. His passion for Westernisation went so far as to make him welcome a settlement of Europeans in India and free inter-marriage on their part with Indians. The resulting mixed community would cling to Great Britain " so long as they are treated liberally and governed in an enlightened manner "; but if events brought about a separation " a friendly and a highly advantageous commercial intercourse may be kept up between two free and Christian countries, united as they will be by resemblance of language, religion, and manners." <sup>34</sup>

This passage throws a clear light on the characteristic faith of Raja Ram Mohun Roy, in whom the passion for truth and humanity, as he conceived them, overbore the passion for his own community or his own faith, or his own country, in a narrow and exclusive sense. He wanted his countrymen to play a great

part; but he saw that this could be done only under European leadership and guidance. He wanted India to be eventually instrumental in "enlightening the surrounding nations of Europe," but this was possible also under European leadership. "The remarkable thing," Miss Collet points out, "is the vision of the eventual condition of his country, however arrived at, as it disclosed itself to the mind of Raja Ram Mohun Roy. He shows here with ample clearness the kind of India he desired, and to some extent, at least expected to arise. It is an *English-speaking India*; it is, moreover, a *Christian India*. It is a *generally Anglicised India*. Nor is he in the slightest degree indisposed to contemplate the prospect of India as a nation *politically independent*. In any case, he evidently desires to accept as her destiny the sublime rôle of the *Enlightener of Asia*." 85

This ideal may not commend itself to his countrymen; but there is no doubt as to his sincerity about India's need to bring the whole structure of her time-worn civilization into line with modern requirements. His passion for truth sometimes ignored the passion of his countrymen for their own faiths and their unmitigated opposition to Christianity as an essentially foreign creed; but India should always be grateful to him for his bold stand for the principle of liberty as the basis of the new Indian religious, social, and political order. The Raja had two sides to his nature. "There was Raja, the cosmopolite, the rationalist thinker, the representative man with a universal outlook on human civilization and its historic march; a Brahmin of the Brahmins; Jeremy Bentham's admired and dearly loved collaborator in the service of mankind; the peer of the Humes, the Gibbons, the Voltaires, the Volneys, the Diderots, or any Free-thinkers or Rationalists of them all. For him all idols were broken, and the parent of all illusions, Authority, had been hacked to pieces. He, the cosmopolite, was daunted by no speculative doubts, discouraged by no craven fears. For him the veil of Isis was torn, the temple had been rent in twain, and the Holy of Holies lay bare to his gaze. Calmly, fearlessly, truthfully, he probed, fathomed, dissected. The Raja was no doctrinaire. He had a wholesome historical

instinct, a love of concrete embodiments and institutions, such as characterised the born religious and social reformer. A rationalist and universalist in every pulse of his being, he was no believer in the cult of the worship of Reason, of naked logical abstraction. The universal guiding principle of the love of God and man, he sought and found in the Scriptures of the nations, and rose from the barren religion of Nature or Theophilanthropy of his eighteenth century predecessors to a liberal interpretation and acceptance of the Historic Revelation and Scriptures, not indeed in any supernatural sense, but as embodiments of the collective sense, of races of mankind, and as concentrating and focussing that principle of Authority which, in this mundane state, is an indispensable cement and foundation, an elementary factor of communal life, whether in the social, political, or religious sphere. Thus rationalistic Raja has verily been the founder and father of the nineteenth century conception of the Scriptures which discards supernaturalism and miracle-mongering, and yet returns and reassures for the race those precious treasures, those storehouses of moral and spiritual force, and of living authority."<sup>56</sup>

The individual thus receives, for the first time in the modern history of India, a special recognition, as the very centre and source of all social life and thought. The individual has, therefore, now to assume a new responsibility—the responsibility of sitting in judgment over each part of his life and accepting only that which commends itself to his reason and rejecting all the rest. The principle of the autonomy of the individual is to be the basis of the new social and religious reconstruction in the country. Authority, tradition, revelation, these principles are not thrown overboard altogether but are thrust into the second place. The first place of right belongs to the individual reason and individual conscience. But what are the criteria by which the individual conscience and individual reason are to regulate individual and social life? The individual reason is implicitly universal reason; and individual conscience is implicitly universal conscience. The end, therefore, is that individual highest good which is in essence the universal highest good. All the rubbish of the centu-

ries which was choking the life of India had to be swept away by one blast of this cold reason. The very source of Hindu thought and life had been poisoned and the pure original well-springs had ceased to flow. The tradition of the centuries had crystallised into an iron mould and now in the name of caste, now in the name of the Brahmin priesthood, now in the name of Manu and Yajnavalkya, had assumed a tyrannical rôle which completely crushed all the whisperings of independent reason and conscience. The social mind had been bound fast to this mechanical routine. It was here that the Raja made a breach and demanded that every part of this authoritative structure must be brought before the bar of reason and allowed to stand only if it received the approval of reason.

The new movement initiated by the Raja has been partly a movement of revolt and partly of reconstruction. The Raja was not an iconoclast in the full sense of the term: he tried in every sphere of life to *reconcile* as far as possible the existing order with the dictates of his enlightened reason. In religion, while he repudiated the grosser forms of idolatry and polytheism, he did not renounce the principle of the divinity and infallibility of the Scriptures; in social life, he fought against the wrongs of Hindu widows and the excesses of caste, but did not categorically condemn the existing social order; in politics, he protested against restrictions on the press and advocated the adoption of a more liberal policy in revenue and other affairs; but on the whole, he stood by the new political order. The Raja, therefore, really embodies the principle of compromise in human affairs, the principle upon which the moderate political party subsequently took its stand.

But the principle of autonomy and the unfettered assertion of reason, though accepted haltingly by the Raja, had come to stay. When Debendra Nath categorically rejected the infallibility of the Vedas, we find this principle receiving its further development in the religious sphere. Maharshi Tagore virtually raised the standard of religious revolt against the arbitrary im-

positions of the Scriptures. But in the social sphere, he moved forward and backward and under him the Brahma Samaj marked time. He was for the reinstatement of a purer spiritual life among the Hindus and could leave the rest to time.

It was reserved for Keshub to assert uncompromisingly the revolutionary principle of the paramountcy of individual conscience not only in matters relating to personal conduct, but also to social relations. The Brahma Samaj now definitely applies the principle invoked by the Raja to the whole social life and becomes the parent of the whole social reform movement in India. This is Keshub's contribution to the movement of freedom in India. Caste now receives a definite repudiation; and a casteless society embodying the new principle of equality first comes into being among the Hindus in India. The principle of the infallibility of the Shastras was the root principle of a static Hindu organisation : but it was still an academic principle for the masses. Caste was the real concrete basis of the Hindu social organization of the medieval age : and as long as caste was all-powerful, the principle of the sovereignty of reason and conscience would remain merely an abstract principle, incapable of influencing the lives of the people. The Brahma Samaj now becomes a wider movement of both religious and social revolt. Man now becomes man for all that : and caste is held to be a mere artificial stamp inscribed upon him by an arbitrary fiat of an irrational society. A new basis of democratic reconstruction is now made possible by this assertion of the sanctity of man as man. The Brahmin priests had no longer the monopoly of the divine wisdom in the Brahma Samaj : and a society, based on the principle of " one God, one Church, one Law, and one Humanity " comes into being. The Brahma creed is thus beautifully summarised in a Sanskrit verse : " This wide universe is the sacred temple of Brahman or the Supreme Being. The pure heart is the only place of pilgrimage. Truth is the one Eternal Scripture. Faith is the foundation of religion. Love is the highest discipline, and Sacrifice of all self-regarding interests and desires is the only form of ascetic renunciation recognised and proclaimed by the members of the

Brahmo Samaj.”

The Brahmo Samaj thus lays the foundation of both the social and political reform movements of the later eighteenth and the early nineteenth century. A movement for the emancipation of the individual and society from arbitrary political fetters begins first as a movement for the emancipation of society from the tyranny of the letter of the Hindu Law which killeth, and then as a movement of the emancipation of society from arbitrary and artificial social institutions. If the Hindus continued to be dominated in every detail of their life by a hard and fast routine code called their *dharma* and imposed upon them by a fast degenerating priesthood and made absolutely rigid by the steel-frame organisation of caste, how could they move or change, how could they develop in any direction? Change—healthy, rational change—was the one condition of permanence; and the Hindus so completely retired into their shell as to make any such change impossible. But a fossilised existence could not go on for ever: and even if it were to go on for ever, it would be no existence at all worthy of human beings. The Raja attacked the very root of this disease by introducing the principle of independent judgment into the very heart of their faith: and Keshub threw himself against the iron walls of a system behind which Hinduism was to keep on its mummified existence. The old social and religious basis being once attacked, the social order could only reconstruct itself on a different principle and a different basis. Protestantism had come with full blast in the religious sphere and later on in the social sphere; and with protestantism against the old foundations of society came the new democratic movement, basing itself on the principle of liberty, equality, and fraternity and demanding the fullest assertion for the hitherto submerged individual in every sphere of life.

# **SOCIAL LIBERALISM**





## SOCIAL LIBERALISM

### C. CIRCUMSTANCES LEADING TO THE SOCIAL REFORM MOVEMENT.

The leaven of Western ideas had begun to work. These were responsible for the rise of a new social conscience among the English-educated intelligentsia of India. \* The Brahmo Samaj had already launched the Social Reform Movement; and the movement soon assumed a broader form affecting the Hindus as such, irrespectively of religious denomination. > There arose an urgent demand for social reform and reconstruction which expressed itself in 1887 in the work of the National Social Conference. > The leadership of this movement undoubtedly belongs to Mahadev Govind Ranade, whose contributions to the development of this movement have almost become classical. The greatest name in this reform party is that of H. H. Sayaji Rao Gaekwar of Baroda, who not only preached social reform incessantly but gave a clear and bold lead to the whole country by his far-reaching measures of social advance. Telang, Chandavarkar, Karsandas, Malabari, Raghunath Rao and many distinguished men in almost all the provinces took up very earnestly this much-needed work of social propaganda all over the country.

>The Indian Social Reform Movement was, like all other movements, the product of the age. In Europe, it was an era of enormous promise. Men took their destinies boldly into their hands and began to construct a new heaven and a new earth. The Voltaires and the Rousseaus in Europe were responsible for a

terrific awakening of the dormant mind of the West : and the volcanic eruption of the French Revolution raised hopes or fears in thinking minds all over the world. The Benthamite principle of the greatest happiness of the greatest number was in the air; and became more or less the basis of the new social life of Europe. August Comte announced the close of an era of vague theology and mystical metaphysics and the beginning of a new era when science would take the place of superstition, and the worship of humanity would take the place of the worship of abstract and remote deities. As Sir N. G. Chandavarkar wrote: "It was an age of splendour, when humanity seemed to stand at the start of a quickened life, with the promise of a bright future for modern civilization. In politics it was the age of the Reform Bill, of Free Trade, of the Abolition of Slavery, of statesmen of towering personalities like Palmerston, Peel, Gladstone, Disraeli, Cobden, Bright, Clarkson and Wilberforce. In social reform it was the age of the Emancipation of Women, of Elizabeth Fry and Florence Nightingale. In literature, which for the period reflects its currents and character and the ideals of the people, it was the age of Wordsworth, Tennyson and Browning, reflecting through them 'the mighty hopes that make us men.' The spirit was of humanity, of good tidings, of great joy for all, breathed by the times in nearly all departments of life and human activity. ✓ The professors, -English, Scotch, or Irish,-who came to teach in our colleges and share in the work of our Universities, were men who breathed the spirit of the times, and sought to impart it to the young men brought within the sphere of their influence. These young men caught the ardour, the sentiment of humanity and of the brotherhood of the human race, and placed as they were in a society where, on account of the superstition of ages, all seemed dark, they felt that a light appeared to them in the very midst of the surrounding darkness."<sup>1</sup>

✓ The fierce attack of Christian missionaries on the weaknesses of Hindu social life and thought had induced a spirit of intelligent criticism among educated men. Never were the ano-

malies of Hindu society so glaringly brought into light. The Hindu had been taught to consider his ways as ideal ways, as ways sanctioned by the infallible Shastras, as ways that had stood the test of time and enabled Hindus to keep at bay all foreign influences and hand down their traditional culture intact from generation to generation. ✓But the moment the fierce light of a different civilization was brought to bear upon this structure of society, things began to wear a doubtful appearance. Is it perfectly natural that girls and boys should be married to one another by their parents when they are in their teens? Must a widow remain a widow for all time, irrespectively of her age or her requirements? Must women be shut out from the light of the world and be allotted a cramped existence for the whole lifetime? Is it so very sinful to eat the food or drink the water of a member of another caste? ✓These and a hundred other similar questions began to agitate the mind of the awakened Indian; and the missionary criticism, however unpleasant it was, could not but drive home the absurdity of these customs into the Hindu mind.

✓The attitude of the British, official and non-official, played its own part in awakening the dormant sense and intelligence of the Hindu community. ✓The Government never felt very comfortable in the presence of the dark forces that ruled the Indian mind; and they wished that the more the Indian mind began to understand the requirements of modern life, the more it would appreciate the ideals and practice of British rule and respond to it loyally and enthusiastically. ✓The Sahib in those days had not yet adopted the aloof attitude of later times, and talked and mixed freely in a spirit of cordiality and friendship with the Indian officers with whom he came into contact, and gently but firmly encouraged a spirit of reform among them. ✓The officials considered it their sacred duty to do what was possible to enlighten and elevate Indian life and character. The idea of the white man's burden, his mission towards the great backward peoples committed to his charge, was taken seriously by men like Metcalfe, Munro and Elphinstone, and gave a sort of refinement to the

relations between Englishmen and Indians.

The fundamental factor in the situation, no doubt, was the introduction of Western education. Men like Lord William Bentinck had taken their courage in both hands and dealt blows to *thugi* \* and infanticide and the cruel custom of burning widows on their funeral pyre; but they could not go beyond that unless they were fortified by a strong public opinion in the country. Men like Raja Ram Mohun Roy had done first class work in this direction in helping the Government to remove these pernicious customs in the name of humanity; but the great mass of society remained absolutely unaffected so long as English education had not made any progress in the country. They had sown the seed, but the ripening had to come only when batches of young men began to come out year after year from the Universities to constitute the advance vanguard of the new social movement. "Men like Madhusudan Dutt, Harish Chandra Mukerjee, Girish Chandra Ghose, Ram Gopal Ghose, Raj Narayan Bose and K. M. Banerjea, were the results of the earliest efforts of English officials and missionaries to educate India according to Western ideals and their pioneer work in these directions brought in a new phase of Bengali national life. There could be no doubt after these first fruits had been gathered that the English language had infused new life into a decaying society."

## 2. THE DAWN OF NEW CONSCIOUSNESS.

Any movement of social reform postulates two things : that the society under consideration has reached neither its best state, so that no improvement is possible, nor its worst state, so that there is no hope of anything better. The Hindu society in the nineteenth century still refused to believe that it was altogether dead and all that it required was a decent burial. It used to be said that all oriental races have had their day; that all that was now left for them was to vegetate and die and make way for their

\* The thugs used to loot and murder innocent travellers, in a clever, deceitful way.

betters. Replying to these dark prognostications, Ranade said: "Happily for us, these prophecies are not true, and what is more, it is in our power to falsify them. History does not countenance them, and the teachings of science are not in their favour. But the history of this great country is but a fairy tale, if it has not illustrated how each invasion from abroad has tended to serve as a discipline of the chosen race, and led to the gradual development of the nation to a higher ideal, if not of actual facts, at least of potential capabilities. The nation has never been depressed beyond hope of recovery, but after a temporary submerging under the floods of foreign influences, has reared up its head – absorbing all that is best in the alien civilization and polity and religion. The testimony of science points in the same direction. If the environments determine the growth, a change in the environment must bring about a change in the political and social organism."<sup>2</sup>

But all movements of social reform are born out of a certain divine discontent with things as they actually are. The Hindus have preserved unbroken their identity for thousands of years: and they have even increased their numbers. They have preserved many of the softer and more passive elements of their national character, but they have lost or are losing those elements which make for a vigorous social life. "We are the same patient, peace-loving, orderly, industrious, simple, and spiritual people that we were centuries ago. We preserve the same tenderness to animal life, the same regard for personal purity, the same metaphysical cast of mind. But patriotism, love of enterprise, co-operative faculty, adventure, energy, aspiration, devotion to duty and such like qualities, we have lost, if we ever possessed them. In fact, as the author of Social Evolution would put it, we have lost the qualities which contribute to Social Efficiency."<sup>3</sup>

### 3. WHAT IS WRONG WITH THE HINDU SOCIAL SYSTEM ?

The fundamental defect of the whole medieval system was that it worshipped the principle of order at the expense of the principle of progress. It enabled Hindu society to escape change

as much as possible and preserve the old forms of life largely unchanged. But the perpetuation of the *status quo* is not only not an inspiring ideal; it is not even a practicable ideal. ° Ceaseless change, continuous activity, is the law of all life. ° A system which does not contain in itself the principle of adapting itself to new situations is destined to be soon antiquated and serves men as a drag rather than as a protection. ° The orthodox party which still persists in this old policy, cannot see beyond the existing system and virtually wants the Hindus to die and disappear rather than allow breaches in their old ways. But neither individuals nor nations have a right to vegetate, to stand still and mark time; and a policy of let-alone is nothing but a policy of mere vegetation.

A policy of mechanical and blind reverence for the immediate past and present is an ideal policy for achieving the goal of social *nirvana*—complete extinction of society. The will not to change is only the will to die—now applied not only to individual lives, but to the life of Hindu society as a whole. No nation has tried this policy better than the Hindus; and what have they reaped? “Political subjection, social prostration, poverty, disease.” The Hindus ceased to be a creative race and made very little contribution to the culture of the world during this stagnant period. “Are we or are we not conscious that many of us, under the narcotic influence of custom and usage, too often violate the feelings of our common human nature and our sense of right and wrong, stunt the growth of our higher life and embitter the existence of many of those who depend on us, our wives and children, our brothers and sons, our relations and friends? Are we prepared to point out any single hour of the day when we do not unconsciously commit injustice of a sort by the side of which municipal system is nothing, when we do not unconsciously sanction iniquities by the side of which the most oppressive tyrant’s rule is mercy itself? We resent the insult given by the oppressor. We protest against the unjust judge. Here, however, we are judge and jury and prosecutor and accused ourselves, and we are sometimes consciously and more often unconsciously committed to a course of conduct

which makes tyrants and slaves of us all, and sapping the strength of our resolution, drags us down to our fall – to be the laughing-stock of the whole world.”<sup>4</sup>

✓ Hindu society, thus, was groaning under the greatest of tyrannies – the tyranny of custom. This social slavery made them incapable of progress; it made them forget the deeper moralities and immoralities involved in their everyday life; robbed them of their thinking faculty, the most precious part of a human being; it perverted their sense of values and made them attach extraordinary importance to veritable trifles and consider veritable trifles as things which really mattered. The curse of the Hindu system even to-day is its immobility, its deadness to all considerations which have a bearing on social welfare.

#### 4. THE MEANING OF SOCIAL REFORM: REVIVAL VS. REFORM.

The cult of the golden past has always its worshippers in every society: and Hinduism which had a great past cannot but occasionally, in the hands of these admirers, mean a return to the best traditions of the race in the past. The cry of revival was already in the air: and Ranade had to dispose of it in his own masterly way: “When we are asked to revive our institutions and customs, people seem to be very much at sea as to what it is they seem to revive? What particular period of history is to be taken as the old? Whether the period of the Vedas, of the Smritis, of the Puranas, or of the Mahomedans or modern Hindu times? Our usages have changed from time to time by a slow process of growth and in some cases, of decay and corruption, and we cannot stop at a particular period without breaking the continuity of the whole. When my revivalist friend presses his argument upon me, he has to seek recourse in some subterfuge which really furnishes no reply to the question—what shall we revive? Shall we revive the old habits of our people, when the most sacred of our castes indulged in all the abominations, as we now understand them, of animal food and drink which exhausted every section of our country’s Zoology and Botany? The men and the gods of



those old days ate and drank forbidden things to excess in a way no revivalist will now venture to recommend. Shall we revive the twelve forms of sons, or eight forms of marriage, which included capture, and recognised mixed and illegitimate intercourse? Shall we revive the Niyoga system of procreating sons on our brother's wives when widowed? Shall we revive the old liberties taken by the Rishis and by the wives of the Rishis with the marital tie? Shall we revive the hecatombs of animals sacrificed from year's end to year's end, and in which human beings were not spared, as propitiatory offerings? Shall we revive the Shakti worship of the left hand with its indecencies and practical debaucheries? Shall we revive the *sutee* and infanticide customs, or the flinging of living men into the rivers, or over rocks, or hookswinging or the crushing beneath the Jagannath car? Shall we revive the internecine wars of the Brahmins and Kshatriyas, or the cruel persecution and degradation of the aboriginal population? Shall we revive the custom of many husbands to one wife, or of many wives to one husband? Shall we require our Brahmins to cease to be landlords and gentlemen, and turn into beggars and dependents upon the king as in old times? These instances will suffice to show that the plan of reviving the ancient usages and customs will not work our salvation, and is not practicable. If these usages were good and beneficial, why were they altered by our wise ancestors? If they were bad and injurious, how can any claim be put forward for their restoration after so many ages? Besides, it seems to be forgotten that in a living organism as society is, no revival is possible. The dead and the buried or burnt, are dead, buried, and burnt once for all, and the dead past cannot, therefore, be revived except by a reformation of the old materials into new organised beings. If revival is impossible, reformation is the only alternative open to sensible people." <sup>5</sup>

The Social Liberals dismissed, therefore, as impracticable and fantastic, the suggestion that the ideal cure of all India's troubles is a return to her past. India cannot if she will or will not if she can, bring back the age of the Vedas or the age

of the Puranas. The clock of history does not move literally back in this fashion. Reverence for the past is, no doubt, very often a healthy influence; but reverence for the past is quite different from return to the past. The cautious social reformer was a conservative as well as a radical. He understood the limitations of the social situation in India thoroughly well, and came to the conclusion that if a return to the past is out of question, a complete severance from the past would be equally impossible and equally undesirable for Hindus. Social reform, therefore, really meant readjustment of the old to the new conditions in a slow and cautious way. It could not mean social die-hardism, a literal clinging to the outworn forms of a decrepit society. It could not mean a mere reproduction of some earlier age of Hindu history. It could not mean a complete and immediate break with the past and a complete and immediate fresh start. Thus Telang wrote: "It was the duty of everyone to understand and appreciate the past and, selecting all that was possible from it, apply it to the altered circumstances of to-day. All this was to be done with moderation, wisdom, and right direction." <sup>6</sup> Ranade inspired the same spirit of cautious reform. "The true reformer has not to write upon a clean slate. His work is more often to complete the half-written sentence. We cannot break with the past altogether. For it is a rich inheritance and we have no reason to be ashamed of it. But while respecting the past, we must ever seek to correct the practical growths that have encrusted it." <sup>7</sup>

What then is the ideal which inspired the social reformer? The whole school of Liberals—religious, social, and political,—under the guidance of its ablest leaders, always looked beyond the tinkering of the social or religious or political machine here and there, the changes of social and religious or political forms, to something which is deeper than all of them and which alone can ensure a healthy, all-round progress of the nation on sound lines. The old civilisation was in ruins. The source of its life, the spring of its inspiration, was dried up. All that had remained was a heap of mere forms from which all life all meaning had long since

departed. A new civilisation had to be born. It had to rediscover its fountain of life, its source of inspiration, its primal impulse. Society moves round the axis of its individuals. √ If the individual is crushed beneath the weight of an oppressive tradition, society is bound to perish under the same weight too. √ The whole aim of social reform, therefore, is to re-discover the individual, to make the original springs of life work and give the nation a new vitality. Ranade put the goal of the movement in terms which will bear to be quoted again and again: "What is the inner spring of action which is setting in motion both reformers and orthodox workers almost against their will, even where their will does not consent to move? That inner spring, the hidden purpose not consciously realised in many cases, is the sense of human dignity and freedom, which is slowly asserting its supremacy over the national mind. It is not confined to one sphere of family life. It invades the whole man, and makes him feel that individual purity and social justice have paramount claims over us all, which we cannot ignore long without being dragged down to a lower level of existence. This or that particular reform or revival of ancient practices, the removal of this or that particular defect or vice, is not and should not be the only end and aim of the agitation to improve our social condition. The end is to renovate, to purify, and also to perfect the whole man by liberating his intellect, elevating his standard of duty, and perfecting all his powers. Till so renovated, purified and perfected, we can never hope to be what our ancestors once were—the chosen people, to whom great tasks were allotted and by whom great deeds were performed. Where this feeling animates the worker, it is a matter of comparative indifference in what particular direction it asserts itself, and in what particular method it proceeds to work. With a liberated manhood, with buoyant hope, with a faith that never shirks duty, with a sense of justice that deals fairly to all, with unclouded intellect and powers fully cultivated, and, lastly, with a love that overleaps all bounds, renovated India will take her proper rank among the nations of the world, and be the master of the situation and of her own destiny. This is the goal to be reached—this is the promised

land." 8

The Social Liberals thoroughly understood that a nation's life is based upon a certain ideological foundation. Hindu society cannot come to its own by a mere outward change in its social forms. Outward manners and customs derive their power from some hidden springs in the people's character and as long as these springs are not touched, mere shufflings of outward customs do not carry us very far. Social reform means reconstruction of the whole Hindu society on a new basis altogether. The principle of the medieval Hindu society must be that of contract. The principle of the medieval organisation was authority, the principle of the reformed organization must be reason. In fact, the determination of social life from without by external constraints has to give way to the determination of social life from within by the principle of freedom in us. The evolution "that we should seek is a change from constraint to freedom, constraint imposed by our own weaker nature over the freedom of our higher powers. It is a change from credulity to faith, from credulity which believes without grounds to faith which builds itself upon a firm foundation. The change which we should all seek is thus a change from constraint to freedom, from credulity to faith, from status to contract, from authority to reason, from unorganised to organized life, from bigotry to toleration, from blind fatalism to a sense of human dignity. This is what I understand by social evolution, both for individuals and societies in this country." 9

It is necessary to go a little deeper into what is exactly implied in the transition of Hindu society from its medieval into its modern form. The rule of authority in India in social matters meant the dominance of certain ideas. It is this dominance which has been responsible for the growing degeneracy of Hindu society. The root disease is the extraordinary hold which these ideas have acquired in the course of ages upon the Hindu mind. What are these basic ideas of the Hindu medieval system? "These ideas may be briefly set forth as isolation, submission to outward force or power more than to the voice of

the inward conscience, perception of fictitious differences between men and men, due to heredity and birth, passive acquiescence in evil or wrong-doing, and a general indifference to secular well-being, almost bordering upon fatalism. These have been the root ideas of our ancient social system. They have as their natural result led to the existing family arrangements, where the woman is entirely subordinated to the man and the lower castes to the higher castes, to the length of depriving men of their natural respect for humanity."<sup>10</sup> Hindu social institutions are the result of Hindu character as it has developed under the influence of these vicious ideas. The essence of social reform is the substitution of new ideals based on reason and justice, freedom and equality, in place of the above ideals of the subordination of woman to man, of the lower castes to the higher castes, and of the whole society to the letter of the law, to the legalistic system of the Shastras as interpreted by the Brahmin priests.

The spirit of exclusiveness and isolation must give way to a new sense of brotherhood, equality, and co-operation. This is the first desideratum. The second is the respect for personality. The fundamental defect of the society was the hypothesis upon which it acted, that human beings are destined to remain perpetually infants in social and religious matters. The hypothesis naturally tended to verify itself and men who are treated as infants tend to shrink to the intellectual and moral level of infants. "The next idea which lies at the root of our helplessness is the sense that we are always intended to remain children, to be subject to outside control, and never to rise to the dignity of self-control by making our conscience and our reason the supreme, if not the sole, guide to our conduct. All past history has been a terrible witness to the havoc committed by this misconception. We are children, no doubt, but the children of God, not of man, and the voice of God is the only voice which we are bound to hear. Of course, all of us cannot listen to this voice when we desire it, because, from long neglect and dependence upon outside help, we have benumbed this faculty of conscience in us. With too many of

us, a thing is true or false, righteous or sinful, simply because somebody in the past has said that it is so. In small matters of manners and courtesies, this outside dictation is not without its use. But when we abandon ourselves entirely to this helpless dependence on other wills, it is no wonder that we become helpless as children in all departments of life. Now the new idea which should take up the place of this helplessness and dependence is not the idea of a rebellious overthrow of all authority, but that of freedom responsible to the voice of God in us. Great and wise men in the past, as in the present, have a claim upon our regard, but they must not come between us and our God—the Divine principle enthroned in the heart of everyone of us, high or low. It is this sense of self-respect, or rather the respect for the God in us, which has to be cultivated. It is a very tender plant which takes years and years to make it grow. But there is the capacity and the power, and we owe it as a duty to ourselves to undertake the task. Revere all human authority, pay your respects to all prophets and all revelations, but never let this reverence and respect come in the way of the dictates of conscience, the Divine command in us." 11

○ Thirdly, the idea of heredity and birth and the belief in the Law of Karma interpreted more or less as blind and mysterious fate, must go. The idea of birth determining the course of our life like a grim necessity has wrought tremendous mischief among us. The given in us is not a fixed quantity incapable of being altered at all. It is capable of being modified, of being developed one way or the other, and the whole interest of life lies in our exerting ourselves to secure this modification or development in desirable directions. The Law of Karma may represent a profound metaphysical and psychological and moral truth; but if it is interpreted to mean the complete dominance of our present life by a series of mysterious past lives, it inevitably creates a sense of utter helplessness and paralysis in our life. - We must put the new idea of human freedom, of the power of human initiative, of the right and the duty to shape our life in accordance with our higher ideals in place of the tyranny of fate. 12

The fourth idea which makes healthy social development very difficult is the belief in the illusoriness of the world. If all existence is a mere vanity and a dream, the best course for a human being is to concentrate on the problem of individual salvation, of emancipation from this world of space and time, and drop all serious interest in the problems of social welfare. The tendency of such a one-sided idealistic philosophy is to gloss over all the current stupidities and rascalities of individual and social life, for, in the long run, from the point of view of the Absolute, they simply do not exist, do not count. The pantheistic absorption of a few select spirits who ought to give a vigorous lead to society in the right direction, in the pursuit of the abstract One, renders possible the polytheistic running riot of the masses and the priests in all sorts of vices in the name of religion. In place of this false philosophy, we must substitute a new burning sense of the reality of the good and the evil of our individual and social life here and now, and a vigorous desire to combat and root out all the absurdities and iniquities of our social life.<sup>13</sup>

The tide of Hindu degeneracy must be stopped. The state of Denmark has become rotten; and this rottenness reflects only the rottenness of Hindu character. "All admit that we have been deformed. We have lost our stature, we are bent in a hundred places, our eyes lust after forbidden things, our ears desire to hear scandals about our neighbours, our tongues lust to taste forbidden fruit, our hands itch for another man's property, our bowels are deranged with indigestible food. We cannot walk on our feet, but require stilts or crutches."<sup>14</sup> The real reform has to come from within. Modifications of social institutions merely mean playing with the symptoms while the root of the disease is untouched. It is for the Reformer to create a new social conscience, a new sense of values, a new sense of dignity in our nature, and our high destiny, and the spread of this mental revolution will slowly but surely bring about a radical regeneration of the whole society.

### 5. INTERDEPENDENCE OF ALL REFORM. MUST SOCIAL REFORM PRECEDE POLITICAL REFORM ?

Social reconstruction is a very comprehensive phrase: it implies the complete reconstruction of all the departments of social life. India is faced with a number of problems, some of which are economic, others political, while still others are neither primarily economic nor political but yet are social problems. Social reform in a broad sense includes economic and political reform: but in a narrow sense it stands for the non-economic, non-political reform of society. The question that has never ceased to exercise the Indian mind is the comparative importance of these various reforms: and even if we grant that all these aspects of social reform are equally important, we still wish to know whether it would be wise to tackle one type of reform first rather than another, in the interests of a strategic concentration of national forces.

There have been two types of thinkers in India: there are those who would first achieve India's salvation in one field only hoping to secure advance in all other directions as a result of success in one sphere only; and there are those who argue that advance in all social departments must be parallel and that we should attack simultaneously all the departments of social life. If we look at the whole problem from the point of view of an economist only, we might come to the conclusion that poverty is the one evil from which India suffers and if we get rid of poverty, all other problems will tend to solve themselves. If we look at the matter from the point of view of a politician only, it will appear that the root evil from which India suffers is the subordination to a foreign government, and once India attains Swaraj, all her difficulties will vanish. There are some who argue that the head and front of the offending is the Hindu system, that unless Hinduism is radically reformed, or unless Hindus accept Christianity there is no hope for India. There is a relative truth in each of these views; but the problem as a matter of fact is a little more complicated than that.



✓ The Social Liberals took their stand on the unity of society and the consequent inter-connection of all departments of national life. But here and there there was a tendency to break loose from this solid general position and a consequent advocacy of one line of attack as superior to every alternative line of attack. In the first place, it was urged by some religious zealots that religious reform is the one thing needed and that social and political reform will then automatically follow. There is considerable truth in this, for in India social customs and institutions have come to be an integral part of religion. The advocates of the Brahmo and the Arya Samaj as well as Christianity, thought seriously that the acceptance of their creeds would change the whole atmosphere and make it favourable to the growth of a new social life. Ranade maintained, against this attitude, that there is ample scope and justification for an independent social reform and an independent political reform movement in a country like India. It should be remembered that the task before the reformer is not so simple as the religionists believe. A change of religion means often nothing more than a change of label; but a change of label does not mean that there is a change of spirit or a change of content. Many Hindus have become Mahomedans and some have become Christians; but they have carried their Hindu ways of looking at things into their new folds. A religious conversion, if it only means a mere change in denomination, leaves the root of the evil absolutely untouched. Religious conversion, if it is to be a deeper conversion, can take place only slowly in the mass of any community. Social conversion, therefore, even in that case, must precede religious conversion, if the latter is to have any meaning. It should be further remembered that the work of social reform cannot be postponed indefinitely till all Hindus become Christians or Samajists; for it may mean postponement for ever. The work of social and political reform must go on independently of religious movements; and when that work attains a substantial measure of success, a part of the case for religious conversion also disappears. It is also forgotten that Hinduism is not essentially what it is to-day, that the great ideas for which we are

fighting to-day were influential at the best periods of Hindu history, and Hinduism has ample scope for an internal reform movement. Above all, such an internal reform movement will mean no abrupt transition in the life of the people and, therefore, will be welcome to the mass of the people much more than any attack on their religion. Social reform among Hindus necessarily means religious reform also; but it need not mean the alienation of the reformed from the ranks of Hinduism.<sup>15</sup>

Mr. Malbari started a campaign of social reform and advocated concentration on social reform, to a certain extent to the exclusion of other reforms, for the time being. At least, it was understood in that sense by some of his friends and opponents. There was, there has always been, the Government School favouring the diversion of the Indian mind from politics into social reform; and some very educated Indians rallied to this lead. Thus for example, Mr. Karkaria, a biographer of Mr. Malabari voices this sentiment. "Many of these English educated Indians have thought it wise to choose the subject of politics for the exercise of their newly acquired strength. Of all the various kinds of activity which they have seen exercised by public men in the West and especially in England they have been dazzled by the most brilliant as exhibited in the field of politics. Nurtured on the liberal sentiments and lofty notions which are the distinguishing features of English literature, they have naturally been impelled in the first instance to apply these to their own country, though a closer knowledge of its past history and present condition would have advised them better. Their activities have been engrossed by a burning desire for the reform of the State, and to this object they are sacrificing all others. This tendency was observed in the newly educated natives from the very beginning, and there were many who were apprehensive of grave political danger from such a system of education (e.g. Lord Ellenborough).

"Of all the objections that are raised against this new class of politicians, who restrict their energies to a close watching of

the acts of the British Government, and subjecting these to minute, if not sometimes, captious criticism, the strongest, because most reasonable, seems to be that they are not using this newly-acquired strength in the direction which requires it most, in trying to remove those crying evils which infest the social side of the body politic, and which stand so much in the way of realizing their new political ideals. The present regime may be bad, though it has by no means been proved that it is not immeasurably superior to the best under which Indians hitherto lived. Its acts now and then deserve censure. But the present social condition of the people, characterised as it is, by senseless and inhuman customs, undermining their vitality and debasing their ideals, is admittedly worse. If there be any one task which should enlist the energy of the educated class and in which they should seek for help from every available quarter, it is that of moral and social reform. The State is based on the family, and before trying to reform the former, attempts must be made to improve the latter. The inner life of the people and their homes must be made healthy, morally and physically, before any solid improvement of the outer life is attempted. A people with their homes debased, their women ignorant and superstitious, a people trammelled with all the old world prejudices and subject to the most cruelly one-sided customs and usages, can never hope to enjoy or exercise high political privileges. All endeavour in this direction alone, without fulfilling the preliminary conditions of moral and social reform, must end in disappointment if not in disaster."<sup>16</sup>

It is true that this attitude was to some extent shared by most of the social reformers, and both the social and the political liberals were deeply conscious of the help, conscious or unconscious, which the British Government gave to their reformist efforts. The problem, however, raised by some English administrators that the Indians would do well to set their own house in order before attacking the British Government, was, however not capable of being looked at only one way. K. T. Telang came forward and endeavoured to meet the points raised by this school.

(1) It is not true, as our English friends assert, that we are devoting an extravagant proportion of our time and energy to political reform, neglecting almost entirely the work of social reform. The contrary impression is due to the fact that social reform activity is not so noisy and does not figure so prominently in the newspapers as political reformist activity; and if the progress in social reform is slow, the progress in the political field is equally slow.

(2) It is said that slavery at home is incompatible with political liberty. It must be admitted that the spirit of political liberty can be only skin-deep in the man who can tolerate slavery within his own household. But in order that we may be able to apply this principle, there must be a consciousness of tyranny and a consciousness of slavery in the parties concerned. But there is no such consciousness of slavery among the females of India. On the other hand, the Indian women refuse to accept the freedom which the reformers offer them. There is therefore, no household slavery, and such as there is, is not incompatible with political liberty.

(3) It is said that a nation socially low cannot be politically great. History does not support this contention. The achievements of Shivaji were politically brilliant; but they took place in an age of infant marriage and enforced widowhood. It was the same in the India of the seventh century, the India of Harshavardhana. Look at England from the great days of Hampden to the Revolution of 1688 and the Declaration of Rights. But during this period of political achievement, the social condition of England was quite different. Queen Mary writes for example, "This book was given the King and I at our coronation." This gives us an idea of the state of female education.

But Mr. Telang (himself became a victim to the same fallacy which he was trying to expose when he laid down as a counter-thesis that political reform should precede social reform. In a phrase which has become famous, he said, reform ought to proceed along the lines of least resistance.) "Secure first the reforms which you can secure with the least difficulty, and then turn your energies in the direction of those reforms where more difficulty has to be encountered. You will thus obtain all that vigour which the spirit of reform must derive from success, and thus carry out the whole work of progress with greater promptitude than if you go to work the other way. This is the principle which we actually act upon within the sphere of political activity itself. How then, can we be justly twitted for applying the same principle as between the two spheres of political and social activity?" (Telang, on the basis of this principle, argued that a richer harvest awaits us in politics, because there are fewer difficulties there. Here the faith of the Indian political liberal in the Government and the want of faith also of the Indian political liberal in the people very characteristically assert themselves.) "In politics, in India, victories can be won by arguments; because we are dealing with a government by a progressive nation which is the benign mother of free nations." But in social reform, we are confronted by an ancient nation, subject to strong prejudices; and where feeling and tradition are appealed to, logic is impotent. Secondly, it is easy to secure the union of all forces—orthodox and progressive, Hindus and Mahomedans—in political action, because the evils are common and the remedies are also common. Politics teaches us how to unite, how to settle matters in a spirit of give and take, how to disarm our opponents and conciliate them, how to subordinate minor points in which we differ to the major points in which we agree. And once this tactics is grasped, it will be easy to apply it to the social sphere. Thirdly, political independence, if once secured, will give the people a new capacity for social advancement.<sup>17</sup>

Telang here was obviously unconscious of the tremendous

force of feeling, tradition, and interest which the bureaucracy was likely to oppose to any grant of power or freedom to India. Nor was he conscious of the oppositions which were latent in political action—oppositions, for example, between Hindus and Mahomedans. But above all, he was forgetting the obvious implications of the fundamental position which he, along with other great social reformers, took up against all one-sided and exclusive concentration on one side of national life only.

It was not possible, he himself pointed out, to draw a sharp line of demarcation between social and political matters. Social problems impinge upon political ones and political problems impinge upon social ones. As Ranade pointed out, the rose has its beauty and its fragrance, but you cannot separate the fragrance from the beauty; if you try, you destroy both. Society is one inter-connected whole, and the strength or weakness of every part of this organism acts and reacts on every other part. "You cannot have a good social system when you find yourself low in the scale of political rights, nor can you be fit to exercise political rights unless your social system is based on reason and justice. You cannot have a good economical system when your social arrangements are imperfect. If your religious ideals are low or grovelling, you cannot succeed in the social, economic, or political spheres. This inter-dependence is not an accident, but is the law of our nature."<sup>18</sup>

Telang's principle, unless properly interpreted, is liable to abuse. It is idle to argue that the need of social reform is greater than the need of political reform; for even if it is true, it will divert men from fighting their political battles at a time when they are required to fight them. It is idle to argue that political reform is more important than social reform, because even if it is true in some sense, it will make Indians forget the root weaknesses of their whole system. A doctrine that we must proceed along the lines of least resistance has been actually followed often by daring patriots in India, but with what results we know too well. Telang himself is the best antidote to his own doctrine

when he says: "The need for improvement in political matters is not greater than in social, and the principles of movement in both are in substance identical whatever differences there may be in application."<sup>19</sup> The spirit of liberty is the same and if it asserts itself in one sphere, it is bound to assert itself in another sphere also.

It may be said, however, that in the interests of practice, at any rate, it is necessary to divide the great field of national work and allow the workers to concentrate only on one or two departments for which they have a special aptitude. That differentiation actually took place when the Indian Congress clearly devoted itself to political problems only, allowing the Indian National Social Conference to take up the social problems. Differentiation is not separation; differentiation goes hand in hand with co-ordination. Mr. Hume, in answer to Malabari, stressed very well this need of not forgetting that different sections of the work are integral parts of the whole, subordinate portions of the common enterprise in which all are interested. "It is essential, I think, that we should all try to realise that, closely inter-woven in humanity as are the physical, intellectual and psychical factors, progress in any direction to be real or permanent, postulates a corresponding progress in other directions—that though we may, and must, most specially devote our energies to overcoming the particular adversary that circumstances have most immediately opposed to us, we each form but one unit in a force contending against a common foe, whose defeat will depend as much on the success of each of our fellow-soldiers as our own.

"At present the greatest obstacle to all progress here appears to me to consist in a general failure to realise the essential unity of the cause of reform. You find earnest men whose eyes appear to be closed to everything but the material wants of the people, and to whom the poverty of our population appears to be the one sole evil against which it is necessary to concentrate all efforts. You find equally devoted enthusiasts, who see in the ignorance of the masses the source of all their sufferings

and in their intellectual elevation a panacea for all woes. You find men of the purest and highest aspirations, careless to a great extent of both the material and the mental wants of the nation, making their sole aim either its moral development or religious culture. These are your social reformers who hold that India is to be saved by the abolition or modification of some evil or obsolete custom or habit, and nailing their flag to their own masts, are willing to see the rest of the fleet sink if only their ships somehow forge ahead. And last but not least, you have the strong practical men, who, Gallio-like, care for none of these things, but place all their hopes on the realization of their aspirations for the political enfranchisement of their countrymen.

“What we want, it seems to me, at the present time most of all, is that all these good labourers should understand that their aims, though diverse, are not only not antagonistic, but are inextricably interlinked parts of one whole—that if you could multiply tenfold every peasant’s means you would serve the country’s interest but little, did you not simultaneously elevate the mental and moral faculties, so as to secure a wise, prudent, and good use of the money, root out old customs involving its rapid dissipation and confer such a political status as would enable the owners to preserve and protect their newly found wealth—that no great development of the brain power is possible on empty stomachs and where men’s energies have to be devoted to satisfying the cravings of these, and that even if possible it would become a positive evil if unaccompanied by moral or spiritual elevation, and means for gratifying the necessarily resulting political aspirations—that moral culture is best fostered, mankind being what it is, by removing from men’s paths those terrible temptations to evil engendered by poverty, hunger, and natural envy of those more fortunate, and that the hope of attaining to the exercise of political functions is often one of the strongest incitements to a higher morality—that the extinction of a few evil customs will avail little without a thorough recast of social framework, a thing only possible as the result of a general advance along all the other lines—physical, intellectual, psychical, and political—



and that lastly, nations in the long run always get precisely as good a Government as they deserve, and that no nominal political enfranchisement will in practice prove more than a change of evil unless such an advance has simultaneously or antecedently been made along all these other lines as shall render the country qualified to assimilate the imposed political status." 20

#### 6. THE METHODS OF ATTAINING SOCIAL REFORM.

Granting that social reform is as pressing and vital as reform in religious or political or economic sphere, and that it cannot be and ought not to be postponed till we have definitely solved our political and economic problems, the next question which faced a practical reformer is the comparative efficiency of different lines of attack of the social problem. The first fact that requires to be grasped is that the kingdom of heaven is not to be taken by storm here as in any other sphere. A policy of short cuts or quick results is eventually bound to prove reactionary rather than progressive. Society is not a mechanical arrangement which can be put together one way or another at the sweet convenience of the mechanic. A clever social physician has to take into consideration not only the general nature of the social structure and the laws of its growth and modification, but also the specific nature of that particular social structure he is called upon to improve or modify. "The process of growth is always slow where it has to be a sure growth. The best natures naturally want to shorten this long process in their desire to achieve the work of a century in a decade. This temptation has to be resisted, and in this respect the teachings of the evolution doctrine have great force, because they teach that growth is structural and organic, and must take slow effect in all parts of the organism, and cannot neglect any and favour the rest. There are those amongst us who think that, in this connection, the work of the reformer is confined only to a brave resolve to break with the past and do what our individual reason suggests as proper and fit. The power of long-formed habits and tendencies

is, however, ignored in this view of the matter. The true reformer has not to write upon a clean slate. His work is more often to complete the half-written sentence. He has to produce the ideal out of the actual, and by the help of the actual. We have one continuous stream of life flowing past us, and we must seek to turn the stream with a gentle bend here and a gentle bend there, to fructify the land; we cannot afford to dam it up altogether or force it into a new channel." 21

Reform may not mean revival but it does mean acceptance of the past and the building of the future on that. It does not mean radicalism; it is essentially a conservative move. The Liberals have always stuck to this slow, cautious, and evolutionary change; they are opposed to revolutions of every type. The social reform movement is based on the presupposition that all is not best in this best of Indian social world; but it does not assume that existing society is merely a festering mass of decay and corruption. Even the die-hard character is not altogether a source of weakness. "No nation has any destined place in it, which changes its creed and its morals, its customs and its social polity, with the facility of fashions." 22 Constructive change is needed, badly needed; but not mere destruction, mere change for change's sake. The whole genius of Hinduism is in the direction of necessary change. "We cannot break with the past altogether; with our past we should not break altogether, for it is a rich inheritance, and we have no reason to be ashamed of it. The society to which we belong has shown wonderful elasticity in the past and there is no reason for apprehending that it has ceased to be tractable and patient and persistent in action. While respecting the past, we must ever seek to correct the parasitical growths that have encrusted it, and sucked the life out of it." 23 The force of the past will be always upon us, it is there in our minds and will, in our habits and customs. The most radical reformers are as much the outcome of the prevailing social atmosphere as the most conservative die-hard. It would be folly to ignore this power of tradition. "Conservatism is a force which

we cannot afford to forego or forget. You may talk and act in a way that appears to be the result of your voluntary efforts, but you are unconsciously influenced by the traditions in which you are born, by the surroundings in which you are brought up, by the very milk which you have drunk from your mother's breasts or influenced by those things in the world which you cannot disown." 24

If a certain degree of conservatism is inevitable, equally inevitable in this age is the spirit of reform. The old structure cannot remain the same, if we want to keep it intact. Time alone often makes the ancient good uncouth. The tide has set in especially since the advent of the British; and no one can resist it. But the social reform movement intends to make this movement a conscious, deliberate, systematic movement. It should not be a drift. If it is not wise or possible to resist the current, it is not wise merely to give way to the current and float with it. Social reform means neither resistance to the force of circumstances and persistence in the old course irrespectively of its absurdity, nor does it mean a mere drift, allowing events to shape us, instead of our trying to shape events; it means neither die-hardism nor let-aloneism; it means a deliberate attempt not to destroy the past, nor to return to it, but to readjust the obsolete structure to the requirements of the new situation, and to make the transition from the old to the new as smooth as possible.

It has been assumed all along that the change which is contemplated should go deep into the nation's soul. What is demanded is not a mere change of forms, but a change of spirit. The root of all reform is in the individual's will, mind, conscience. A policy of drift also may give us reform; but it will be a reform at the best, of the outer self of society. "When one drifts into reform, he is not reformed, he remains exactly as he was. The fastest train does not give exercise to our body if we do not ourselves move. Some there are who thought that when they were asked to lend their support to reform there was some objective reality outside themselves that they had to deal with. There was no such

thing. The thing to be reformed was their own self, heart, and head, and soul, their own prejudices were to be removed, their superstitions to be eradicated, their courage to be strengthened, their weaknesses to be conquered, in fact their character is to be formed again so as to suit the times, so as to fit with the spirit of the age. "26

It follows that the one agency which transcends all others in importance, in this work of inner conversion of the whole Indian mind is undoubtedly education. It is here that the Social Liberal boldly and unambiguously welcomes the spirit of the West as it spreads through the mass-mind, through Western institutions and Western education. Education is here prized above everything else, on account of its emancipating influence. The new era was heralded by Raja Ram Mohun Roy by his protest against the perpetuation of the medieval system of education and his insistence on the adoption of a full-fledged modern education. The Social Liberals as well as the Political Liberals have never wavered in their allegiance to the ideals and spirit of English education.

No one appreciated more the value of education as a very indispensable factor in social reconstruction than H. H. the Maharaja of Baroda. He had the rare privilege not only of talking reform but of practising it on a large scale in his State. "That education is the key to all human progress is an oft-repeated truism: but it cannot be repeated too often, particularly in this country, where ignorance is so great....."

"Education not only improves the mind, but enables us to perceive where our true interest lies. Without education no solid progress can be made, and without it no lasting progress can be maintained." 26 H. H. made primary education free and compulsory in his State and thus in a way laid the foundations of the modern type of democracy in India.

But it is not desirable to wait till education of the right type is made accessible to every one. Further, even educated

people mostly find it hard to stand up boldly for reform. Hence the necessity of adopting other methods of propaganda and action. There is first the method of tradition. The traditional method consists in showing that the reform proposed is not an innovation; it has ample warrant in our ancient Shastras. The reformer may have to interpret certain texts in his own way; but this method can silence the orthodox party which takes its stand on the old texts. Here an attempt is made to build on the past and to preserve social continuity. Raja Ram Mohun Roy had often adopted this method in order to prove that there was no compulsion to be *suttve* in the Shastras and that image-worship is a later innovation. Thus Ranade advocated certain marriage reforms on the basis not of their rationality but of their orthodox character. The present usages in so many cases have grossly perverted the original intentions of the Smritikars; and consequently they may be set aside not to favour the spirit of change, but that of conservatism. "Those who seek reform in this matter do not desire to turn marriage into an affair of mutual romantic love. They do not want to thrust aside the parental authority, or to diminish the sense of responsibility now felt. They advocate a return from modern conceptions to the real sense of the old Smriti texts. It is hoped that after the present reaction subsides, men will come to see that in clinging to the existing order of things they are really setting at naught the traditions of their own best days and the injunctions of their own Shastras, leaving aside all considerations of duty and expediency; and that in calling for a change on old lines, the reformers seek not to revolutionise, but only to lop off the diseased overgrowth and excrescence, and to restore vitality and energy to the social organism." 27

The traditional method has its limitations; there may not be warrant for every needed change in the Shastras; and even when the old texts can be marshalled in favour of some reform, these have generally appealed only to those who are otherwise convinced in favour of that reform. It is, however, very valuable for those who would like to move forward without doing any

violence to their Hinduism. It is the most tactful method; it provokes least opposition; it refuses to touch the deeper aspects of a controversy; and it tries to fight the orthodox party on its own ground. But it cannot persuade the die-hards who would also employ all their ingenuity in digging up texts suitable to them and interpreting them in their own way. To quote only one instance. There is a text in the Rig-Veda which originally ran:

'*Arohantu janayo yonim agre*'

( Let the mothers advance to the altars first. )

*Agre* was changed to *agneh*, the genitive of *agni*. The text then means:

"Let the mothers go into the womb of fire." Max Muller calls this "perhaps the most flagrant instance of what can be done by an unscrupulous priesthood."

As has been said, even the devil can quote scripture. The die-hard party really takes its stand on usage and when confronted by an inconvenient text always maintains that custom is more powerful than the Shastras. But a more fundamental limitation of this method is that it prevents the parties concerned from fighting the issue out on its real merits. The appeal to reason must ultimately over-ride all other appeals.

Hence the reformers had often recourse to the *conscience* method. It consists in appealing directly to the individual's sense of right and wrong. In fact, this has always been the main method employed by the reformers. The individual conscience is not always an unerring conscience; and the dictates of conscience so often vary. But there is a universal conscience, implicit in the individual conscience, and this conscience is capable of being trained and perfected. Whatever may be its limitations, in the last resort it is the individual's sense of right and wrong that must guide him. "In all such matters the first step towards betterment is to realise the fact that our social conditions are not exactly as they should be, and they stand in need of a healthy change.

Until the conscience is stirred up, nothing great or good can be accomplished by the agencies from outside, which hardly touch the surface."<sup>28</sup> In fact, the very essence of reform is this change which comes over people's minds. The awakening of conscience is valuable not only because it leads up to changes in institutions but also because it itself is the one thing needed. "The true test of progress must be seen in signs which show that this vast mass of humanity is being vivified by the sacred fire which burns only to purify and elevate."<sup>29</sup> The whole issue between reformers and the no-changers is this: whether it is proper and dignified for human beings to be governed in all matters of conduct by external agencies or whether it is now time for the individual in India to fall back upon the light which God has given him in his own head and heart. "The next idea which lies at the root of our helplessness is the sense that we are always intended to remain children, to be subject to outside control, and never to rise to the dignity of self-control by making our conscience and our reason the supreme, if not the only, guide to our conduct. All past history has been a terrible witness to the havoc committed by this misconception. We are children, no doubt, but the children of God and not of man, and the voice of God is the only voice we are bound to listen."<sup>30</sup>

The third method is called the method of rebellion. It means that the reformers should raise the standard of revolt against the old society, separate themselves from the old society, and then declare uncompromising war against it. The programme appears very simple and attractive especially to young hot-heads and avoids all compromise with the devil. It simply declares that "those who are not <sup>with us</sup> for us are against us." It divides Hindu society into two parts and tries to organise the new society on radically new lines. But this method had already to some extent been tried by the Brahma Samaj and had failed. It altogether overlooks the tremendous force of the orthodox Hindu tradition. It drives the few awakened souls out of the fold of Hinduism and thus deprives Hindu society of their very

valuable influence. It also breaks the historic continuity of Hinduism and, therefore, eventually will do more harm than good. Instead of deliberately breaking with the old order, Ranade would rather utilise the old machinery for a new purpose. He thus would accept even the institution of castes and Acharyas (or priests), if he could carry the principles of reform into orthodox society through them.

Lastly, there is the well-known method of legislation. It means the enforcement of reform through the agency of the caste or of the State. The method of legislation was not a great favourite among the more balanced social reformers. Thus the Maharaja of Baroda, as the President of the Social Conference, said in 1904, "There appear to be two great methods of reform—legislation and persuasion. Of these the simpler and swifter is legislation, but on the other hand it can only deal with particular evils, and its effects are less permanent and thorough. Moreover, in some respects it appears more suited to our national temperament, which like that of some continental peoples in Europe, prefers Government action to popular initiative. But legislation cannot deal with great barriers which have their roots deep in social organisation. This only education can deal with. There must be an intelligent appeal to the whole people, which shall produce a general awakening, a general determination to think and act."<sup>31</sup> Ranade said that it was a constraint imposed by the wise upon the ignorant in their common interest. There is such a thing as men "being forced to be free." It is, however, a coercive method and should be tried only when other methods fail.

The question as regards the exact place of legislation in social reform in India came to the front in connection with the Age of Consent Bill. The orthodox party always raises the cry of "religion in danger" and insists upon the British Government respecting its own pledges as regards non-intervention in religion. Telang, who was not a blind zealot in the cause of reform, vigorously challenged the soundness of every argument advanced by the no-change party.<sup>32</sup> The State, he maintained, has every right to



interfere for the sake of justice and humanity, even if the Shastras were against the proposed measure. The Government may have pledged itself to a policy of neutrality in religion by the Proclamation of 1858 but even the Government has not the right to renounce its duty and its duty is to protect its subjects from unjust harm. "That is in truth the Sovereign's paramount duty—the common ground on which the champions of meddling State interference must join hands with Manu on the one hand and with Humboldt and Herbert Spencer on the other." The Queen's Proclamation was levelled at religious persecution and similar proceedings in exercise of irresponsible and unrestrained power. "We may well ask Sir R. C. Mitter and the Maharajas and others whether they think that good government and progress of the people may be ever expected to come if the British Government accepts as authoritative their construction of the Queen's Proclamation? That construction must logically involve, for instance, the shutting up of the schools and colleges where a system of astronomy is taught that must knock on the head the absurdities of the Hindu Jyotish, which forms an integral part of their ritual of marriage. If where the claims of humanity are implicated, the British Government is to hold its hand and put forward a plea of *non possumus*, it will write itself down as unworthy of its best traditions, and will announce a principle of action that, if logically carried out, will destroy the possibility of any solid good resulting from its presence in India." There is no natural right to barbarism, to arbitrary and irrational customs. "The liberty of man consisted in being forced to find out the right path and to walk thereon."

More formidable than the attitude of the orthodox party was that of virile nationalists like Tilak. Tilak came forward to oppose the intervention of the Government. Tilak felt that the great need of the country was political autonomy and to secure this it was necessary to rouse the pride and self-confidence of the nation in itself and to concentrate all the forces of the nation on the one object. His opposition to social reformers was based on his fear that their perpetual criticism of their own institu-

tions would weaken and destroy all national pride and lead inevitably to a serious division in the national camp. Tilak said, if there is to be legislation, let there be by all means, but for those who want it, and not for the masses. Tilak "believed in the imperative necessity of checking, from the larger national standpoint, the disintegrating forces by fostering a due sense of pride in and respect for the social and religious institutions of the people. He strongly resented State interference for the simple reason that reform to be durable must be a growth from within."<sup>33</sup>

Ranade agrees with Tilak that jealousy of foreign interference in social matters is a good sign; but he draws a line between the interference due to foreign initiation and the interference due to Indian initiation. "The initiation is to be our own, and based chiefly upon the example of our venerated past and dictated by the sense of the most representative and enlightened men in the community and all that is sought at the hands of the foreigners is to give to this responsible sense, as embodied in the practices and usages of the respectable classes, the force and the sanction of law."<sup>34</sup>

It is quite true that institutions cannot grow up at the behest of the rulers, that they are essentially growths and not manufactures. But Ranade replies that what the reformers want is a return to and a restoration of the days of our past history. "Those who advocate it justify it on the authority of texts revered and admitted to be binding to this day. The intermediate corruption and degradation was not of the nation's seeking. It was forced upon it by the predominance of barbarous influences and by the intolerance of ruthless conquerors. That force having ceased to be operative, we must now return to the old order of things, if we are to grow to our old proportions."<sup>35</sup> Ranade took a radically different view of the State in India from Tilak, who considered the British Government itself as an unjustifiable intrusion. Not so the Moderate School. "The State in its collective capacity represents the power, the wisdom, the mercy, and charity of its best citizens. What a single man or a combination of men,

can best do on their own account, that the State may do, but it cannot shirk its duty if it sees its way to remedy evils, which no private combination of men can check adequately, or which it can deal with more speedily and effectively than any private combination of men can do."<sup>36</sup>

Still the Moderate Social Reformers would not invoke the assistance of the State unless it was absolutely necessary; for they were deeply convinced of the evolutionary character of all reform. You cannot change men by an Act of Parliament; and social reform which they wanted consisted in a change of our hearts. "Super-imposed laws will not do service to us unless as in some extreme cases the surgeon has to be sent for to stop hemorrhage and allow the physician time to heal the patient."<sup>37</sup> There cannot be hurry in such matters. The pace of social reform cannot be artificially forced. The final hope of social salvation lies in education—education both in the Universities and outside. "My faith," wrote Telang to Malabari, "in the education of public opinion as a great social force is almost unlimited. And I believe that in the long run the results of that education are not only more enduring, but—what might seem paradoxical—more rapid than the results of such artificial remedies applied *ab extra* as are proposed in your note. The school-master is abroad. Among the so-called upper classes education has already spread sufficiently wide for all practical purposes connected with these questions, and from them social reform may be expected to filter down to the classes below them without much difficulty."<sup>38</sup>

It may not be always wise to substitute new lamps for old; but it is certainly wise for India to substitute new knowledge for old. H. H. the Maharaja of Baroda gives no quarter to medieval and feudal illusions, and although he is a distinguished representative of the order of princes in India, he has not hesitated in giving a bold lead to his humbler brethren in the cause of an all-round social advance. Here is his penetrating analysis of the relationship of Hindu society to the old and the new knowledge. "The old knowledge related all facts to the single idea of religion, the

new classifies life and restricts the sphere of religion to the high spiritual matters with which it is properly concerned. What is to be gained by clinging to the older and less developed system and applying the solemn sanctions of religion to matters of ordinary convenience which do not really affect our spiritual welfare? We only make life cumbrous and hamper our efficiency. Indeed, these rules and restrictions, which become too many and irksome for men to observe, help to demoralise us, for either we get accustomed to breaking what we regard as the ordinances of religion, and what, therefore, it ought to be our aim and interest to observe, or we turn a large number of innocent acts into secret vices. In either case we come to think nothing of leading a double life.

“The next thing we learn is the importance of a more accurate knowledge of the laws of Nature; we must rationalise our knowledge and no longer cling to superstitions. To take some homely instances, the ideas of our people are full of strange theories of cause and effect, and indications of coming events, such as a lizard falling on the body causes misfortune, that the sight of a widow on certain occasions is inauspicious, that the advisability of marriages can best be determined by comparing horoscopes, that it is bathing in the Ganges or paying money to Brahmins and not one's conduct that purifies the mind and soul. All this obviously typifies a primitive state of mind which, if encouraged, in small things, must dominate us in those which are higher. A society which persists in beliefs of this nature is not likely to understand cause and effect in its own social arrangements. We must get rid of superstition in great things as well as small, and govern our actions by a rational consideration of aims and means.

“Our next lesson is that we must accept new knowledge and assimilate it whether it comes from without or from within. A society armed with bows and arrows, confronted with others which use the modern rifle, must arm itself with rifles if it is to go on existing; and the same principle applies itself in all matters.

We must not only accept knowledge intellectually but have the moral courage to alter our actions and customs in accordance. Otherwise, our knowledge is of little use; for the true test of knowledge is its practical utility in equipping the society for the actual problems of life. If then, our customs put us at a disadvantage in the struggle for life, it is useless to persist in them merely because they are our own or old." 39

These are the methods of social advance. Not any one method is completely suited for every species of change that is needed. Education may be the ideal method; but are we sure that we would have done away with *suttee* with its assistance alone? The spirit of true comprehension, and of bold but cautious action is rare. Even education touches very often the surface of the Hindu or Muslim in India. Society is a very strange creature; its moods are yet far from being completely comprehended. Sometimes it will be coerced and sometimes coaxed into action. Sometimes the thunder of revolt rouses people as nothing else does; but very often it becomes instrumental in consolidating the ranks of the die-hards. The appeal from Hinduism degenerate to Hinduism pure and simple is often unparalleled in its efficacy; and many listen to the music of the text of Manu and Yajnavalkya and all their doubts vanish. An appeal to conscience is bound to be in the long run irresistible; but the slumbering conscience of the orthodox Hindu accustomed to see one side of things for centuries has been so far slow to wake up in response to the call of the pure social reformer.

The fact to be remembered above all is the organic unity of society and the inter-connectedness of its various parts. The Maharaja of Baroda was never more prophetic than when he laid down that the great advances in social reform will ultimately come from political and economic development. "But social reform cannot stand alone. The social aspect of a society is closely connected with the economic and the political. The advance of one affects both the others. Therefore we cannot hope for general improvement in social conditions until we have conquered some of our economic difficulties and have realised

more fully the opportunities which exist for the development of a sane political life.

“Indeed, we may look for considerable assistance in social reform from the economic development. Industrial progress has already done much to break down the barriers of caste and will do more. If India can become richer, she will have more leisure for the consideration of her needs, more capital for the exploitation of her resources and for the encouragement of the education of her people to make the most use of them. A more active commercial life must bring all classes of people together and force upon their attention as nothing else can, the great common interests which unite them.”<sup>40</sup>

#### 7. PROGRAMME OF SOCIAL REFORM : CASTE.

The Social Reformers felt that the greatest obstacle to all progress lay in the institution of caste among the Hindus. Dr. Bhandarkar observed: “Caste has become so inveterate in Hindu society that the endeavour to do so (to obliterate all distinctions at once) will result in the formation of new castes. But the end must steadily be kept in view. We must remember that caste is the greatest monster we have to kill.”<sup>41</sup>

Caste had come into being or at any rate had stiffened in its operation to resist the forces of change from without. It has, no doubt, been a wonderful shell, behind which a society retiring to live in its own way can entrench itself. But if the time had come to recast Hindu society on modern lines, in order that it may survive in a better and worthier form, caste will have either to go immediately or allow itself to be an instrument of change provisionally and be slowly modified that eventually it may disappear. Here was the reformer's greatest difficulty. “It should be borne in mind that the peculiar caste system of India constitutes the most formidable difficulty in the way of introduction of European civilisation among the people of India.”<sup>42</sup>

But the reformers also felt the unsuitability of the caste-

system from the standpoint of humanity or justice or equality. It was a system based on the principle of privilege and as such it has roused the anger of reformers who could not look with sympathy on arbitrary distinctions of high and low, which had no justification in fact. "The caste-basis of society is essentially one of inequality, as determined by certain artificial significance of birth and of barriers arbitrarily created to limit the sphere of human faculties. The modern world will not acknowledge special claims of individuals to special means of spiritual salvation. The Pariah as well as the Brahmin will be allowed to seek his own special means of salvation."<sup>43</sup>

The system of caste, standing as it does for a system of rigidity and irrational worship of the principles of birth and heredity, militates against the principle of social efficiency. It is necessary that there should be ample scope in a society for any individual talent to find out and get the place in society to which it is eminently fitted. In other words, the reformers demand an equality of opportunity and the proper adaptation of capacities to work in the interests of the fuller development not only of the individuals concerned but of society as a whole. "We can no longer lay down arbitrarily that certain occupations are open to a certain caste and others to other castes. Each person's aptitude and opportunity are the only determining factors in the choice of occupation. The great principle of social relation in these days is a perfect equality of footing to all. The history of the modern world is mostly the history of the struggle against a monopoly of power and prestige in certain classes; the privileged classes having been deprived of their privileges, the masses are emancipated and elevated, bringing together all members of the community on a footing of equality and removing all obstacles placed by society or the State before individuals in the rivalry of life."<sup>44</sup>

Caste further tends to divide society into endless groups and raises artificial barriers between them. This comes in the way of building up national solidarity. "In India the idea of caste has been able to prevent social union, intercourse, inter-

change of ideas, and inter-marriage; it has operated to promote a class hatred, to prevent national union."<sup>45</sup>

In fact, caste throws its ominous shadow over every phase of individual and social life in India. The Maharaja of Baroda exposes the evil influence of caste in his usual completely realistic way. "The evils of caste cover the whole range of social life. It hampers the life of the individual with a vast number of petty rules and observances, which have no meaning. It cripples him in his relations with his family, in his marriage, in the education of his children and his life generally. It weakens the economic position by attempting to confine him to particular trades by preventing him from learning the culture of the West, and by giving him an exaggerated view of his knowledge and importance. It cripples his professional life by increasing distrust, treachery, and jealousy, hampering a free use of other's abilities, and ruins his social life by increasing exclusiveness, restricting the opportunities of social intercourse and preventing that intellectual development on which the prosperity of any class most depends. In the wider spheres of life, in municipal or local affairs, it destroys all hope of local patriotism, of work for the common good, by thrusting forward the interests of the caste as opposed to those of the community, and by making combined efforts for the common good exceedingly difficult. But its serious offence is its effect on national life and national unity. It intensifies local dissensions and diverse interests, and obscures great national ideas and interests."<sup>46</sup>

The Maharaja of Baroda realised very early that the problem of the lower castes called the "Untouchables" was one of the most urgent problems demanding a patient and sympathetic handling at the hands of the higher castes. The higher castes were vociferous in their demand for justice and equality at the hands of the British Government; but how could they do it consistently with their own caste ideals? The Reformers wanted liberation; and they would not leave the lower castes out of their scheme. The problem "demands the transformation in mind and



heart of all our people – a transvaluation of values – a universal quickening of conscience.” The conscience of Europe was stirred and slavery disappeared in the nineteenth century. But the presence of millions of untouchables shows that the Hindu conscience is not yet sufficiently stirred by this institution, which is, in some respects worse than slavery. The danger to the cause of a united Hinduism, a united India here is very clear, and the sooner sanity comes over the die-hard Hindus, the better.

#### 8. PROGRAMME OF SOCIAL REFORM : WOMEN AND MARRIAGE.

Another equally fundamental problem facing the social reformer was the position of woman in Hindu society. Like the problem of caste, the problem of the status of women is one of the basic problems on the solution of which depends the solution of many other problems. The Hindu woman in the first place received very little education even in higher castes. She was generally sunk in darkness and superstition. Secondly, she was a victim of certain cruel customs; in the higher communities, if she became a widow even at a very early age, she was not allowed to re-marry. The lot of a widow was also often very hard and unendurable. Thirdly, she was disposed of in marriage very early, when she had no knowledge of the nature of the transaction and to a partner, whom she might not have even seen.

Raja Ram Mohun Roy scored his first great victory for the woman's cause in India when the cruel custom of *suttee* disappeared. Pundit Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar scored the second great victory in the cause of Hindu women, when he induced the Government to make the remarriage of widows legally permissible (1856). Malabari's campaign against infant marriage led to the passing of the Age of Consent Act ( 1891 ) which raised the minimum of the girl's age when a marriage can be consummated from 10 to 12 years. The Sarada Act has to some extent settled the problem of child marriage.

Infant marriages could not but look ridiculous from every

point of view to the social reformer. They were no marriages at all —no unions voluntarily entered into by competent parties. The whole idea of medieval society was to bring the individual completely under the power of society. There was to be no freedom of thought, no freedom of action, in vital matters. Marriage is surely one very important matter in which the personality of the party concerned ought to find its fullest expression. But in a way, women at any rate were supposed not to have an independence of personality. That was laid down by Manu and religiously stuck to by the Hindus till the advent of Western influences. In the circumstances, the girl was not supposed to have any say in the matter; her marriage was no concern of hers. But even the male child was equally unceremoniously rushed into the matrimonial contract, very often when he was too inexperienced to understand anything. Infant marriage, therefore, is a sin against the very idea of personality, which is one of the basic ideas of the social reform movement. It constitutes a gross, unwarranted right of interference with the most precious liberties of the individual. But it has many other undesirable consequences too. The physical development of married infants must suffer considerably; and the right age of marriage can be decided only on the basis of expert physiological knowledge. The education of children who settle down in marriage very often has a very premature close; and with the bodies and minds of the younger generation thus crippled, what can we hope from such a society?

Infant marriage became most tragic in the case of girls who sometimes became widows for life before they had even seen or met their husbands. A widow had the most unenviable position in society; and the less we say of her sufferings the better. The reformers, therefore, demanded that infant marriage should go; that widows should have as much right, not merely legally, but socially, to re-marry, as the widowers; that all taint of inferiority associated with woman should disappear, and above all, that there should be ample facilities for the full education and development of women in all suitable directions.

## II. CONCLUSION.

The task of the social reformer had been a formidable one. This is due to the rigid conservatism of Hindu society to-day. Every problem has been considered a part of religion; and to criticise it is to challenge the foundations of the whole structure. Caste further enables the no-change elements in society to inflict the terrible penalty of excommunication upon the social reformer, a penalty which will make the boldest shudder. There is the atmosphere of the family, the influence of old father or the old mother, which is not easy to resist.

It required tremendous moral courage to pit oneself against forces such as these. "Strength of numbers we cannot command," said Ranade, "but we can command earnestness of conviction, singleness of devotion, readiness of self-sacrifice in all honest workers in the cause. We have above all to learn to bear and to forbear—to bear ridicule, insults, even personal injuries at times, and forbear from returning abuse for abuse. In the words of the Prophet of Nazareth, we have to take up the cross not because it is pleasant to be persecuted, but because the pain and the injury are nothing by the side of the principle for which they are endured."<sup>47</sup>

Raja Ram Mohun Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, and Keshub Chandra Sen were to a certain extent of the stuff of which martyrs are made. Reformers of this type have stood for their principle's sake (though Keshub's lapses are well-known) and have always become sources of inspiration to the society. Men like Ranade and Telang were not cast in the same heroic mould; their main work consists in thought rather than in action. They laid down the principles, they suggested particular methods; and they made the case for social reform almost irresistible. "Great changes," says Hobhouse in his "Liberalism", "are not caused by ideas alone, but they cannot be effected without ideas. The passions of men must be aroused, if the frost of custom is to be broken or the chains of authority burst,

but passion itself is blind, and its world is chaotic. To be effective, men must act together; and to act together they must have a common understanding and a common object. When it comes to be a question of any far-reaching change, they must not only conceive their immediate ends but must convert others. They must communicate sympathy and win over the unconvinced. Upon the whole, they must show that their object is possible, that it is compatible with existing institutions or at any rate with some workable form of social life. They are driven on by the requirements of the situation to the elaborations of ideas and in the end to some sort of social philosophy, and the philosophies that have driving force behind them are those which arise after this fashion out of the practical demands of human feelings."<sup>48</sup>

The Social Liberals carried the work of emancipation begun by Raja Ram Mohun Roy one step further. Religious liberalism stood for the freedom of the individual judgment from the dead weight of an authoritative dogma or priesthood. Social liberalism stands for essentially the same principle; it stands for the emancipation first of the individual and then of society from the tyranny of custom. It was not meant in either case that every capricious individual could be a law unto himself. It was merely meant to insist upon the right of the individual, to emphasise the sacred duty of the individual, to make the fullest use of all the resources that God has given him in trying to evaluate systems and not to allow himself to be treated merely as a cipher in the scheme of things. The essence of Liberalism is to demand the substitution in every sphere of life of the principle of reason for the principle of routine, the principle of conscience for that of custom, of necessary change and progress for a rigid perpetuation of the *status quo*.

# POLITICAL LIBERALISM



## POLITICAL LIBERALISM

### I AWAKENING.

The Mutiny of 1857 may be taken as a convenient starting-point in the history of India's political struggles in the modern world. The old order represented by the Company Raj now disappears and gives way to a more conscious and deliberate assumption by the British Parliament of its responsibilities towards India. In India also the stage now becomes clear: and it is understood by all that the medieval order of conflicting Native Rajas and Nabobs has definitely passed away. The Mutiny was an attempt on a large scale for the last time for the old forces to assert themselves against the new régime. It failed: and with its failure, the British Rule emerges as a great all-India political organisation controlling roughly the whole of India from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin.

With the establishment of a comprehensive peace under one rule, the vague but growingly more definite pan-Indian political consciousness is born. This consciousness slowly begins to express itself in a number of ways. The greatest gift of the new dispensation is the freedom it has brought with it: and this freedom is practically at the root of the whole Indian National Movement. The Indian Universities established in 1854 soon began to turn out hundreds of graduates trained in modern history, modern politics, and modern economics.

The earliest exponents of India's cause were remarkable

men: but they were British, men like Burke or Macaulay or Bright or Fawcett. They are rightly called the Friends of India: and they laid the foundation of independent and impartial thinking about India's problems. They were fearless critics of British administration in India: and it was their example which above all served as a guide and inspiration to the early Indian politicians.

The agency which has perhaps played the most striking part in the evolution of modern Indian life is the Indian Press. Sir Charles Metcalfe restored the freedom of the Press in India: and the vernacular papers as well as the Indo-English papers began to make rapid progress. Ishwarchandra Gupta's *Prabhakar* was one of the earliest Indian papers which discussed politics. It was followed by a host of dailies and weeklies and monthlies. The *Hindu Patriot*, the *Indian Mirror*, the *Amrit Bazar Patrika*, the *Bengalee* and several others in Bengal, the *Rast Goftar*, the *Bombay Samachar*, the *Indu Prakash*, the *Jam-e-Jamshid*, the *Mahratta*, the *Keasari* in Bombay: the *Hindu*, the *Standard*, the *Swadesh-mitra* and some others in Madras, the *Tribune* in Lahore: these among others played a prominent part in the awakening of Indian political consciousness in those days. Describing the influence of the Indian Press, John Bright said: "The Government Officials look into them (i. e. Indian Papers) to see if they are saying anything unpleasant to the Government—anything that indicates sedition or discontent, but never for the purpose of being influenced by the judgment of the writers and editors. The actual press of the country, which touches the Government, is the press of the English: and that press generally has been in favour of annexation of more territory, more places, more salaries, and ultimately more pensions."<sup>1</sup>

There was tremendous and growing suffering in the country: millions had been thrown out of employment by the breakdown of India's old industries: and pressure on the soil grew apace. Agricultural distress, therefore, supplied the major premiss of a revolution: and political education, unaccompanied by political power supplied the minor premiss, in the language of Blunt. Mere distress,



however acute or long-continued, does not always lead to upheavals: certainly not in India, where men generally find all explanation in the working of a mysterious and inscrutable fate. But now calamities which were formerly attributed to God came to be associated with the Government. Educated men began to know something of the operation of the law of cause and effect in the human and social sphere: and they soon connected the sufferings of the people with the policy of the Government.

## 2. RACE-CONSCIOUSNESS.

The policy of a Government is, however, a very general and vague thing to the people; it does not necessarily rouse people to the point of frenzy, as long as it is carried out in a broad, impersonal, inoffensive way. But the officers of the Government, the day-to-day exponents and visible embodiments of the Raj and its policy had not only no affection for the people, but did not care to hide their indifference and even contempt for them. The opening of the Suez Canal, while it shortened the physical distance between India and England, increased the mental distance between the two countries. The English officer ceased to be a trusted friend and a respected guardian and adviser, and became more and more either a cold and distant or a haughty and insolent representative of the Raj.

The exhibition in different forms of racial bitterness on the part of the members of the governing caste has been one main factor in the development of a decidedly anti-British attitude on the part of the Indian politicians. The earlier politicians did not make capital out of it: but the feeling has never been absent from the sub-conscious mind of India. Sir Henry Cotton has given us a graphic insight into the mind of the official and his dealings with the 'natives,' John Stuart Mill in his "Representative Government" says: "If there be a fact to which all experience testifies, it is that when a country holds another in subjection, the individuals of the ruling people, who resort to

the foreign country to make their fortunes are, of all others, those who most need to be held under powerful restraint. They are always one of the chief difficulties of the Government. Armed with the prestige and filled with the scornful overbearingness of the conquering nation, they have the feelings inspired by absolute power without the sense of responsibility. Among a people like that of India the utmost efforts of the public authorities are not enough for the effectual protection of the weak against the strong; and of all the strong, the European settlers are strongest, and wherever the demoralising effect of the situation is not in a most remarkable degree corrected by the personal character of the individual, they think the people of the country mere dirt under their feet; it seems to them monstrous that any rights of the natives should stand in the way of their smallest pretensions."

The English attitude in India becomes more hardened as the Indian becomes more and more educated, more and more conscious of his rights, and more alive to his national self-respect. Instances occur frequently of assaults on Indians by Europeans. Pedestrians have often been abused and struck because they have not lowered their umbrellas on meeting Europeans on the way. Indian gentlemen of the highest rank have been freely insulted in railway carriages by Englishmen travelling or desiring to travel in the same compartment. Even a Rajah—a chief of State has been made to shampoo Englishmen when he happened to travel with them.

Public attention was specially roused when now and then there was a scandalous failure of justice when the issue lay between an Indian on the one side and an Englishman on the other. In old times, the Government officials used to take the side of Indians against the non-official European community when necessary. But after the Mutiny, we find officials and non-officials making common cause against Indians. It is an ugly fact "which it is no use disguising, that the murders of natives by Englishmen is no infrequent occurrence. In one issue of the *Amrit Bazaar Patrika* of this month, three contemporary cases are dealt with, in

none of which have the prisoners paid the full penalty for murder.”<sup>2</sup> Contrast this with the firmness with which justice was meted out to Indians in those days. I refer to the Maler Kotla Case of 1872. There was a riot in Ludhiana in connection with cow-killing : and a hundred fanatic Sikhs attacked a Punjab town. Sixty-six of them who survived, surrendered. The Deputy Commissioner, Mr. Cowan, blew forty-nine of them from the guns. Mr. Cowan was dismissed, though the entire Anglo-Indian Press was on his side

This arrogant class-consciousness burst out in a violent form in the time of Lord Ripon against the famous Ilbert Bill. Lord Ripon wanted to remove the racial bar between Indians and Europeans in the matter of criminal jurisdiction. It was proposed that all district magistrates and sessions judges, Indian as well as European, should have the same criminal jurisdiction over European British subjects. It was a small affair, but the European community rose up against it as one man and started a very intense agitation all over the country. A conspiracy was formed to put the Viceroy on board a steamer at Chandpat Ghat, and send him to England via the Cape.<sup>3</sup> The Bill failed: but it left a permanent mark on Indian political life. The smouldering racial feelings found a vent which left no ambiguity in the minds of Indians about their position in the eyes of the officials. But above all, it gave an object lesson to the Indians about the enormous possibilities of a well-organised political agitation in the country.

### 3. EXTREMISM OF THE PRESS.

The movement gathered momentum during the viceregalities of Lord Mayo, Lord Northbrook and Lord Lytton. Lord Mayo's brief régime was marked by the Wahabi Trial, and Lord Northbrook's by the trial and deposition of the Gaekwad on the ground of complicity in the attempted murder of the British Resident, Col. Phayre. Both these régimes excited public feeling

to a considerable extent in the country. Lord Lytton had Imperialist ambitions : and a number of events during his régime added fresh fuel to the popular feeling. The war against Afghanistan, partly because it menaced the freedom of a neighbouring country, and partly because it involved heavy financial expenditure on the part of the Government of India, aroused considerable opposition among the educated people in India. Equally unpopular and reactionary were two other measures : the Arms Act and the Vernacular Press Act. The Arms Act (1878) deeply touched the feeling of national self-respect of the Indians : and clearly evinced the complete want of confidence of the Government in the people of the country. The Vernacular Press Act (1877) had the same tendency; it attempted to stifle by force the expressions of public feeling on matters of national importance.

It is interesting to note the exact nature of political feelings among some sections of the people at that time. A paper called the "*Sadharanee*" attracted a lot of attention. In one article, referring to the fall of Plevna, during the Russo-Turkish War, the paper says : " We Hindus have borne and still bear the hardships and misery which follow the downfall of the prestige of a nation. In every bone, vein, and pore of our bodies, this sense of national degradation works as a slow consuming fire. God forbid that even our deadliest enemies should suffer as we do." In another article called " Spurious Loyalty ", we read : " The study of the very alphabet of politics has taught us this, that the performance of pledges forms no part of politics. When the Russian Emperor, setting aside an old treaty, resolved to station men-of-war in the waters of the Black Sea, Mr. Mill was asked by the English Minister ( of the day ) to express his views on the subject. Mr. Mill then frankly declared that there was no connection between ' politics and the performance of pledges.' To-day finding myself in a dangerous position, I agree to pay you a tribute of a million sterling. But ten years hence, becoming conscious of my own strength, I find that if I do not pay the promised million, you will be powerless to enforce your demands. I accordingly break my promise.

“If you and I were to do anything of this kind, it would be considered a grievous crime. But kings frequently act this way. The science of politics is in no way concerned with morality or immorality.

“The British Government is continually breaking its promises. Thus it first engaged to pay an annual sum of fifty-three lakhs to the Nawab Nazim of Moorshidabad. This was reduced to 32 lakhs for some time, which again has been ultimately cut down to half this sum. The Fortress of Gwalior, belonging to the Scindia, and the Berars to the Nizam, once taken as securities have not been restored. These are common occurrences. A history of the non-fulfilment of promises by the British Government would be the whole history of the last hundred and fifty years. We are not so foolish as to believe that the British Government should now, after a period of profound peace for over eighteen years, redeem the promises which they made on the 1st of November, 1858, soon after the crisis of the Indian Mutiny. During that critical period there were dark clouds in the political sky; bright flashed the lightnings afar and European hearts were chilled with an icy fear. But now the gentle breeze of peace is blowing, the sun of prosperity shines on high. Where is the wonder then that the English should now throw aside the heavy clothes with which they protected their bodies against cold, wind, and rain? Whoever uses winter clothes in spring?

“It is the general belief that the Viceroy’s speech on the 1st of January, 1877, nullified to a considerable extent the Queen’s Proclamation of 1858. Babu Surendra Nath Bannerjee, because he gave expression to this belief at a meeting of the Calcutta Municipality, brought down upon himself the wrath of the *sahibs* (Europeans) who charged him with being disloyal. He who attempted to mar the spirit of the Queen’s Proclamation by a cloud of vague phrases, is regarded as a loyal politician, but if you understand the thing and venture to speak out plainly, you are looked upon as disloyal. Do the *sahibs* take us for such idiots as to think that we can be hushed to silence, because they bring

against us some bitter and unfounded accusations ?

“ We know very well when it behoves us to show our loyalty; we tore our bosoms and poured out our heart’s blood to welcome the two Royal Princes who visited India. But what definition of loyalty are we to accept when we are frankly criticising the measures of Government ? The Viceroy spoke against the Queen’s Proclamation and shall we say: ‘ No, the Viceroy said nothing against it. ’ Such insincere flattery is not loyalty...

“ It was declared in 1858 that, if the natives of the country proved themselves equal, all appointments so far as practicable would be given to them. But now we are told that all high executive offices are to be given to Englishmen only. If these two declarations are not contradictory, then henceforward there will be no difference in colour between black and white. If it amounts to disloyalty to point out this contradiction, and if for this, the Government chooses to punish us, then we with tens of millions of Her Majesty’s subjects are prepared to be punished along with Surendra Nath.”

In another article headed: “ The Final Decision in the Fenuah Cases,” we read:—

“ The people were hitherto proud of the justice administered in the High Court. In seeking to shield a rash, oppressive, and unprincipled European civilian, Government has now brought that Court into contempt, and struck a blow at the root of British justice. Government has thus worked its own ruin, and yet if after this, the people are found to express discontent, the Anglo-Indian editors will brand the Bengalees with such epithets as ungrateful, disloyal, scurrilous and what not.

“ Long ago we wrote about the Fenuah case. Our readers may remember that the *sahibs* of the factory wanted to have an embankment opened by force. The ryots resisted and they stretched themselves upon the *bund*. In order to frighten them, the *sahibs* fired blank cartridges but this proving of no effect,

bullets were regularly used. In the court, the ryots deposed that they saw a gun in the hands of the *Burra Sahib*. The *Burra Sahib*, however, in the deposition, said that he had no gun with him, but the *Chota Sahib* had one. A great confusion ensued. Those who said that the *Burra Sahib* had a gun with him were charged with perjury.

“As to the final judgment of the High Court in the case, it is observed that perhaps a decision so strange was never passed even in the most barbarous country in the world. It is first taken for granted that there has been no illegality in the proceedings, and then punishment is inflicted on a number of innocent persons on this supposition. There is not a doubt that the fame of British justice is gone for ever.”

The following article (20th September, 1877) from another paper, the *Bharat Mihir*, is equally interesting. It was published under the heading ‘Our Grief’.

“The *Samaj Darpana* has taken leave for good. We make a few extracts below from what the Editor said when he bade farewell to his readers.

“If to teach loyalty to the public be the object of the Native newspapers then they may as well not exist at all, for people are already sufficiently loyal.

“If anybody says, there is not the slightest dissatisfaction in the country, not a single man’s face is sad, all are satisfied, all are happy, there is nothing to be said against the past acts of the Government, nothing against the present acts, then it will be our duty to reprobate such a man as a liar, as one who has not given a faithful representation of the actual state of things. And such a man is no friend of the English. What is the use of newspapers if they observe a certain state of feeling in the community at large and represent quite a different state of feelings before the Government or the public? Would it not be a misnomer to call newspapers the organs of the public, if the journalist could not

represent the grievances of the people in a free and unfettered manner? Is it necessary to repeat *ad nauseam* that the English are our benefactors? How often shall we abuse our loyalty by reiterating on every occasion when we discuss (public questions) that we are loyal? What heart will not be pained to see the spectacle of educated natives crying for want of food, while every month, batches of Englishmen, fresh from England, are taking possession of all the appointments in the public service? Or what political economy is this that would sanction the retention in the service of highly paid Europeans, while famine and destitution raged in the land and people groaned under the burden of taxation? Why should Moola Bux be hanged for an offence for which Heemian receives only eighteen months' imprisonment? Why should Surendra Nath be dismissed for a fault for which Jack or John receives promotion? That you should despise me as a worthless thing not to be touched, while I should worship you with flowers and sandalwood, is a thing which nature never heard before. We are no fools, though we may be worthless in many respects. Having worshipped so long in the depths of our hearts the virtuous Victoria, we are at last told that we are disloyal."

Another article from the *Samprokash*, on the "Way to Gag the Native Press" (24th December, 1877) is equally instructive. The editor maintains that the Native Press will be automatically gagged if the Government adopts a more equitable policy.

"The authorities should cease to make any distinction between black and white, the native and the foreigner, the conqueror and the conquered, and whether in the court, durbar or the council, should seek to regard all classes of the community with equal impartiality, enact equal laws, give them appointments of equal value, according to merit, and ability, award condign punishments to high-handed Europeans, whether official or non-official. If these measures be adopted, Mr. Eden will see that the mouth of the native press will be of itself stopped..."

"A magistrate, the other day, assaulted an unoffending



native, whose only fault was that he was washing his mouth when the officer passed by, and did not make his *salaam*. What punishment was even awarded to this Magistrate; and how is it that he has been left in charge of a district? So long as the authorities do not redress these wrongs, their utmost efforts to gag the Native Press will never be successful. Should they do this illegally and by force, another mouth will forthwith be opened."

Another paper traces the growth of the drinking habit to the policy of the Government in a striking article. (10th March, 1877.)

"It chills one's blood (literally dries one's blood) to contemplate the terrible evils which drink is causing in our midst. Even immediately after the first arrival of the English in this country, there were hardly more than one or two gentlemen in any village who used to drink, and amongst the lower orders there was perhaps an individual here and there who would smoke *ganjah*. But they had a very bad repute in society. After this, when Government found that there was a very good means of gain in it, it began to encourage the liquor traffic. We have heard, and Dr. Wilson has clearly shown it in his report, that whereas there was only one liquor shop in Dacca before, there are a hundred now. Good Mussulmans and the Krishna-mantri Hindus considered it a sin even to touch wine; their descendants are now founders and protectors of grog-shops. Now-a-days, wine has become one of the principal articles of trade, and it has become the guardian divinity of every household. This wine is the index of the modern civilisation of the West. A person will not be honoured in the society of an educated man unless he has learned to drink. The number of drunkards is gradually increasing, both among Hindus and Mussulmans. Christians have been mainly instrumental in propagating a taste for wine. They themselves have not been ruined by it, but are accomplishing the ruin of others.....There is nothing else but drink which can do all sorts of injury, pecuniary, physical, and mental. We have some very influential men who died at a very premature age from the

effects of drinking; some other have become completely useless; and there are others who through the same cause are on the high road to ruin. Who will not be grieved at seeing the country in such a wretched state? The Government cannot do anything to prevent the evil until it consents to forego the profits it obtains from spirits and liquors.

“It does not become the ruling powers to gain money by a means so detrimental to the interest of its subjects, and so opposed to humane principles of government.”<sup>4</sup>

These articles explain to some extent the attitude of the Government towards the Vernacular Press. But to us they are interesting because of the light they throw upon the currents of public opinion and feeling in those days. They clearly show that politics, both moderate and extremist, existed in the country long before these schools came into existence. The Press was doing in those days a first-class service both to the Government and to the people.

#### 4. LORD RIPON : HIS INFLUENCE.

If Lord Lytton played a prominent part in rousing the patriotism of the country and giving it a strong anti-British bias, Lord Ripon played an equally prominent part in stirring up popular feeling and giving it a strong pro-British bias. To understand the rise and working of the earliest nationalism in modern India, one has carefully to remember the factors which went to strengthen popular attachment to the British Government as well as the factors which went to cause a sort of discontent with the existing administration.

The popular attitude in the days of the Company was strongly anti-British. The creation of loyal India seemed an impossible dream to the rulers then. People openly rejoiced when the rumours of the destruction of the Company's Army in Afghanistan (1842) spread in the Indian bazaars. “All India”, wrote

Lord Metcalfe in 1824, "All India is at times looking out for our downfall. The people everywhere would rejoice at our destruction." In 1814, he wrote, "Our situation in India has always been precarious. We are still a handful of Europeans, governing an immense empire without any firm hold on the country, having warlike and powerful enemies on all our frontiers and the spirit of disaffection dormant, but rooted universally among our subjects. We might now be swept away in a single whirlwind. We are without root. The best affected natives would think of a change of Government with indifference, and in the North-Western Provinces, there is hardly a man who would not hope for benefit from such a change."

"Shall we ever," he again asked in 1820, "shall we ever contrive to attach the native population to our Government? And can this be done by identifying the interests of the upper classes with our own? Is it possible in any way to identify their interests with ours? To all three questions if put to me, I should answer *No.*"<sup>5</sup>

But with the establishment of order and peace over all the country, all hopes in the native powers to re-establish their independence disappeared. This was the contribution of the Mutiny. Isolated dots of sovereignty struggling with each other disappeared. One single India emerged. The disloyalties of princes were converted into so many loyalties. Each power now imagined that the firmer its attachment to the central power, the greater its security: and it further felt that the greater the security of the central power, the greater its own resulting security.

The Pax Britannica was soon felt to be a great blessing to the people of India who had seen nothing but fight, anarchy, confusion, since the fall of the great Moghul. Education spread, and it also brought a keener realisation of the possibilities for good hitherto undreamt of, inherent in the new order. A reign of law had taken the place of a reign of terror; person and property became safe to a remarkable extent; and a cry

of ineffable relief went forth from the heart of the Indian people. B. C. Pal writes:—"In the sixties of the last century, even village urchins in distant and out of the way places used to cry out for protection from the British 'Company' when attacked by their playmates. "Dohai Company Bahadur" was a familiar cry in our rural parts in those days. Our educated people still remembered these traditions. Their professions of loyalty to the British Queen and the British Government were therefore absolutely sincere notwithstanding their criticism of the acts and policies of the Indian Government."<sup>6</sup>

The policy of conciliation announced in the Queen's Proclamation, went very far in soothing the lacerated soul of India after the Mutiny. The Proclamation became the one basis of the new creed of loyalty as well as patriotism. It was the one source of inspiration to the troubled soul of educated India. The heart of the newly educated Indian further responded with enthusiasm to the new ideals so eloquently preached by men like Burke and Macaulay. The whole modern Congress movement, upto 1905, is nothing but a perpetual appeal from Philip drunk to Philip sober, from the actualities of British administration in India to the beautiful principles and visions embodied in English political literature, Burke and Bright, Macaulay and Gladstone were the masters at whose feet the Indian politicians learnt all their politics. They were names to conjure with; their speeches and writings became the political Bible of our intelligentsia for nearly two generations. Men read and re-read every word which came from them. Men built their hopes and their aspirations upon them. No wonder that a whole generation of Indian nationalists was loyalist to the core in spite of their very vigorous criticism of the acts and policy of the bureaucracy.

The movement of Great Britain and then of the Colonies in the direction of democracy touched Indian mind deeply. If England moved under the pressure of facts more and more towards the realisation of popular government, why could not India? The lessons of constitutional development of England went into the

heart of the Indian politician. The tradition of liberty slowly broadening down from precedent to precedent, of ordered progress, of bloodless revolutions, was transmitted by English education to our politicians and became an inseparable part of their consciousness. If Canada or Australia got what she wanted by persistent pressure, why could not India, by having recourse to the same method, obtain the same results? Did not the native English heart rejoice in the emancipation of down-trodden people everywhere? Would it not equally rejoice in the rise of Indians to manhood in their own good time? Had not England been the classic home of liberty where patriots from various countries at one time or other, had found a home and refuge? Pondering deeply over all these facts, and taking their lessons completely to heart, the Indian politician said with Cowper, "England, with all thy faults I love thee still!"

In India, the Government was also being slowly recast to suit Indian needs. The advent of a Liberal Government in Great Britain always raised high hopes among Indians. The policy of Lord Lytton was the policy of Lord Salisbury and Lord Beaconsfield. In 1880, Gladstone came into power. "When Mr. Gladstone came into office in 1880," wrote Blunt, "he found himself at the head of an immense majority in the House of Commons, pledged to the ideas of liberty in the East, of which he had himself been the foremost preacher. With regard to India, he had formulated the Liberal creed in a single sentence. "Our title to India," he had said, "depends on the first condition, that our being there is profitable to the Indian nation, and on a second condition that we can make them see and understand it to be profitable." Lord Ripon was chosen to carry out this policy.

The concrete achievements of Lord Ripon's Viceroyalty may not be very substantial, but there was no mistake as regards his attitude. His Ilbert Bill failed; but the determination gradually to do away with invidious racial differences was there, and it was this which endeared him to the popular imagination. The more official and non-official Englishmen

opposed him, the more did the people of India love him. It will not be an exaggeration if we say that he has been the only national Viceroy we had, because he became one of the national heroes in those days. People were hungering for some one in the Government to understand them and to represent them, and they found in Lord Ripon one who meant to do his very best for the country. The old pledges were there, but it was reserved for Lord Ripon to show that they were not idle pledges. The people found out that the British Government too had a heart and a conscience; and their faith in the eventual fulfilment of the promises of the Raj became stronger than ever. Lord Ripon thus became the sheet-anchor of the people's loyalty as well as patriotism, and the moderate politicians were never tired of referring to his great name again and again all through the early Congress years. Here is the evidence of Pundit Malaviya. Speaking as President of the Indian National Congress (1909) he said: "Lord Ripon was loved and respected by educated Indians as I believe no Englishman who has ever been connected with India, excepting the Father of the Indian National Congress, Mr. Allan Octavian Hume, and Sir William Wedderburn, has been loved and respected. He was loved, because he made the most courageous attempt to act up to the spirit of the noble Proclamation of 1858, to obliterate race-distinctions, and to treat his Indian fellow-subjects as standing on a footing of equality with their European fellow-subjects. He was respected, because he was a God-fearing man and showed by his conduct in the exalted office he filled as Viceroy of India, that he believed in the truth of the teaching that righteousness exalteth a nation. He was loved, because he was a type of the noblest of Englishmen, who have an innate love of justice, and who wish to see the blessings of liberty which they themselves enjoy extended to all their fellow-countrymen."<sup>8</sup>

The repeal of the Vernacular Press Act and his support of the Ilbert's Bill clearly revealed the inner intentions of Lord Ripon, and his Local Self-Government Act was meant to lay the foundation of National Self-Government in India in future Indian

educated opinion had begun to demand some share in the Government, and this Act met the aspirations of the people to some extent. The most striking thing about Lord Ripon was the principle which he enunciated, that efficiency is not the only ideal of Government but that Self-Government was an even more important ideal. He said that "as education advanced, there was rapidly growing up an intelligent class of public-spirited men, whom it was not only bad policy, but sheer waste of power, to fail to utilise." But he specially emphasised the value of local self-government as "an instrument of political and popular education."

Here then was something upon which the Indian politicians could build their hopes and aspirations. It was said "that this declaration of a great policy was an open invitation to those who were working for the uplift of their country to co-operate with the Government for its realisation."<sup>9</sup>

There was no great change in the structure of the Government, and yet the whole atmosphere changed because of the new note struck by Lord Ripon.

##### **5. LORD LYTTON: RISE OF ANTI-BRITISH FEELING.**

Indians were therefore receiving valuable lessons in the art of modern politics during the two vicerealties of Lord Lytton and Lord Ripon. Lord Lytton's reactionary measures had already roused the country from her stupor. "The wanton invasion of Cabul...followed by the second Afghan War, the large increase of the army under the hallucinations of the Russian bug-bear, the costly establishment of a 'scientific frontier', the complete disarming of an inoffensive and helpless population, although the Eurasians were left untouched, the gagging of the vernacular press, the sacrifice of the import cotton duties as a Conservative sop to Lanchashire",<sup>10</sup> these events followed in quick succession and stirred up profound misgivings in the minds of the educated

classes as to the direction in which the Empire was moving.

The Delhi Durbar was held in 1877. A terrible famine was raging in the country at the time, causing veritable havoc among the people. A Calcutta newspaper remarked with reference to the costly pageant of 1877 that "Nero was fiddling while Rome was burning." But the Durbar, while it was meant to be a demonstration of Indian loyalty on a large scale, suggested to the Indian mind the possibility of bringing together in one place the representatives of the different parts of India. The Durbar raised in theory the status of the Queen's Indian subjects, who now became citizens of the British Empire. Many prominent men—Surendranath Bannerjee, Vishvanath Mandlik, Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy—were present at the function, and the idea suggested itself to them that "if the princes and nobles in the land could be forced to form a pageant for the glorification of an autocratic Viceroy, why could not the people be gathered together to unite themselves to restrain by constitutional means and methods the spirit of autocratic rule?"<sup>11</sup> The idea of a united India thus emerged as an unconscious by-product of the Durbar.

The agitation which the Anglo-Indians organised against the Ilbert Bill was equally a blessing in disguise. Politics became openly a racial conflict between the whites and the non-whites, and a lot of mud was thrown by both sides. The Babu was called a "low class hybrid". The outbursts of the infuriated Europeans were thoroughly characteristic. "Shall we be judged by the nigger?" "Shall he send us to jail?" "Shall he be put in authority over us? Never! It is impossible! Better that British rule in India should end than that we should be obliged to submit to such humiliating laws."<sup>12</sup> The agitation taught three lessons to Indians: that racial insolence was a very powerful fact in the situation, that a successful organisation could work wonders, and that the Government established by law also could be set at defiance, if need be, by a widespread agitation in India. The cleavage between the conquerors and the conquered was a hard fact, and even Lord Ripon had to bow to it. And if the Anglo-



Indians could themselves successfully organise and defy the Viceroy, why could not the Indians do the same? Thus the Indians learnt the "A.B.C. of seditious agitation" at the hands of their British masters.

The Platform now begins to be an equally important instrument of political propaganda as the Press. In 1876, the Indian Association was started in Calcutta in order to create and organise public opinion on vital matters. Surendranath Bannerjee was one of its moving spirits. The first problem which faced it was the question of the Civil Service Examination. The age limit for that examination was reduced in 1877 from twenty-one to nineteen. This was regarded as a deliberate attempt to shut out as many Indians as possible. The agitation started in Calcutta and spread all over the country. Surendranath Bannerjee on behalf of the Association, toured round the country and tried to create a common platform on the basis of a common grievance. Such was the beginning of an all-India political agitation in the country. The credit of giving the lead to the whole country in political, as in social and religious reform, belongs undoubtedly to Bengal, and Surendranath Bannerjee was one of our early national heroes. Sir Henry Cotton wrote in his *New India* : "The Bengalee Babus now rule public opinion from Peshawar to Chittagong...A quarter of a century ago there was no trace of this; the idea of any Bengalee influence in the Punjab would have been a conception incredible to Lord Lawrence, to a Montgomery or a Macleod; yet it is the case that during the past year the tour of a Bengalee lecturer, lecturing in English in Upper India, assumed the character of a triumphal progress; and at the present moment, the name of Surendranath Bannerjee excites as much admiration among the rising generation of Multan as in Dacca."<sup>13</sup>

The Indian Association started its next campaign against the Vernacular Press Act of Lord Lytton. Numerous political associations now started all over Bengal and took up the cry. Thus we witness the birth of political consciousness all over the country especially among the middle classes.

The Ilbert Bill intensified this feeling among the Indians, and the whole country rallied round Lord Ripon in a way unparalleled in the political annals of modern India. The country became mad with excitement. People gave him addresses and in many cases unharnessed the horses from his carriage. The Anglo-Indian was stirred deeply at this novel demonstration. "If it be real, what does it mean?" exclaimed Sir Auckland Colvin in a pamphlet which created sensation. "The dry bones in the open valley," he said, "had become instinct with life."<sup>14</sup>

#### 6. BIRTH OF THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS.

The time was thus ripe for the foundation of an All-India political organisation like the Indian National Congress. These demonstrations undoubtedly marked the beginning of a new spirit of patriotism and co-operation in the country. In Bengal there were the British Indian Association and the Indian Association; in Bombay, we had the Bombay Association started by men like Jagannath Sanker Seth and Dadabhai Naoroji. The Sarvajanik Sabha was started in Poona during the seventies under Chiplunkar and others. But these associations mostly voiced local politics.

The idea of a national gathering was mooted in Calcutta and in Madras. But the credit of giving it final bodily shape really goes to Hume. Mr. A. O. Hume had retired in 1882 from the post of a Secretary to Government. He had the experience of thirty-three years' service and had acquired a very intimate knowledge both of the government and the people. His democratic instincts convinced him that 'to dig an overt and constitutional channel for the discharge of the increasing ferment' was the only remedy. In 1883, he addressed an open letter to the graduates of the Calcutta University, the sincerity and outspokenness of which leave no doubt in our minds as regards his motives:—

"Constituting as you do, a large body of the most highly educated Indians, you should, in the natural order of things, con-

stitute also the most important source of all mental, moral, social and political progress in India. Whether in the individual or the nation, all vital progress must spring from within, and it is to you her most cultured and enlightened minds, her most favoured sons, that your country must look for the initiative.

“Scattered individuals, however capable and however willing, are powerless singly. What is needed is union, organisation, and a well-defined line of action, and to secure these, an association is required, armed and organised with unusual care, having for its object to promote the mental, moral, social and political regeneration of the people of India. Our little army must be *sui generis* in discipline and equipment, and the question simply is, how many of you will prove to possess, in addition to your high scholastic attainments, the unselfishness, moral courage, self-control, and active spirit of benevolence which are essential in all who should enlist ?

“As I said before, you are the salt of the land. And if amongst you, the elite, fifty men cannot be found with sufficient power of self-sacrifice, sufficient love for and pride in their country, sufficient genuine and unselfish heartfelt patriotism to take the initiative, and if needs be, devote the rest of their lives to the cause, then there is no hope for India. Her sons must and will remain mere humble and helpless instruments in the hands of foreign rulers, for ‘they who would be free themselves must strike the blow.’

“Every nation secures precisely as good a government as it merits...Men know how to act. Let there be no more complaints of Englishmen being preferred to you in all important offices, for if you lack that public spirit, that highest form of altruistic devotion that leads men to subordinate private ease to the public weal, that true patriotism that has made Englishmen what they are, then rightly are these preferred to you and rightly and inevitably have they become your rulers. And rulers and taskmasters they must continue, let the yoke gall your shoulders

ever so sorely, until you realise and stand prepared to act upon the eternal truth, whether in the case of individuals or nations, that self-sacrifice and unselfishness are the only unfailing guides to freedom and happiness."<sup>15</sup>

This document is the parent of Congress agitation. It breathes such a fine spirit of liberty and patriotism that it goes straight to the heart. It emphasises the spirit of self-reliance which is the embodiment not only of the earlier movement, but is the basis of the later movement as well. It points out the necessity of a national consolidation of all thought and effort in the interests of national progress. Mr. Hume's passion for liberty and for the Indian cause inspired every line that he wrote here. This passionate appeal has been well compared to St. Paul's epistle to the Romans, "in the deep pathos and fervid eloquence, no less than in its burning zeal and warm sympathy."<sup>16</sup>

It is true that the idea of a national union was already in the air. Circumstances had made the country ready for it. It had been already in the process of being worked out in Bengal. It was discussed at an informal meeting of the Theosophical Convention at Madras. In this sense it is true, as Mr. Rushbrook Williams says: "Neither Indians nor Englishmen can claim to be its sole creators." But if one man deserves the credit of initiating the movement, that man was undoubtedly Mr. Hume.

A controversy has raged round the motives of Hume in starting this movement. What was required was extreme daring and extreme caution. Mr. Hume had to some extent both. That he was not an Indian was positively an advantage in those days. "No Indian," said Gokhale, "could have started the Indian National Congress."<sup>17</sup> A high English official naturally commanded great weight not only with the official class, but also with the conservative and timid sections of the Indian public. The only handicaps were that, being a non-Indian, his motives were liable to mis-interpretation at the hands of the radical section of Indians. But it is much to the credit of Mr. Hume that he was able to con-

vince even the sceptical extremist of the sincerity of his intentions.

If the Congress was to see the light of day, it was very necessary to move very slowly and cautiously. It was necessary to disarm the active opposition of the Government and, if possible, to enlist its support. True, it is difficult, nay impossible, to play this double rôle successfully for a long time. If you try to please the Government, you cannot please at any rate the extremist sections of the people, and if you try to meet the wishes of the latter, you are sure to encounter the wrath of the powers that be. This has been one of the ever-recurring dilemmas of Indian public life, and the Congress also found it to its cost, that it could not but displease one or the other party, and eventually, it may be, both.

Mr. Hume was keen on securing official support and he thought of starting a National Union rather for social reform than for political reform. He consulted Lord Dufferin who had just come out to India as Viceroy, and evolved the scheme of a political association largely under the influence of Lord Dufferin. If this is true, and there are reasons for believing it to be true, the ultimate credit or discredit of making the first move in the direction of starting the Congress belongs to an English Viceroy. Mr. W. C. Bannerjee wrote in 1898 in his 'Introduction to Indian Politics': "It will probably be news to many that the Indian National Congress, as it was originally started and it has since been carried on, is in reality the work of the Marquis of Dufferin and Ava when that nobleman was the Governor-General of India...He said (to Hume) there was no body of persons in this country who performed the functions which Her Majesty's opposition did in England. The newspapers, even if they really represented the views of the people, were not reliable, and as the English were necessarily ignorant of what was thought of them and their policy in native circles, it would be very desirable in their interests as well as in the interests of the ruled that Indian politicians should meet yearly and point out to the Government in what respects the administration was defective, and how it could be improved, and he added that an assembly such as he proposed

should not be presided over by the Local Governor, for in his presence the people might not like to speak out their minds." (18) Mr. Hume then placed Lord Dufferin's scheme and his own before the leading politicians of the country and the latter unanimously accepted Lord Dufferin's scheme. Sir William Wedderburn supports this statement. "Indeed, in initiating the National Movement, Mr. Hume took counsel with the Viceroy, Lord Dufferin, and whereas he was himself disposed to begin his reform propaganda on the social side, it was apparently by Lord Dufferin's advice that he took up the work of political organisation as the first matter to be dealt with." 19

It is true that Hume in his correspondence with Sir Auckland Colvin had to give the Congress the best colour he could from the Government point of view. He saw that danger was brewing in the country and that if it did not find a regular outlet in some such body as the Congress, it did not bode any good to the safety of the Empire. He said that "no choice was left to those who gave the primary impetus to the movement. The ferment due to the creation of Western ideas, education, invention and appliances, was at work with a rapidly increasing intensity, and it became of paramount importance to find for its products an overt and constitutional channel for discharge, instead of leaving them to fester as they had already commenced to do, under the surface." He continued that "from the most important point of view, the future maintenance of the integrity of the British Empire, the real question, when the Congress started, was not, is it premature, but is it too late, and will the country now accept it?" 20

Thus was born the premier non-official political organisation in the country, called the Indian National Congress. The men who dominated the Congress from 1885 to 1905 were the first political leaders of the country. There are great names in the early history of the Congress, Dadabhai Naoroji, Sir William Wedderburn, Hume, Sir Henry Cotton, Sir Pheroza Shah Mehta, W. C. Bannerjee, Surendranath Bannerjee, Anand Charlu, Budro-

odin Tyabji, Pundit Madan Mohan Malaviya, Telang, Anand Mohan Bose, Lal Mohan Ghose, A. C. Mazumdar, Bhupendranath Basu, Mahadev Govind Ranade, Pundit Bishan Narayan Dhar, C. Vijayaraghavachariar, R. C. Dutt, Sankaran Nair, Mr (later Lord) Sinha, Dr. Rash Behari Ghosh, Gokhale and many others. Dadabhai Naoroji is regarded unanimously as the father of Indian national life. Up to 1905 or 1906 his was the dominating figure in the Congress. His touching simplicity, his unquestionable sincerity, and his burning patriotism raised him above all factions and made him both in name and in fact the "Grand Old Man" of India. Surendranath Bannerjee and Pherozeshah Mehta were all along the guiding spirits of the Moderate Party in India. But the man to whom we must give the credit for being the foremost and best-equipped spokesman of the party in theory as well as in practice, was undoubtedly Mr. Gopal Krishna Gokhale. His selfless life and his remarkably lucid speeches give us a full insight into the working of the higher mind of the earlier representatives of India's political struggles and aspirations

### 7. THE OBJECTIVE.

The advocates of the Indian cause in those days advanced very cautiously. But even they could not remain altogether stationary, and towards the end of the first phase of India's new effort, they laid down the goal of her political striving in no uncertain terms.

The evolution of Indian political life under the British clearly shows that only one aim has been steadily kept in view by the Indian politicians. There is an underlying unity of purpose which binds together organically, India's earliest efforts with her latest strivings. It has been one long drift towards democracy. This goal has been implicit from the beginning, and as events developed, the politicians were driven to make it clear first to themselves and then to the outside world.

In the manifesto issued by the leaders in March, 1885,

we read:—

“ A Conference of the Indian National Union will be held at Poona from the 25th to the 31st December, 1885.

“ This Conference will be composed of delegates—leading politicians, well acquainted with the English language from all parts of the Bengal, Bombay and Madras Presidency.

“ The direct objects of the Conference will be (i) to enable all the most earnest labourers in the cause of national progress to become personally known to each other; (ii) to discuss and decide upon political operations to be undertaken during the ensuing year.

“ Indirectly, this Conference will form the germ of a native Parliament, and, if properly conducted, will constitute in a few years an unanswerable reply to the assertion that India is wholly unfit for any form of representative institution.”<sup>21</sup>

The object in the beginning was to create the germ of a truly representative all-India gathering. The different leaders in various parts of India had to be brought together in one place for a few days in a year, in order that they might know each other, exchange views, talk, discuss, deliberate and arrive at certain common conclusions with regard to India's problems. W. C. Bannerjee, the first President of the Congress, also laid down the objects of the Congress under four heads: (a) the promotion of personal intimacy among the national workers; (b) the eradication by direct personal intercourse of all possible race, creed, or provincial prejudices among all lovers of our country, and the further development and consolidation of those sentiments of national unity that had their origin in their well-beloved Lord Ripon's ever memorable reign; (3) the formulation of the matured conclusions of the thinkers after careful discussion on Indian problems, and lastly, (4) the determination of the lines of work for the next year.<sup>22</sup>



It was certainly very wise of those leaders to concentrate their attention upon the training and the organisation of public opinion, of one common mind on all important Indian questions. The Congress was not to be necessarily a pro-British or anti-British body; it was to be a training-ground for representative institutions in future for the Indian intelligentsia. Its mission was humble, but none the less very important; and it stuck to its mission faithfully for all these years. There was no unity in the country except what the Government brought with it, and the whole task of the Indian politicians was to convert this external unity imposed to some extent by force into an internal unity of thought, will, and feeling, evolved from within by the nation's own efforts. The leaders were cautious, but they did not lack the vision and they referred to the Congress being the germ of the future Indian Parliament.

In the second Congress, an important declaration was made, sharply differentiating the political questions which concerned all the people of India alike, from the social problems of different communities. Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji took up a bold line and made the Congress and the Indian Liberal Party a purely political body, not directly concerned as such with the social problems of the different communities. Each community had its own social problems; and the social problems of one were not necessarily the social problems of the others. What did a Parsee, for example, know about the Hindu inner life, or a Hindu know about the Parsee inner life? Then there would be resentment on the part of each community, if there were an attempt to meddle with it by an outside body. But above all, the country wanted to create unity and not fresh divisions; it was advisable, therefore, to consider the problems in which all were equally interested rather than those which tended to create fresh conflicts. "If you blame us for ignoring these (social reforms), you should equally blame the House of Commons for not discussing the abstruser problems of mathematics or metaphysics. A National Congress must confine itself to questions in which the entire nation has a direct partici-

pation, and it must leave the adjustment of social reforms and other class questions to class congresses."<sup>23</sup>

The Congress kept before itself two ideals, and as its circle of influence widened and the political consciousness increased in the country, it passed gradually from the one to the other. The first ideal was the ideal of good government, and the second one of a modified type of self-government. In 1899, we find it laid down in the Rules of the Congress Constitution:—"The object of the Indian National Congress shall be to promote by constitutional means the interests of the well-being of the people of the Indian Empire."

But the idea of gradual attainment of fuller and fuller freedom was always there. Mr. George Yule, the President of the fourth Congress, suggested that the Indians had become adolescent politically, although they had not attained political maturity. They had had the feeding-bottle long enough; they did not want the strong meat of full age, but they desired to be weaned politically. They desired to emerge from "a darkened room" not into the full blaze of day, but into a stage of more light.<sup>24</sup>

Slowly driven by the pressure of circumstance, the Congress began to demand a modified form of self-government. In 1905, Gokhale presided over the Congress, and in his Presidential speech declared: "The goal of the Congress is that India should be governed in the interests of the Indians themselves, and that, in course of time, a form of government should be attained in this country similar to what exists in the self-governing colonies of the British Empire."<sup>25</sup>

The Liberals always recognised that (a) the movement towards the ideal must be a slow one, and that by progressive stages India had to reach the ideal; and (b) that the highest political development India should aspire to, was within the framework of the British Empire. Thus Gokhale continues: "For better or for worse, our destinies are now linked with those of England, and the Congress fully recognises that whatever advance we seek

must be within the Empire itself. That advance, moreover, can only be gradual, as at each stage of the progress, it may be necessary for us to pass through a brief course of apprenticeship before we are enabled to go to the next one; for it is a reasonable proposition that the state of responsibility required for the proper exercise of the political institutions of the West can be acquired by an Eastern people through practical training and experiment only."<sup>26</sup>

In 1906, Dadabhai Naoroji, as the President of the Congress, put the seal on the matter, by declaring bluntly that Swaraj or Self-Government was the goal of all India's political striving. "Just as the administration of the United Kingdom in all services, departments, and details is in the hands of the people themselves of the country, so should we in India claim that the administration in all services, departments and details should be in the hands of the people themselves of India....."

"As in the United Kingdom and the colonies, all taxation and legislation and the power of spending the taxes are in the hands of the representatives of the people of these countries, so should also be the rights of the people of India." He added that "the whole matter can be compressed in one word, "self-government" or "Swaraj", like that of the United Kingdom or the Colonies."<sup>27</sup>

The whole political history of India during these years is significantly expressed in this transition from the moderate demand of a better government to the more radical demand of Swaraj.

#### 8. LOYALTY TO THE BRITISH CONNECTION.

Loyalty to the British masters was one of the fundamental articles of the Liberals' creed. It is interesting to inquire into the nature of this loyalty and the sources from which it is derived. The Indians had just come under the magic influence of the beautiful ideals enshrined in English literature and English history. The spell of the West was fully upon them. The names of Burke and Macaulay, Gladstone and Morley,

or Carlyle and Emerson, were music to their ears. A new world of thought had been just opened to them; and they felt intoxicated, they felt giddy under its influence. Our young men are steeped in the early years of their lives in these English influences and they can no more be disloyal to them than they can be disloyal to themselves. They speak English more fluently very often than they speak their mother tongue, and sometimes they think and dream in English. There was thus a deep, passionate appreciation of Western culture and a desperate desire to cling to it at all costs. Intellectual life had become inconceivable without the West. In the Fourth Congress we hear: "We look upon it as our national Government; English is our *lingua franca*; of English institutions we have become deeply enamoured; and as we have been trained upon lines peculiarly British, we cannot do ought but ask for privileges of British citizenship."<sup>28</sup>

Here we are told that the English Government is our national government and English language is our national language. In a sense this was literally true. The Government was national in the sense of being an all-India Government, and the language was national in the sense of being an all-India language. The educated liberals instinctively feared that with the disappearance of the English Government or the English language, India might lapse back into its old particularistic grooves. Hence the delight with which they clung to both. English was the language of the Congress: it was the language in which they heard their political leaders deliver their political message. Raja Ram Mohun Roy became common property because his works had partly been written in English, and leaders like Surendranath Bannerjee could instal themselves in the popular imagination because they spoke in eloquent English. Here is one of Surendranath Bannerjee's rhetorical tributes to the English: he said that the English civilization was "the noblest which the world has ever seen, the emblem of indissoluble union between England and India,—a civilization fraught with unspeakable renown to the English name."<sup>29</sup>

The Indian political mind heartily welcomed the rise and

growth under the British of free institutions. To be disloyal to these institutions, which carried with them untold possibilities for the growth of the nation, was impossible for the Indians. Their heart's desire was for more of these institutions and not less. Surendranath Bannerjee burst out in his peroration at Poona: "To England we look for inspiration and guidance. To England we look for sympathy in the struggle. From England must come the crowning mandate which will enfranchise our peoples. England is our political guide and moral preceptor in the exalted sphere of political duty. English history has taught us those principles of freedom which we cherish with our life-blood. We have been fed upon the strong food of English Constitutional freedom. We have been taught to admire the eloquence and genius of the great masters of English political philosophy. We have been brought face to face with the struggles and the triumphs of the English people in their stately march towards constitutional freedom. Where will you find better models of courage, devotion, and sacrifice: not in Rome, not in Greece, not even in France, in the stormy days of the Revolution—courage tempered by caution, partnership softened by a large-hearted charity, enthusiasm leavened by sobriety—all subordinated to the one predominating sense of love of country and love of God?"<sup>30</sup>

The whole political literature of this period in India is permeated with a deep sense of gratitude for the innumerable blessings of the British Raj. Dadabhai Naoroji removed all ambiguity about the loyalty of the Indian mind in the second Congress. "Let us speak out like men and proclaim that we are loyal to the backbone; that we understand the benefits English rule has conferred upon us; that we thoroughly appreciate the education that has been given to us, the new light which has been poured upon us, turning us from darkness into light and teaching us the new lesson that kings are made for the people and not the people for their kings: and the new lesson we have learned amidst the darkness of despotism only by the light of free English civilization."<sup>31</sup> Gokhale summed up briefly the achievements

of the British: "I am aware that much good has been done by England in India in certain directions. The Western type of the administrative machinery has been substituted in place of what we once had. The country enjoys now uninterrupted peace and order. Justice, though costly, is fairly dispensed, as between Indian and Indian... Then you have introduced Western education, with freedom of speech and freedom of writing. These are all things that stand to your credit."<sup>32</sup>

There was thus a full measure of a very lively appreciation of all the good that the British did in India, consciously or unconsciously. But gratitude does not merely mean recognition of things done: it is also an expectation of favours to come. The Liberals indeed were very discreet; they had to take the ship of India's cause through uncharted waters to its destination, and they were fully conscious of the rocks ahead. They knew that the Government would not tolerate an openly seditious movement in India. The plant of India's freedom was still very delicate and the slightest adverse blast might nip it in the bud. Hence the more patriotic they were, the more loyal they became. Their patriotism was born out of their loyalty; but it is more true to say that their loyalty was born out of their patriotism. Partly, therefore, this new religion of loyalty-cum-patriotism was the outcome of caution, of a strong sense of actualities of the political situation. In every sentence in which they referred to the cause of their country, they added a qualification, assuring the Government of their loyalty. In fact, the ideal of the Liberal party in India was and has always been to unite the highest patriotic devotion to the country with an equally enthusiastic attachment to the Crown.

But this attitude was not merely a diplomatic trick; it was not a mere pose, dictated by prudence or necessity. It was the outcome of their vivid appreciation of not only the actual good that was being done by the British, but above all, the enormous possibilities which the Government revealed to the wondering gaze of the Indian moderates. The highest aspiration which they

cherished was to be full British citizens, not only in name, but also in fact. They always felt that there was the finger of God in the advent of the British. Gokhale even called the connection with the British a Providential dispensation. We will give three witnesses who expressed the same fact in slightly different ways.

✓ Dadabhai Naoroji in the Presidential Address (1886) replying to the charge of disloyalty asked: "Is this Congress a nursery for sedition and rebellion against the British Government? Or is it another stone in the foundation of the stability of that Government? The assemblage of such a Congress is an event of the utmost importance in Indian History. I ask whether in the most glorious days of Hindu rule, in the days of Rajas like the great Vikram, you could imagine the possibility of a meeting of this kind, where even Hindus of all different provinces of the kingdom could have collected and spoken as one nation. Coming down to the later Empire of our friends the Mahomedans, even in the days of the great Akbar himself, would it have been possible for a meeting like this to assemble, composed of all classes and communities, all speaking one language, and all having uniform and high aspirations of their own. Such a thing is possible and possible under the British Rule only."<sup>33</sup> ✓

Mahadeo Govind Ranade discovers a great moral purpose in each of the foreign conquests of India. Each invasion has tended to serve as a discipline of our chosen race and led the nation to a higher ideal. The British connection is the climax of this process of education, because the British are the most gifted and free nation in the world. "Both Hindus and Mahomedans lack many of the virtues represented by the love of order and regulated authority. Both are wanting in the love of municipal freedom, in the exercise of virtues necessary for civic life, and in aptitudes for mechanical skill, in the love of science and research, in the love of daring and adventurous discovery, the resolution to master difficulties, and in chivalrous respect for womankind. Neither the old Hindu nor the old Mahomedan civilization was in a

condition to train these virtues in a way to bring up the races of India on a level with those of Western Europe, and so the work of education had to be renewed."<sup>34</sup> Britain then has a divine mission in the East. "The *rationale* of British rule in India is its capacity and providential purpose of fostering the political education of the country on the largest scale in civil and public activities."<sup>35</sup>

Surendranath Bannerjee in one of the most eloquent passages in Congress literature (1895), gives a classical expression to the faith of the Liberals in the magnificent promise of the British Raj. "The noblest heritage which we can leave to our children and our children's children is the heritage of enlarged rights, safeguarded by the loyal devotion and the fervent enthusiasm of an emancipated people. Let us so work with confidence in each other, with unwavering loyalty to the British connection, that we may accomplish this great object within a measurable distance of time. Then will the Congress have fulfilled its mission—justified the hopes of those who formed it and who worked for it—not indeed by the supersession of the British rule in India, but by broadening its basis, liberalising its spirit, ennobling its character, and placing it upon the unchallengable foundations of a nation's affections. It is not severance that we look forward to—but unification, permanent embodiment as an integral part of that great Empire which has given the rest of the world the models of free institutions that is what we aim at. But permanence means assimilation, incorporation, equal rights, equal privileges. England is the august mother of free nations. She has covered the world with free States. Places hitherto the chosen abode of barbarism, are now the home of freedom. Wherever floats the flag of England, there free Governments have been established. We appeal to England gradually to change the character of her rule in India, to liberalise it, to shift its foundations, to adapt it to the newly developed environments of the country and the people, so that in the fulness of time, India may find its place in the great confederacy of free States, English in their origin, English in their character, English in their institutions, rejoicing in their permanent and



indissoluble union with England, a glory to the mother country and an honour to the human race. Then will England have fulfilled her great mission in the East, accomplished her high destiny among the Nations, repaid the long-standing debt which the West owes to the East, and covered herself with imperishable renown and everlasting glory."<sup>36</sup>

### 9. THE METHOD-CONSTITUTIONAL AGITATION.

How is the goal to be achieved? It is easy enough to enumerate the aim of all political life in India, but the real difficulty centres round the methods which will bring the people of India nearer and nearer the realisation of their hopes. The Indian Liberals saw that there was no royal road to the attainment of political salvation. But they never doubted the efficacy of the one instrument viz. constitutional agitation.

What is constitutional agitation? Gokhale marked out a very wide sphere for it in a passage which is now often conveniently ignored. "Constitutional agitation," he said, "was agitation by methods which they were entitled to adopt to bring about the changes they desired through the action of constitutional authorities. Thus defined, the field of constitutional agitation was a very wide one. Three things were excluded: rebellion, aiding or abetting a foreign invasion, and resort to crime. Roughly speaking, barring these three things, all else was constitutional. No doubt, everything that was constitutional was not wise or expedient. But that was a different matter. Prayers and appeals to justice lay at one end. Passive resistance, including even its extreme form of non-payment of taxes till redress was obtained, lay at the other end."<sup>37</sup>

Gokhale ruled out as inadmissible and absurd the idea of attaining the goal, independently of the authorities. The object of constitutional agitation is to bring as much pressure as possible upon the governing authorities. The fundamental factor is the creation of a strong and determined public opinion in the country:

the leaders therefore, should direct their attention more and more to the building up of such an opinion. This was the object of all agitation—the building up of the strength of our own people. To this end all our efforts should be directed. In the first place, we should unite all the different sections of the Hindu community and then bring about a union between the Hindus and the Mahomedans. Secondly, we should try to raise the level of our national character, making it firm of purpose and disciplined in action; thirdly, we should create and diffuse as widely as possible a common national consciousness among our people, enabling them to transcend the differences of race, and class, and caste.

It is true that the high hopes raised at the time of the inauguration of the Congress were not all realised; but is there any justification for despair? The work which Congress agitation has accomplished has not been negligible. The Congress had been of enormous value in nation-building. Summing up the achievements of the Congress, Gokhale said; “The minds of the people have been familiarised with the idea of a united India working for her salvation; a national public opinion has been created; close bonds of sympathy now knit together the different provinces, castes and creeds hamper less and less the pursuit of common aims; the dignity of a consciousness of national existence has spread over the whole land. Our record of political concessions won is, no doubt, very meagre, but those that have been secured are of very considerable value, some retrogression has been prevented, and if latterly we have been unable to stem the tide of reaction, the resistance we have offered, though it has failed of its avowed purpose, has substantially strengthened our public life. Our deliberations have extended over a very wide range of problems; public opinion in the country is, in consequence, better informed, and the press is steadily growing in authority and usefulness. Above all, there is a general perception now of the goal towards which we have to strive and a wide recognition of the arduous character of the struggle and the immense sacrifices it requires.”<sup>138</sup>

The Indian Liberal realised that the problem facing him was one of the most complicated ones that ever faced the leaders of men. It was certainly bound to be a very formidable business in India, because there were special circumstances which rendered a difficult task a hundred times more difficult. The nature of the goal and the character of the means to be employed in the attainment of the goal were determined for him by his full appreciation of the so many hard factors in India's political situation. Patience, infinite patience, was naturally considered by him absolutely essential; for he realised that the struggle was bound to be a very long and weary one. No one realised better than these Indian politicians that there are no short cuts to the realisation of political ideals. But they did not despair. There was a touching religious faith in their attitude which cannot but move us even to-day. In a letter to an Englishman, we find Gokhale expressing himself a little more unreservedly about the nature of the Indian political problem. "Our problem," he writes, "is indeed an enormously difficult one—I sometimes think that no country in the world was ever called upon to face such a problem as ours. Endless divisions and sub-divisions in the country, the bulk of the population ignorant, and clinging with a tenacity to the old modes of thought and sentiment, which are averse to all change and do not understand change, seventy millions of Mahomedans more or less hostile to national aspirations and all power lodged in the hands of a fleeting body of foreign officials most of whom represent your Tory principles at their worst—this is the situation to-day. Out of this mass, an India has to be evolved, strong, free, united, democratic and qualified generally to take her proper place among the nations of the world. It is a task that may well appal and I don't know if it ever will be accomplished. But we can all work for that end, and after all, there is much in the words of one of your most beautiful hymns:—'One step enough for me.' "39

A violent cataclysm was out of the question. The Indian problem was not to be solved by such methods. The goal would be reached only by slow and steady movement; it was

no use, therefore, giving way to despair or to impatience with the progress so far made. Bold and heroic methods might appeal to the imagination of an impatient political idealist, but the Indian Liberal took his stand on solid fact and refused to be hurried away by a gale of popular frenzy. He was reviled, he was ridiculed, he was slowly losing his influence both with the people and with the Government, but he would not allow his better judgment to be overborne. Facts do not cease to be facts, simply because you do not like them. "Let us not forget," said Gokhale, "that we are at a stage of the country's progress when our achievements are bound to be small, our disappointments frequent and trying. It will be given to our countrymen of future generations to serve India by their successes; we, of the present generation, must be content to serve India mainly by our failures. For hard though it be, out of these failures the strength will come which in the end will accomplish great tasks."<sup>40</sup>

If constitutional agitation failed, what was the alternative? The so-called boycotts did not appeal to the imagination of Gokhale; they were bound to fail. Referring first to the economic boycott, he said that the exclusion from their market of foreign goods worth a hundred crores a year was bound to be a slow affair; and even if it were successful, it would not affect our political domination, which in certain conceivable circumstances, might even become harsher. The political boycott was simply impossible. It was no use destroying schools and colleges before you build up new ones; for these were very useful even for the development of national spirit. The boycott of Government services was ludicrous in the extreme. The boycott of the legislatures was also bound to be equally futile; for there were enough men in the country who would take the vacant places. We should aim at the steady increase in the little powers of administration we possessed, instead of throwing away even these little opportunities of serving the public.

Concluding his criticism of the extremist methods, he said,

the most direct and the most effective form of passive resistance was non-payment of taxes; it would further bring home to each man the responsibility of his own action. Let the Extremists resort to it and they would soon find out where they stood and how far they were supported.<sup>41</sup>

But constitutional agitation had not failed; it could not fail. It had not been even tried. They had not yet exhausted even a thousandth part of the possibilities of real constitutional agitation. English history was one long record of a policy of peaceful and persistent political pressure yielding step by step the desired results. In Great Britain, reforms had not been granted to people out of a mood of generosity on the part of the rulers: they had been wrung, exacted from reluctant hands, by ceaseless bombardment of criticism in all the ways known to modern democracies. But these ways were constitutional, and they were peaceful. /Dadabhai, even in 1905, repeated the same cry—the need for more and more agitation. “What is wanted for us is to learn the lesson from the English themselves—to agitate most largely and most perseveringly by petitions, demonstrations, and meetings, all quite peacefully but enthusiastically conducted... Agitation is the life and soul of the whole political, social, and industrial history of England. It is by agitation the English have accomplished their most glorious achievements, their prosperity, their liberties, and, in short, their first place among the nations of the world. The whole life of England, every day, is all agitation. You do not open your paper in the morning but read from beginning to end, it is all agitation—Congresses and Conferences—Meetings and Resolutions—without end for a thousand and one movements, local and national. From the Prime Minister to the humblest politician, his occupation is agitation for everything he wants to accomplish. Agitation is the civilised peaceful weapon of moral force, and infinitely preferable to brute physical force when possible.”<sup>42</sup>

The Liberals based their hopes for the eventual success of constitutional agitation on a number of assumptions. In the first place, they had faith in the righteousness of their cause and

the operations of a sympathetic Providence. In a speech delivered in England, Surendranath Bannerjee (1909) said, "The journey may seem long and wearisome; the promised land may appear to be distant, but uplifted by hope and by faith—an undying faith in the high destinies of our country—let us fight the good fight, and I am confident that the God of all nations will vouchsafe us the victory—that victory which awaits those who, inspired by sublime confidence in His dispensation and in the paramountcy of the moral laws, seek to work out the regeneration of the country in a spirit of peace, of righteousness, and absolute self-consecration." 43

This undying faith in the destinies of the country had inspired all parties as well as the faith in the inherent righteousness of the cause. But lest we might be tempted to misjudge or not properly judge these early protagonists of India's cause, we should fully emphasise and bring out the sources of inspiration which sustained them for years against heavy odds and lent a certain sublimity to their efforts. The Liberals were fully conscious that political concessions were not to be had for the asking or that there would be cheap attainment of freedom without long and arduous trials. In 1902, we find Surendranath Bannerjee concluding his Presidential Address with a characteristic appeal to India's great past. "The triumphs of liberty are not to be won in a day. Liberty is a jealous Goddess, exacting in her worship and claiming from her votaries prolonged and assiduous devotion. Read history. Learn from it the inestimable lesson of patience and fortitude and self-sacrificing devotion which a constitutional struggle for constitutional liberty involves. The responsibilities of the present, the hopes of the future, the glories of the past ought all to inspire us with the noblest enthusiasm to serve our country. Is there a land more worthy of service and sacrifice? Where is a land more interesting, more venerated in antiquity, more rich in historic traditions, in the wealth of religious, ethical, and spiritual conceptions, which have left an enduring impress on the civilization of mankind? India is the cradle of two religions. It is the Holy Land of the East. Here knowledge first lit her torch. Here, in

the morning of the world, the Vedic Rishis sang those hymns which represent the first yearnings of infant humanity towards the divine ideal. Here was developed a literature and language which still excite the admiration of mankind—a philosophy which pondered deep over the problems of life and evolved solutions which satisfied the highest yearnings of the loftiest minds. Here man first essayed to solve the mystery of life, and the solution wrapped in the rich colours of the poetic imagination and clothed with the deeper significance of a higher spiritual idea, bids fair, thanks to the genius of the greatest Hindu scientist of the age, to be accepted by the world of science. From our shores went forth those missionaries who, filled with apostolic fervour, traversed the wilds of Asia and established the ascendancy of that faith which is the law and religion of the Nations of the Far East. Japan is our spiritual pupil. China, Siberia, and the island of the Eastern Archipelago turn with reverend eyes to the land, where was born the prophet of their faith."<sup>44</sup> Ranade professes the same faith in the divine mission of India. "I profess implicit faith in two articles of my creed : this country of ours is the true land of promise, this race of ours is the chosen race. It was not for nothing that God has showered his choicest blessings on this ancient land of Aryavarta."<sup>45</sup>

But what differentiated the Liberals from other political parties is their faith in the British Government and the British people. The other more radical parties believed even more fervently, as we shall see, in God and the country. The Liberals, however, pinned their faith in the British people to an extent not shared by others. Constitutional agitation meant agitation in two directions; an agitation to rouse the Indian people and an agitation to rouse the British people and the British Government. Their ideal was to obtain a recognition of equality in the Empire, and consequently their whole agitation was directed to convince the British that they were fit for more responsibility, that they had as much right to the control of their domestic affairs as the other peoples in the Empire had in their own countries. The ideals

which had inspired the British all through their history were democratic ideals; how could they then be now false to those ideals? Secondly, they argued that the colonies had gradually risen to the status of self-government in a constitutional way. India, too, if she perseveres, could attain the same constitutional liberty in a constitutional way. Thirdly, almost every internal domestic struggle in English history had been fought and won in the same constitutional way. Fourthly, there were the declarations of Liberal statesmen, which had the ring of unmistakable sincerity about them. Fifthly, they found in actual experience a certain fairness and broad-mindedness about the British people which always sustained them in their hopes.

Surendranath Bannerjee, addressing a meeting at Finsbury, asserted his invincible faith in the English people. "We have great confidence in the justice and generosity of the English people. We have abounding faith in the liberty-loving instincts of the greatest representative assembly in the world—the British House of Commons, the Mother of Parliaments, where sits enthroned the newly enfranchised democracy of those islands. To whatever party you belong...you own an indefeasible allegiance to that which forms the keystone of your constitution, the representative principle, the right of the people to have a voice in the government of their country. Your history is the history of the growth, the progress, and the triumph of the representative principle, your literature is pervaded by the same lofty spirit of freedom. Wherever the English have gathered together, wherever they have formed their colonies, whether it be amid the blazing heat of the equatorial regions or in those distant continents, watered by the Southern Seas,—wherever the English have raised their flag and have formed their governments, they have formed them upon the representative model and the representative basis."<sup>4</sup> 6

The Liberals were never tired of quoting the great utterances of British statesmen; and just as every word in the Bible is sacred to the orthodox Christian, and every text a matter of



literal truth, so every sermon of the British statesman became the one source of inspiration and light and stability to the Indian Liberal, when all around was confusion and darkness. Thus for example, Dadabhai Naoroji quoted Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman ( who was quoting Bright ) and took his stand on the British conscience :

“ There is on earth a yet diviner thing  
Veiled though it be than Parliament or King. ”

“ What is that diviner thing ? It is the human conscience, inspiring human opinion and human sympathy. ” “ I ask them, ” said Dadabhai, “ to extend that human conscience to India. ” In the words of Mr. Morley, “ It will be a bad day indeed if we have one conscience for the mother country and another conscience for all that vast territory over which your eye does not extend.”<sup>47</sup> No wonder that Dadabhai thought that as we have the right to petition ( the British Bill of Rights—fifth clause ). India could do well in sending a petition to His Majesty the King-Emperor, the House of Commons, and the House of Lords.

The Indian Liberals always had high hopes when the Liberals in England came to power; and when John Morley became the Secretary of State for India, they felt that the Indian problem would receive a very sympathetic handling. Thus Gokhale could not suppress his jubilation. “ Large numbers of educated men in this country feel towards Morley as towards a Master, and the heart hopes and trembles as it never hoped and trembled before. He, the reverend student of Burke, the friend and biographer of Gladstone, will he courageously apply their principles and his own to the government of this country, or will he, too, succumb to the influence of the India Office, and thus cast a blight on hopes which his own writings have done so much to foster.”<sup>48</sup>

It is difficult for men of (this generation) to enter into the mentality of the Indian Liberals in those days. But the spell of English history, of English ideals, of English literature so power-

fully held their mind that they hoped that in spite of temporary and apparent setbacks, the march of India towards complete freedom under the ægis of Great Britain was a dead certainty. When they talked of the divine possibilities inherent in the new dispensation, they lost themselves almost in a trance. Their language suddenly became poetical; and they talked like mystics, who had the secret of divine political illumination. Here is a passage from Dr. Rash Behari Ghose, which speaks to us of the same unconquerable faith in the mysterious linking of India to Great Britain, the same determination to see hope and nothing but hope in the Indian political horizon. "I cannot believe that England will ever retrace her steps or forget her duty to India, where she came not as a conqueror but as a deliverer with the ready acquiescence of the people, 'to heal and settle,' to substitute order and good government for disorder and anarchy, to fit 'stone to stone again,' and restore that edifice which had been slowly and painfully built up by the wisest and best of Indian sovereigns. That task has now been accomplished; white-winged peace now broods over the whole land; and it only remains for England now to fit us gradually for that autonomy which she has granted to her colonies...Then and not till then will the bar sinister be removed,—that badge of inferiority and subjection which must chafe and gall men who have been nourished on the glorious literature of England,—that literature which had taught France the principles of liberty and which must carry with it wherever it spreads a love of British virtues and of British freedom.

"Great is the destiny of England, but equally great are the responsibilities involving a sacred trust; but I am confident that the august mother of free nations, the friend of struggling nationalities and of emancipation all over the world, will rise to the height of her duty. Shall Christian England fall below pagan Rome, who in her best days, conquered only to extend the privileges of citizenship to her subjects, investing them with equal rights and equal laws, equally administered?" 49 Pherozechah Mehta declared in 1890 from the Congress Chair his "unbounded

faith in the living and fertilising principles of English culture and English education."<sup>50</sup>

If English history and English literature and English sense of justice were vague, intangible factors, the Liberal politicians took care to fortify themselves with something more solid and reliable. They took their stand upon the solemn pledges given to India from time to time. The Proclamation of 1858 was to them as dear as the Sermon on the Mount is to an orthodox Christian. Every word in the Proclamation went to their heart. Here was a basis upon which they could build the structure of India's future State, and build enduringly. The Proclamation and similar other great utterances were recited as *mantras*—carrying with them a sort of mystic virtue. The British Government owed its stability to this one great document given to India on a great occasion by Queen Victoria, more than to any other factor during all these years after the Mutiny. "The Proclamation," said Surendranath, "is the Magna Charta of our rights and liberties. The Proclamation, the whole Proclamation and nothing but the Proclamation—is our watchword, our battle-cry. It is the ensign of battle, and the ensign of victory. It is the gospel of our political redemption."<sup>51</sup> The Proclamation gave them practically all that they wanted—full and equal British citizenship. The essence of the Liberal's constitutional agitation was to bring home to the consciousness of the British statesmen the implications of their great pledges and charters and to insist in season and out of season their one demand to be governed according to the principles laid down by themselves.

Still even if those great declarations sounded too abstract and visionary to the matter-of-fact politician, the Liberal took his stand always upon the one thing which matters to a politician—viz. self-interest. Their great thesis was that the interests of India were the interests of Great Britain. The Benthamite principle of enlightened self-interest certainly stands as the one reliable force in human affairs. The Liberals always tried to prove that in the long run what was good for India was good for Britain.

Their one anxiety was not to weaken the Empire but to strengthen it. They did not want separation; they wanted assimilation. They did not want to cut off their country from the great British power, they wanted to bring it nearer to it. They, therefore, turned their faces against all radical politics; because that was destructive of all that the Empire stood for, all that India badly needed. Even if the Empire assured them of nothing but order and peace, they would hug it to their bosom, because they knew that these were conditions without which freedom and growth were impossible. Constitutional agitation meant to them above all, progress compatible with and based on order. "You must all realise," said Gokhale to the Extremists, "that whatever the shortcomings of bureaucracy, and however intolerable at times the insolence of the individual Englishman, they alone stand to-day in the country for order; and without continued order, no real progress is possible for our people. It is not difficult at any time to create disorder in our country—it was our portion for centuries—but it is not so easy to substitute another form of order for that which has been evolved in the course of century."<sup>52</sup>

Hence their indomitable faith in constitutional agitation as the one weapon for good, given to India. Their loyalty to the Empire ideal was not the lip loyalty which cautious statesmen wear on their sleeves to make their progress easy. Their loyalty was not a mere matter of give-and-take, of calculation, of utility. Their loyalty was their faith, their one political religion. The Empire was dear to their imagination, the Empire was the one sure basis of India's present achievements and future hopes. Great Britain had held forth the promise of that charmed thing called freedom before their ideals; and if she were not there to supervise this very difficult process of the attainment of freedom, what would happen to India? "England has moved us," said Pundit Bishan Narayan Dhar, "from our ancient anchorage. She has cast us adrift, against our will, upon the wide waters of a seething proletariat, and we turn back to England, and ask her to grant us that compass of representative institutions by which amid a

thousand storms, she has steered her prosperous course to the safe haven of regulated political freedom."<sup>53</sup> "If you go on making your appeal," he said in 1888, "with fairness, courage, and moderation to the great English nation, they will assuredly respond to your prayers, for as the harp responds to the harper's touch, so does the great deep heart of England respond to every reasonable prayer for justice and freedom."<sup>54</sup> It was, however, reserved for Surendranath always to wind up his orations by invoking that sublime faith in the Empire. He was always sure of "one response which...will be in accord with the great traditions of the English people, and will serve to consolidate the foundations of British rule in India, and to broad-base it upon the affections of a happy, prosperous, and contented people." "We plead for the permanence of British rule in India. We plead for the gradual reconstruction of that ancient and venerated system which has given to India law and order and the elements of stable peace. We plead for justice and liberty, for equal rights and enlarged privileges for our participation in the citizenship of the Empire; and I am sure we do not plead in vain; for the Empire, thus reconstructed and reorganised will be stronger, nobler, richer far in the love, the gratitude, the enthusiastic devotion of a happy and contented people, rejoicing in their indissoluble union with England, and glorying in the rich promise of a steady and uninterrupted progress towards their destinies, under the protection and guidance of that great people to whom in the counsels of Providence has been assigned the high mission and the consecrated task of disseminating among the nations of the earth the great, the priceless, the inestimable blessing of constitutional liberty."<sup>55</sup>

It is necessary to understand the precise objects of this agitation and the conditions under which it had to be carried on, before we are entitled to pass a summary verdict of condemnation upon it. The politicians in India wanted in the first place to bring about a better mutual understanding between the people and the Government. They intended to play the rôle of interpreters of the popular mind on the one hand and of the mind of

the Government on the other. The Congress agitation did this part of the task quite well. All those views which hitherto were discussed in private or in individual newspapers were now expressed in an authoritative form by the leading representatives of the country.

Secondly, the Liberals aimed at the general establishment of the principles of democracy in the administration of the country. Here the task was not so easy. They never imagined that it would be *veni, vidi, vici* ( I came, I saw, I conquered ), for them. The Liberals had their heads in the clouds; but their feet were firmly planted on the solid ground of reality. Their task was two-fold, to bring about the gradual conversion of the authorities on the one hand and of the people on the other hand. They knew that the Government meant business; and rhetorical appeals to the higher part of human nature did not bring about miraculous changes in human affairs. They did not cherish illusions as to the strength and resolution on the part of the bureaucracy. " On one side of us," said Gokhale, " are arrayed forces of racial ascendancy, of monopoly, of power... We had no reason to expect the citadel of monopoly to capitulate at the first assault, and we have only ourselves to thank if we are now disappointed in such unjustifiable expectations. Remember, gentlemen, that those who are against us and in whose hands there is the monopoly of power—they have behind them practically the vast resources of Government. In any case they have behind them the moral support of the Government of the country. Moreover, it is but fair to acknowledge that they are a body of picked men, that man for man they are better than ourselves, they have a higher standard of duty, higher notions of patriotism, higher notions of loyalty to each other, higher notions of organised work and of discipline... We have no right to complain that they are what they are. If we understand the true dignity of political work, we should rejoice that we are confronted by opponents such as these."<sup>5 6</sup>

The Congress during its career of twenty years (1885-1905), had not been altogether futile. The age for the Indian Civil

Service was raised from 19 to 23. The Legislative Councils had been expanded, and there had been all along an improvement. There was no reason to despair. It had been argued that subject peoples nowhere have achieved their salvation by such methods. Gokhale's reply is characteristic. "You can never have a perfect parallel in history...The history of the world has not yet come to an end. There are more chapters to be added."<sup>57</sup>

It was not that constitutional agitation had failed, but that Indians had failed. The possibilities of constitutional agitation had hardly been fathomed. Patience was nowhere more necessary than here, because unless you acquire the power to change facts, you should put up with them. These elder statesmen knew too well that Rome was not built in a day. It was the consciousness of the greatness of their task that made them preach the gospel of patience. Nothing great was easy, and the virtue of knowing the limits of human effort was always remembered by them. Dr. Rash Behari Ghose tried in the characteristic Liberal way to remind his audience of the necessary slowness of all great change in human life. "But you must have patience. You must learn to wait, and everything will come to you in time. Remember the long and arduous struggle in England before the Catholics were emancipated or the Test Acts repealed. Remember the great fight which Cobden had to fight for the repeal of the Corn Laws. Remember the public agitation and the ferment before the first Reform Act was passed. Remember too, how very slowly the Irish Church fell; and when you hear the English described as a nation of shop keepers, do not forget that they spent twenty millions to emancipate the slave. Our difficulties are very much greater, for we have not only to face class prejudices, but also the prejudices so hard to die, of race, of religion, and of colour, for we are unhappily in every sense aliens. But do not be discouraged; do not despair. There is not the least cause for despondency. Have confidence in yourselves and also in the good faith of England; and do not, I pray you, be led away by the passions of the moment; and when you are met by calumnies and lies, console yourselves with the reflection that the just claims of the great body

of the English people have been similarly met by the party of privilege and supremacy and a subservient Press."<sup>58</sup>

Turning next to the more important task of organising public opinion, the Liberals found that they had to fight a vast mass of ignorance, apathy, and moral helplessness. It was an exceedingly difficult work "to energise this vast mass, to put life into it, to make it move along with us, and the work is bound to be slow."<sup>59</sup> Here they confessed that this record was very meagre, progress was very slow. "Our public life is really feeble and ineffective, because it is so faint-hearted and so soulless. Very few of us have faith in the work we are doing. There must be more discipline in our public life."<sup>60</sup> In the same mood of confession, Surendranath burst out, "Here we are, hesitating, doubting, calculating, casting up moral results to satisfy ourselves that gains have been commensurable to our sacrifices. Such indeed has not been the royal road to political enfranchisement."<sup>61</sup>

The results so far achieved in the creation of public spirit had been rather disappointing. It was true that, thanks to the ceaseless activity of the Congress, the Legislatures became more and more living bodies, that there had been a greater grasp of public affairs on the part of the educated classes and a keener interest in public problems on the part of the public; and that the Press had become a more potent instrument for public good than was the case before. It was also true that the real gains in a struggle such as this were bound to be moral rather than material. "The real moral interest of a struggle, such as we are engaged in, lies not so much in the particular readjustment of present institutions which we may succeed in securing, as in the strength that the conflict brings us to be a permanent part of ourselves. The whole life of the people which is broader and deeper than what is touched by purely political institutions, is enriched even by failures, provided that the effort has been all that it should be."<sup>61 a</sup>

Here we come face to face with the right intuition of the greatest Liberals as regards the end of all constitutional agitation,



the real problem of the country. Political demands and economic needs may rouse us and sustain us in our efforts; but deeper than politics and economics, and sustaining and inspiring both politics and economics, is the character of man. In India man had lost his original stature, and unless he recovered it, all other gains were but as sounding of the brass or the tinkling of the cymbal. If politics were feeble, it was because man was feeble. Quoting his master, Ranade, Gokhale continues, "The true end of our work is to renovate, to purify, and also to perfect the whole man liberating his intellect, elevating his standard of duty, and developing to the full all his powers. Till so renovated, purified, and perfected, we can never hope to be what our ancestors once were,—a chosen people to whom great tasks were allotted and by whom great deeds were performed. Where this feeling animates the workers, it is a matter of comparative indifference in what particular directions it asserts itself and in what particular method it proceeds to work. With a liberated manhood, with a buoyant hope, with a faith that never shirks duty, with a sense of justice that deals fairly by all, with unclouded intellect and powers fully cultivated, and lastly with a love that overleaps all bounds, renovated India will take her proper rank among the nations of the world, and be the master of the situation and of her own destiny. This is the goal to be reached—this is the promised land. Happy are they who see it in distant vision, happier those who are permitted to work and clear the way for it, happiest they who live to see it with their eyes and tread upon the holy soil once more. Famine and pestilence, oppression and sorrow, will then be myths of the past; and the gods will once again descend to the earth and associate with men, as they did in times which we now call mythical."<sup>62</sup>

Constitutional agitation ought to be a much more comprehensive programme than had been so far attempted. If everyone contributed his mite, the rich their money, the scholars and thinkers their learning and thought, the young men their missionary zeal and devotion, the face of the country would be transformed. "If we all recognise our respective duties in this spirit," said the

sage of Poona, "we shall be able to turn our present efforts into a great, rousing movement for the political emancipation of this land. In the presence of such a movement, all our petty personal differences will sink, all our squabbles will vanish, our faith will shine radiantly, sacrifices will be made to the extent they are necessary and the country will march onwards to the realisation of that destiny of which we should dream by night and on which we should muse by day."<sup>63</sup> Here we get a prophetic glimpse of the future on the part of this great Indian Liberal leader. It was becoming clearer and clearer to the mind of the Liberal,—and all this development was taking place under the influence largely of the radical thought in the country—that a nation-wide movement was more and more required in the interests of the cause which was so dear to his heart. But it should never be forgotten that the expansion of the Liberal mind which was witnessed since 1900 was largely due to the influence of the Tilak School of Politics.

#### 10. ADMINISTRATIVE REFORM.

The Congress began as a very modest and very moderate body. It assumed the rôle of a fearless critic of individual administrative measures from the very beginning. It played the part in one sense of "His Majesty's Opposition;" but it had no hopes of turning out the party in power and taking its place. In spite of this drawback, the Congress on the whole (never) indulged in irresponsible criticism.

In the first place, the Congress tried to safeguard the legal rights of the people and to ensure an impartial administration of justice. It protested against the curtailment of the powers of juries and the combination of the judicial and executive functions in one body. The "strange union of the functions of constable and magistrate, public prosecutor and criminal judge, revenue collector and appeal court in revenue cases" was a subject of ceaseless comment in early Congress years. Here was a vicious combination of two incompatible rôles in the same person, leading to flagrant miscarriages of justice. But the Government on the

grounds of economy and executive prestige continued the system. The Congress criticism has become accepted as valid to a great extent. Mr. Adamson, the Home Member, admitted in a budget debate, in 1908, that "the exercise of control over the subordinate magistrates by whom the great bulk of criminal cases are tried, is the point where the present system is defective. If the control is exercised by the officer who is responsible for the peace of the district, there is the constant danger that the subordinate magistracy may be unconsciously guided by other than purely judicial considerations...It is not enough that the administration of justice is pure; it can never be the bedrock of our rule unless it is also above suspicion."<sup>64</sup>

Secondly, the Liberal politicians were equally keen on diffusing elements of general education all over the country. In 1910, Gokhale brought a resolution for making primary education compulsory and free in British India before the Imperial Council. "I think that the question of free and compulsory primary education is now in this country the question of questions. The well being of millions upon millions of children who are waiting to be brought under the humanising influence of education depends upon it. The increased efficiency of the individual, the higher general level of intelligence, the stiffening of the moral backbone of large sections of the community none of these things can come without such education. In fact, the whole of our future as a nation is inextricably bound up with it...The practice of the whole civilized world, the sympathies of British democracy, and our own natural and legitimate aspirations all these are united in its favour. To my mind the call to them (the Government) is clear and it is also the call of statesmanship that statesmanship which pursues, unflinching but unflinching, the highest interests of the people committed to its care."<sup>65</sup>

Gokhale emphasised the necessity of mass education as an absolute essential to the process of national reconstruction. He reminded the Government that the education of the children was one of its primary duties. The Government had to spend on the

police and the army; but here the ideal was to keep down expenditure to the lowest level consistent with the proper standard of efficiency. They were necessary; but they were necessary evils. It was not so with education. Here, the more one spent the better. European Governments were arming themselves heavily; but this heavy military expenditure did not come in the way of national education.

What did education mean for the people? It meant for them the capacity to read and write. It meant a higher level of intelligence, a keener enjoyment of life, a more refined standard of living and greater economic and moral efficiency. Grant the man in the street, grant the man in the village ordinary elementary education, and the superstitions and prejudices of the masses would disappear, and a higher level of thought, of comfort, and of health would ensue. If they wanted to fight plague and malaria, the tyranny of the moneylender, the abuses of petty officials, they would have to teach the people to read and write. If it was the duty of the Government to establish and maintain order and suppress crime, it was equally its duty to root out ignorance, which was the parent of all crime and misery. A popular system of education was the one necessary essential for the eventual establishment of a popular system of Government.

In all advanced countries they saw compulsory elementary education working wonders. In 1870, England had forty-three per cent of her children at school and in ten years all the children came under the influence of education. Japan took compulsion and saw within twenty years the universal spread of education. It was no use arguing against compulsion. As Pundit Malaviya said, "to establish and to maintain order and to repress crime, a certain amount of compulsion, of restraint, had to be exercised on the wills and actions of individuals. Any further comment on this 'logic of compulsion' is superfluous, for without it, the very idea of society falls to the ground." The Hon. Mr. Basu said that Lord William Bentinck had prevented the burning of hundreds of *sutees* annually, so compulsory education was likely to save millions

of people from the ravages of plague, cholera, and malaria.

Another problem which came year after year to the Congress was the problem of the public services. In a way, the whole political agitation had started in the country on this issue. In 1833, the right of Indians to all posts was recognised by statute. In 1853, the competitive principle was introduced. During the régime of Lord Salisbury, the age-limit for the competitive examination for the Civil Service was reduced to nineteen. In 1877, one of the biggest public demonstrations was held in Calcutta on this question and Surendranath Bannerjee undertook a tour over the country to rouse public feeling on a question of common interest. Lal Mohan Ghose was sent to England to agitate on this question. Dadabhai Naoroji carried on the same fight in England for a number of years.

The Congress took up the question at its very first session. Its demand was the fulfilment of the pledges given in 1833 and 1858. In the fifth Congress, Gokhale charged the Government with hypocrisy or treachery. "The terms of the enactment of 1833 and the Proclamation of 1858 are so explicit that those who now try to withhold the privileges then assured to us must be prepared to face the painful dilemma of hypocrisy or treachery, must be prepared to admit that England was insincere when she made these promises or that she is prepared to break faith with us now."<sup>66</sup> The age limit had been raised from 19 to 23. The Congress demanded practically that the competitive system should be worked under conditions which should guarantee to Indians complete equality of treatment. The Civil Service Examinations were held in England; the age limit for some years was kept at 19. These conditions virtually shut out Indians from their share in the higher service. The agitation for simultaneous examinations both in India and England continued without success up to 1920, when the principle was accepted by the Government.

➤ The Liberals, in fact, concentrated upon this problem of a wider and wider employment of Indians in the higher services of

the country. England's success in India, said Gokhale, depended largely upon its successful association of Indians with the tasks of administration. There must be a steady movement in this direction. If the growing unrest were to be prevented, it was absolutely essential that the Government should adopt a policy of progressive substitution of Indian for foreign agency. "The question, however, that in my humble opinion transcends all others in importance at this moment is how to associate the people of this country with the administration of their own affairs, so that their growing estrangement may be prevented, and while their self-respect is satisfied on one side, the bond between them and the Empire may be strengthened on the other. The Englishman who imagines that India can be governed much longer on the same lines as in the past, and the Indian who thinks that he must seek a destiny for his country outside the Empire, of which now, for better or worse, we are a part, both alike show an inadequate appreciation of the realities of the present situation."<sup>67</sup>

The case for the Indianization of higher services rested partly on economic, partly on political, but above all on moral grounds. Here we shall not discuss the wider constitutional question. The political ground is stated above; there was growing dissatisfaction in the country, especially among the educated classes at their being shut out from most of the lucrative and responsible posts. Secondly, there was the financial argument. The foreign agency was bound to be a very expensive agency. The European demanded a very high salary and this meant a burden on the finances of the country which was out of all proportion to the country's economic capacity or the commercial return in the shape of efficient service. There were heavy pensions and furlough charges. Dadabhai went further and said that "the employment of a native is not only economy, but a complete gain to the extent of his whole salary. When a European is employed, he displaces a native whom nature intended to fill the place. The native coming in his place is natural. Every pie he eats is, therefore, a gain to the country, and every pie he saves

is so much saved to the country for the use of all its children. Every pie paid to a foreigner is a complete moral loss to the country."<sup>68</sup>

The moral degradation involved in the permanent operation of the system was the most crushing argument against its continuance. In a striking passage, Gokhale clearly pointed out the enormous degradation, intellectual and moral, involved in a system in which Indians were mere clerks, mere servants meant to carry out the orders of their British masters. "A kind of dwarfing or stunting of our race is going on under the present system. We must live all the days of our life in an atmosphere of inferiority and the tallest of us must bend, in order that the exigencies of the existing system may be satisfied. The upward impulse which every schoolboy at Eton or Harrow may feel, that he may one day be a Gladstone, a Nelson, or a Wellington, and which may draw forth all the best efforts of which he is capable, is denied to us. The full height to which our manhood is capable of rising can never be reached by us under the present system. The moral elevation which every self-governing people feels cannot be felt by us. Our administrative and military talents must gradually disappear, owing to sheer disuse, till at last our lot, as hewers of wood and drawers of water, in our own country, is stereotyped."<sup>69</sup>

The Congress politicians were bitterly excited about the disarmament policy of the British Government. They felt that their loyalty was met by a policy of persistent distrust and suspicion. They felt that the country was slowly losing its power of self-defence under the insidious operation of the Arms Act. They further felt that there was an invidious distinction in the application of the principle of the Arms Act between race and race. Some of the bitterest speeches in the Congress were on this disarmament question. It was one of the root causes of political unrest. It revealed to the trusting mind of the Indian Liberal politician the grim reality of "foreign rule."

In the first Congress, an appeal was made to the Govern-

ment " to change their present policy of suspicion and distrust to a generous and confiding one."70 In the second Congress, Raja Rampal Singh pointed out the dangers inherent in the Government policy and the limitations of the attitude of gratitude and loyalty which the Congress had taken up, in a spirited speech. " We cannot be grateful to it ( the Government ) for degrading our natures, for systematically crushing out of us all martial spirit, for converting a race of soldiers and heroes into a timid flock of quill-driving sheep...When I think that, despite the glories of the Pax Britannica, despite the noble intentions of Great Britain, despite all the good she may have done or tried to do us, the balance will be against her and India will have to regret rather than rejoice that she has ever had anything to do with England.

" This may be strong language, but it is the truth; nothing can ever make amends to a nation, for the destruction of its national spirit, and of the capacity to defend itself, and the soil from which it springs.

" Nor is it only we who shall have to regret and suffer for the mistaken policy that our Government is unhappily pursuing in this matter. Look where you will around you in the world, and you will see gigantic armies and armaments. There is trouble in store for the whole civilised world, and sooner or later a tremendous military struggle will commence, in which assuredly before it terminates, Great Britain will be involved...

" Then will England regret that instead of millions of brave Indians trained to arms to fling back invaders, she has only her scanty legions to oppose to them and from her timid subjects can only look at most for good wishes—good wishes truly good in their way, but poor bulwarks against Berdan rifles and steel ordinances.

" But on our own account we deprecate the existing policy. High and low, we are losing all knowledge of the use of arms, and with this, that spirit of self-reliance which enables a man to dare,



which makes men brave, which makes them worthy of the name of men...Fifty years ago, without desiring warfare, every young man's heart glowed within him at the thought of some day showing his prowess in a fair fight. If men are to be fit for soldiers, fit to fight to any purpose, when the time of trial comes, and come it must for every country, then they must be trained in the use of arms, they must from their childhood see their parents, their elders, using arms and participating in the use of those martial exercises which only thirty-five years ago, in Oudh at least, were part of every gentleman's occupation.

"I might dwell on the fact that in the way the Arms Act is now worked in many localities, the people, their herds, their crops are wholly at the mercy of wild beasts. I might dwell on the insult, the injustice, the violation of the most sacred and solemn pledges by England to India that are involved in the rules that permit Indian Christians, but do not permit Indian Hindus or Mahomedans to volunteer."<sup>71</sup>

Another speaker made a striking comparison between the earlier Government and the British Raj in this respect. "The Emperors of old had confidence in the bravery and faithfulness of the people, and never deprived them of arms, and derived considerable assistance from the people in return. The martial spirit of the people of the country raised the descendants of Taimur, Akbar in particular, to the highest pitch of supremacy and power. If the people of India with arms in their hands and bullets in their pockets could remain subject to the Mahomedan Empire, and accepted its supremacy, does it stand to reason that they would rebel against so just and civilised a Government as that of the British people? The peace and prosperity of a people are among the first requisites of sovereignty and these cannot be secured unless the rulers and the ruled repose mutual confidence in each other. ✓

"No Emperor ever feared the sword of his subject, nor ever emasculated a brave nation by force...You must have read

in history that when Nadir Shah once summoned the Nawab of Farrukabad to Delhi for an interview, and the Nawab replied that he could not come without his armour and weapons, Nadir said:—' Go and tell him he may come with his artillery.' What a revolution! There was a time when the Emperors of old were not afraid of the arms of their enemies; a time has now come when we, unfortunate though loyal and faithful subjects are distrusted even by our own Government."<sup>72</sup>

Sir S. P. Sinha in 1915 as a Congress President thoroughly exposed the so-called natural defencelessness and military incapacity of the Indian people. The British, in season and out of season, pointed out that their obligations to the people of the country demanded that they should not relax their hold as long as India remained militarily helpless. But who was responsible for this military and naval helplessness? The assumption here was that the people were inherently unfit for self-defence: and the arm of the British was necessary to protect them against foreign invasion. "I take leave to point out, therefore, that it is not correct at any rate at the present time, to assert of any sections of the Indian people that they are wanting in such physical courage and manly virtues as to render them incapable of bearing arms. But even if it were so, is it not the obvious duty of England so to train them as to remove this incapacity as they are trying to remove so many others, especially if it be the case, as there is some reason to believe it is, that it is the English rule which has brought them to such a pass? England has ruled this country for considerably over 150 years now, and surely it cannot be a matter of pride to her that at the end of this period the withdrawal of her rule means chaos and anarchy and would leave the country an easy prey to any foreign adventurers. There are some of our critics who never fail to remind us that if the English were to leave the country to-day, we would have to wire to them to come back before they got as far as Aden. Some even enjoy the grim joke that were the English to withdraw now, there would be neither a rupee nor a virgin left in some parts of the country. For my part I can

conceive of no more scathing indictment of the results of British Rule. A superman might gloat over the spectacle of the conquest of might over justice, and over righteousness, but I am much mistaken if the British nation fighting now as ever for the cause of justice and freedom and liberty, will consider it as other than discreditable to itself in the highest degree that, after nearly two centuries of British Rule, India has been brought to-day to the same emasculated condition as the Britons were in the beginning of the fifth century when the Roman legions left the English shores, in order to defend their own country against the Huns, Goths and other barbarian hordes.

“ In asking, therefore, for the right of military training, we are seeking to regain our lost self-respect and to strengthen our sense of civic responsibility. We are seeking to regain our right to defend our homes and hearths against possible invaders, should the strong protecting arm of England be ever withdrawn from our country. It is no mere sentiment that compels us to demand this inalienable right of all human beings, though sentiment has its undoubted place in the scheme of every government.”<sup>73</sup>

## II. ECONOMIC REFORM.

The Indian Liberals (very soon) perceived the close connection between economics and politics. It is true that they started as politicians and then developed their special economic policy. They were the first to attempt a comprehensive diagnosis of India's economic ills and suggest remedies. They have given us detailed historical analyses of the slow deterioration that came over Indian economic life especially during the early years of the British Raj. They collected statistics or used the existing statistics to show that India had become one of the poorest countries in the world. They traced almost all economic miseries to India's growing ruralisation and the constant drain to which she was subjected. They pleaded passionately for the examination of India's

economic life in the light of India's peculiar conditions and became the founders of what is subsequently known as Indian economics. They pleaded powerfully for a sort of national policy of discriminating protection to industries suited to India. They subjected the financial and currency and land revenue policy of the Government to a fire of ceaseless criticism. They came to the conclusion that the political factor which elsewhere had made for economic prosperity had made for economic ruin in India. Dadabhai Naoroji, Gokhale, Telang, R. C. Dutt and M. G. Ranade, these may be said to be the first Indian economists who brought to bear their knowledge of modern economics upon India's problems in the light of India's conditions and needs.

#### 1. **Relativity of Economic Doctrine: Indian Economics.**

The first great discovery which they made was the inapplicability of the dogmas of classical economics to India. In a brilliant paper, Ranade has given us the reasons why certain economic doctrines of Smith and Ricardo in their unqualified form were not applicable to India. Official exponents of the economics of India often took their stand on the doctrines of economic science. They imagined that these doctrines were absolutely and demonstrably true, and must be accepted for our guidance without any reference to time or place, or the stage of national advance. They considered any ethnic or social or juristic or ethical differences as irrelevant. For example, they argued that if free-trade were suited to England, it must be suited to all countries; if factory legislation were required in one country, it was equally necessary in other countries as well; that if State help were not necessary to credit institutions in England, it was equally superfluous in India; that if the public control and ownership of certain businesses were not in the interests of England, it was equally not in the interests of India, and so on.

Official economists might be excused to some extent if they applied consistently the same theories, right or wrong, to

both countries—England and India. But they were not consistent; they hailed from a country where private ownership of land was complete and they developed here a partiality for the socialization of land.<sup>74</sup>

Political Economy is not a science of general and absolute truths, like physics or chemistry. The classical economics assumed that (a) the individual is an economic man, actuated solely or mainly by self-interest; (b) the pursuit of self-interest on the part of every individual results in the maximum good of the society; (c) free competition is the ideal state of affairs; and all customary and state regulation is an encroachment on natural liberty; (d) there is perfect freedom and equality in the power of contract between individuals; (e) capital and labour are both perfectly mobile and move at once to a place where a better return is expected; (f) there is a universal tendency for profit and wages to seek a common level; (g) population tends to outstrip the means of subsistence; (h) demand and supply tend to adjust to each other; and (i) that National Economy is essentially individualistic and has no collective aspect.<sup>75</sup>

Ranade pointed out that these assumptions, break down particularly in Indian society. Here the average man is the very antipodes of the Economic man. The family and the caste are more powerful than the individual in determining his position in life. Self-interest, in the sense of the desire for wealth is not absent, but it is not the only ideal aimed at. There is neither the desire nor the aptitude for free and unlimited competition, except within certain predetermined grooves or groups. Custom and state regulation are far more powerful than competition, and status more decisive in its influence than contract. Neither capital nor labour is mobile, enterprising and intelligent enough to shift from place to place. Wages and profit are fixed, and not elastic and responsive to change of circumstances. Population follows its own law, being cut down by disease and famine, while production is almost stationary...In a society so constituted, the tendencies assumed as axiomatic, are not only inoperative, but are actually deflected

from their proper direction. You might as well talk of the tendency of mountains to be washed away into the sea, or of the valleys to fill up, or of the sun to get cold, as reasons for our practical conduct within a measurable distance of time."<sup>76</sup>

Ranade rendered the same service to the cause of India that List did to Germany. He pointed out that national well-being consisted not only in the creation of the highest quantity of wealth measured in exchange value, independently of the quality of that wealth, but in the full and many-sided development of all productive powers. The economic education of a nation was of greater value than the immediate gain of its present members. It was the duty of the State to help the people from a lower economic stage—agricultural—to a higher economic stage—industrial and commercial.

It was necessary, therefore, to take into consideration the peculiar circumstances and the special economic stage of a people before any economic policy was laid down with regard to it. In India, labour was cheap and comparatively unskilled; capital was scarce and unenterprising; co-operation on a large scale was unknown; agriculture was by far the chief industry of the people; custom was all-powerful; land was the monopoly of the State; there was a lower standard of life and a tendency to subdivision and not concentration of wealth; religious ideas were influential in checking too ardent a pursuit of wealth. These were old legacies and inherited weaknesses.<sup>77</sup>

## **2. Indian Poverty : Its Causes : Commercial Drain**

What is the present economic situation and how has it come about? Partly, no doubt, it is due to the continuance of the medieval order of things. But, partly, it is the result of the new economic order which was suddenly forced upon our people.

The fundamental fact about India is her poverty. William Digby and Dadabhai Naoroji deserve the credit of bringing out

for the first time the fact of the grim poverty and consequent economic helplessness of the people. Here, as elsewhere, the Liberal politicians always took care to fortify their position by quotations from reliable English authorities, who were not likely to exaggerate facts damaging to British rule. Sir C. Elliot, for example, had said, "I do not hesitate to say that half of our agricultural population never know from year's end to year's end what it is to have their hunger fully satisfied."<sup>78</sup> Sir William Hunter's view is equally explicit. "There remain forty millions of people who go through life on insufficient food."<sup>79</sup>

There has been, in fact, an almost complete unanimity about the phenomenal nature of India's poverty. H. H. the Maharaja of Baroda has given us two statements of remarkable boldness and clarity about the economic problem of India—one in 1902, at the opening of the Industrial Exhibition at Ahmedabad and the other at the second Industrial Conference, in 1906. Famine, increasing poverty and widespread disease are there: they signify a radical weakness in our system. These cast a terrible shadow over all our present and future. "Fail there," said His Highness, "and what can the future bring us? We can only grow poorer and weaker, more dependent on foreign help, we must watch our industrial freedom fall into extinction, and drag out a miserable existence as the hewers of wood and drawers of water to any foreign power which happens to be our master. Solve that problem and you have a great future before, the future of a great people, worthy of your ancestors and of your old position among the nations."<sup>80</sup>

Here, therefore, is one of the root weaknesses of our whole system—a weakness which is bound to paralyse our efforts in every direction. It is necessary to realise the fact of its poverty and its significance in our social and national life; to trace it to its proper causes; and then to suggest its appropriate remedies. The Liberal School deserves the gratitude of the country for this excellent work in the analysis of Indian economic life and for the formulation of its remedies. Here the statements of His High-

ness are most characteristic.

Was poverty the result of some fundamental weakness of our nature due to our climate? There was a theory that the inhabitants of tropical and subtropical regions were disinherited by some mysterious law of nature from all hope of originality, enterprise, and leadership. Empire, civilisation, trade and manufacture, we had been told, belonged of right to the nations of the temperate regions. It was a part of the divine scheme that the Indians were to restrict themselves both in their interests as well as in the interests of the world to the production of raw materials.<sup>81</sup>

It was true that at present the situation in India was exceedingly depressing; and that leadership had passed out of our hands. But was this fact due to immutable causes beyond our control or was it the result of recent and removable tendencies?

The Indian genius was, we are told, great in religion and philosophy; but politics and economics were not its spheres. There was some truth in this statement; but there was considerable exaggeration and falsehood in it. These theories had a dangerous tendency to falsify facts and issues and put both the Indians as well as the outside world absolutely on the wrong track. Unless it were satisfactorily shown that the Indian mind was equally adapted both to the secular as well as the sacred side of life, no considerable progress could be made in economic life.<sup>82</sup> We had great generals like Shiwaji, Hyder Ali, and Ranjit Singh. We now had at least some great scientists like Jagdish Bose. The Parsis were an enterprising and industrially capable race; so were the Bhatias, the Khojas, and the merchants of Sindh. We were in the past a great commercial people. All this was sufficient to overthrow the theory of our constitutional incapacity. "We see a very wealthy nation with organised guilds of artisans, a flourishing inland commerce, a large export and import trade. We hear of busy and flourishing ports through which the manufactures of India flowed out to Europe, to Arabia, and to Persia...Where then has



all this trade gone and what has caused our decline? ”<sup>83</sup>

We are told that our economic decay is due to the marvellous progress in the technical applications of science in Europe. We are told that we have in India nothing but the natural working of economic laws. His Highness points out, however, that this theory also is only partially true. Life had almost departed from Indian industry before Europe had brought her machines to any remarkable development. The real cause of our economic degradation was political in its nature; we owed it to the “ acquisition of political power by the East India Company, and the absorption of India into the growing British Empire.”<sup>84</sup>

This political change had, we are taught by R. C. Dutt and other writers, the gravest effect on our economic life. The East India Company turned its attention more and more to the production of raw materials. “ There were heavy transit duties on inland commerce and there were commercial Residents in every part of the Company’s possessions, who managed to control the work of the local artisans, and so thoroughly that outside their factories all manufactures came to an end.

On this came the protective policy of the British Government, which crushed Indian manufacture by prohibitive duties. Then came the application of steam to manufacture. It is scarcely to be wondered at, if with all this against us at home and abroad, our manufactures declined and with the advance in the improvement of machinery and the initiation of a Free Trade policy, this decline was hastened into ruin...

“Once the manufacturing superiority of India had been transferred to England, it was impossible for the weaker country to recover its position without some measure of protection. Not only was the struggle in itself unequal, but the spectacle of a mighty commerce, overshadowing and dominating ours, flooding our markets and taking away our produce for its factories, induced a profound dejection, helplessness and inertia among our people. Unable to react against that dominating force we came

to believe that the inability was constitutional and inherent in ourselves; there is a tendency, in fact, to hypnotise ourselves into apathy by continued repetition of the formula that Indians as a race are lacking in enterprise, deficient in business faculties, barren in organising power.”<sup>85</sup>

Men see the more obvious fact of the political domination of India by Britain; but more important than the political domination, though connected with it, is the less obvious but equally significant economic domination of India by Great Britain. The Liberals, thus, not only impressed upon the Indian mind the extraordinary poverty of the country but also the exact nature and extent of that poverty and the precise causes from which it had arisen. The economic poverty of this country is due largely to the political factor. This fact has been brought out with a wealth of facts and arguments by men like Ranade and Dutt. “The political domination of one country by another,” says Ranade in a passage which is often quoted, “attracts far more attention than the formidable, though unfelt domination which the capital, enterprise, and skill of one country exercise over the trade and manufactures of another. This latter domination has an insidious influence which paralyses the springs of all the varied activities which together make up the life of a nation.”<sup>86</sup>

The result of this economic domination was to convert this country once great in agriculture, industry, and commerce, into a purely agricultural country, “a plantation growing raw produce to be shipped by British agents in British ships, to be worked into fabric by British skill and capital, and to be re-exported to the Dependency by British merchants to their corresponding British firms in India and elsewhere.”<sup>87</sup>

### 3. Political Drain: Military Expenditure.

Indian poverty is naturally a complex fact—the result of many causes, some of which are political, while others are economic and social. But the political factor, according to this school,

overshadows all others. The tragic history of the slow economic decline of this great people has been traced both by British and Indian writers. But another factor that has been equally operative all along is what is known as "the drain." Indian imports were worth roughly about one hundred crores of rupees a year; but her exports, on the other hand, amounted to nearly one hundred and fifty crores a year. A part of this excess of exports is met by precious metals. Then there are nearly thirty or forty crores to be accounted for. English capital to the tune of more than 400 crores, has been invested in railways, indigo, tea and other industries: and India has to pay a reasonable rate of interest on it. Thus India has to pay nearly ten crores on account of her industrial domination by England. The remaining twenty or thirty crores constitute a sort of political tribute to England. Under this head come a large part of what are called "Home Charges" money spent in England for India. Then there are the savings of European merchants, doctors, lawyers and such other persons. Then there are the earnings of the English officials and the British troops in the country.

Whatever the explanation or justification of this two-fold drain—political and commercial—may be, the fact of drain cannot be denied. No country in the world can successfully resist the disastrous consequences of this process, rightly called bleeding by Lord Salisbury. The British administration in India, therefore, has in more than one way resulted in the fearful impoverishment of the people. "For a hundred years and more now," said Gokhale, "India has been for members of the dominant race a country where fortunes were to be made to be taken out and spent elsewhere. As in Ireland, the evil of absentee landlordism has in the past aggravated the racial domination of the English over the Irish, so in India what may be called absentee capitalism has been added to the racial ascendancy of Englishmen. A great and ruinous drain of wealth from the country has gone on for many years, the net excess of exports over imports (including treasure) during the last forty years amounting to no less than a thousand millions sterling."<sup>88</sup>

A third important factor, leading to the growing impoverishment of the people is the heavy expenditure, occasional and recurrent, on the Indian Army. It was emphasised by Gokhale before the Welby Commission that the percentage of the expenditure on the army in India was much higher than elsewhere : e.g. in India it was 35%, while in the United Kingdom it was 19%, in Japan 16% and so on. In no country in the world had the military services absorbed such a large proportion of the Government income. In India it exceeded the civil expenditure by about 2½ crores. Military expenditure in fact "overshadows the whole field of Indian finance and under its chilling shade no healthy development is possible for the people." The army was required for the purpose of the maintenance of British rule in India, and as the maintenance of this rule was at least as much an imperial interest as an Indian interest, the cost should be proportionately divided between India and Great Britain. If India were the strategic frontier of the Empire, surely the defence of such frontier was an imperial responsibility. It had been said that the Indian army was to be a main factor in the maintenance of the balance of power in Asia; and as this was a purely imperial object, the charge also must fall on the imperial exchequer.<sup>89</sup>

The Government's frontier and trans-frontier policy was only one factor in the situation. The whole system of military defence in India was based on a policy of distrust of the people of the country; the people were compulsorily disarmed; whole populations were excluded from the army; and reliance was more and more placed on British officers. Unless the people of the country were made to feel that they were ultimately responsible for their own defence and taken into the confidence of the Government, the present highly expensive and comparatively inefficient system of military administration was bound to continue. Our military defence must be placed on a national basis. Gokhale recommended short service for the Indian Army, the creation of Indian reserves and the gradual extension—first to select classes of the community—and then as confidence grew, to all, of the privilege of citizen soldiers. Then only we could have substantial reduc-

tions in the crushing military burdens and the funds would be released for other more useful and productive purposes. Military safety must remain, no doubt, a paramount consideration in a country's policy; but military efficiency was always *relative*. It must be determined in the case of each country by a combined consideration of the needs of defence and the financial resources of the people. In India, expenditure flowed out of all proportion to the economic capacity of the people, and yet the resulting efficiency was not at all as much as it could be desired. The best safety of the country lay not in piling armament upon armament, but in the genuine contentment and loyalty of the people, and in a policy of non-aggression towards our neighbours. But the British Government in India relied for the defence of the country largely upon a standing army of a more or less mercenary type, officered by the British. The plan was, "financially, the most wasteful conceivable; even as an organization of national defence, it is radically faulty. No pouring out of money like water on mere *standing battalions* can ever give India the military strength and preparedness which other civilized countries possess, while the whole population is disarmed and the process of demartialization continues apace. The policy of placing the main reliance for purposes of defence on a standing army has now been discarded everywhere else, and at the present moment, India is about the only country in the civilized world where the people are debarred from the privileges of *citizen-soldiership* and from all voluntary participation in the responsibilities of national defence. The whole arrangement is an unnatural one; one may go further and say that it is an impossible one, and if ever unfortunately a day of real stress and danger comes, Government will find it so. What I am anxious to see is the adoption of some plan, whereby while a position of greater self-respect is assigned to us in the work of national defence, the establishments during peace and war times may be separated and thus our finances may be freed from the intolerable pressure of an excessive and ever-growing military expenditure" 90

## 4. Ruralisation of India : the case for State Help.

The Liberals, however, did not despair of the situation. They always hoped that the British Government was capable of becoming more friendly to Indian aspirations and Indian interests. The new Government had opened the country to the commerce of the world; it had developed communications, and it had unparalleled resources and power of organization at its disposal. But the Government was labouring under the influence of a false theory and had adopted a deliberately *laissez faire* attitude in industrial matters. European political thought was fast moving towards a collectivist ideal. The police State, with its negative ideal of allowing full and unfettered play to purely competitive forces within society, was being more and more discredited. The State was expected not to be the organ of the people for taking care of national needs in all matters in which individual and co-operative efforts were not likely to be so effective and economic as national effort. If in Europe the State was attempting more and more tasks in the interests of the nation, there was no reason why in India the State should adopt a different attitude. In India the situation favoured and even demanded most rigorous action on the part of the State more than in Europe. Here, the Government, because it was an European Government, had superior advantages and, therefore, superior obligations, to attempt things which native rules, past or present, could neither achieve nor even think of. Here, in India, the State claimed to be the sole landlord and was certainly the biggest capitalist in the country. The State had already helped the foreign capitalists in the tea, coffee and cinchona plantations, as well as the working of the iron and coal fields. But this was nothing compared with what it could be expected to do, because of its resources and the needs of the country.

The Indian Liberals could not shut their eyes to what was happening in other countries like Germany or Japan. In these countries, it was the initiative of the State which was rapidly and

effectively transforming their essentially medieval organizations into first-rate modern powers. The whole question was not of individual liberty versus State rights; it was a question of expediency. Ranade asked the Government to pioneer new enterprises by lending them the free use of its credit and superior organization. If the Government could subsidize private co-operative effort or guarantee minimum interest to Railway Companies, why could it not do these things? Here was a wide field for the exercise of its rôle of superior wisdom and modern character. "The building up of National, not merely State, credit on broad foundations by helping people to acquire confidence in a free and largely ramified banking system, so advantageously worked in Europe under different forms, has also not been attempted here. There is, lastly, the duty cast on it of utilizing indigenous resources, and organizing them in a way, to produce in India in State factories all the products of skill which the State Departments require in the way of stores. These are only a few of the many directions in which, far more than Exchange and Frontier difficulties, the highest statesmanship will have a field of its own for consideration and action. They will, no doubt, receive such consideration if only the minds of the rulers are thoroughly freed from the fear of offending the so-called maxims of rigid economic science.<sup>9 1</sup>"

India had drifted into an economic morass: she had become more and more a mere plantation for the production of raw materials. She was told that that was her natural rôle; she was a country in the torrid zone; and the principle of international and territorial division of labour required both in her interests and in the interests of the world that she should specialize in that task. Nature had decreed—she was asked to believe—that Great Britain and the other European or American countries should work up into a finished form the raw materials produced by her.

But as the Maharaja of Baroda has pointed out, this was a false version of history, a deliberate perversion of facts. India has been certainly, and may always remain in one sense, an agricul-

tural country. But there is no reason why she should not develop manufactures and commerce and thus achieve her proper economic place in the nations of the world. The Indian Liberals have placed before India the ideal of a balanced economic development. It is quite appropriate that the raw materials produced in India should be as far as possible worked up by Indian skill, capital, and enterprise, for the consumption of the Indian public. A co-ordination of the three-fold forms of industrial activity is a permanent national insurance against recurrent dangers, and as such is economically the most beneficial course in the interests of the community.

The exclusive dependence upon agriculture is the one fundamental weakness of the Indian economic system. The official records point out that there is a growth of trade of exports and imports, and this is one of the surest marks of economic prosperity. But this is not an unmixed good; because we are merely perfecting ourselves in the art of growing and exporting raw produce and importing articles manufactured abroad. Fifty years ago, India clothed herself with her own products and even aspired to clothe people in Europe to some extent. The situation has become tragic in the extreme. "Our shipping is not ours; not even the coasting trade is carried on in our bottoms...our banking is not ours...the Insurance and the freight and the commission business is all foreign monopoly and the foreign merchants' hand is seen trafficking with our producers in the remotest and smallest villages. The railways are admittedly foreign monopolies."<sup>2</sup> The result of this complete capture of the Indian market by the outsider has been simply disastrous. The country is "fed, clothed, warmed, washed, lighted, helped and comforted generally by a thousand arts and industries,—in the manipulation of which its sons have every day a decreasing share. Foreign competition, not because it is foreign, but because it is the competition of nature's powers against man's labours—it is the competition of organised skill and science against ignorance and idleness—is transferring the monopoly not only of wealth but



what is more important, of skill, talent, and activity to others."<sup>93</sup>

### 5. The Case for Protection.

The Indian Liberals very early recognised and powerfully expressed their conviction that economics is wider than classical economics and further, that in determining the question of national policy, full consideration must be given to all the factors, economic and non-economic, having any bearing on national welfare. Indian opinion was fast crystallising about a policy of genuine protection to native industry; and this question also they discussed not only from the point of view of orthodox economics, but also from the wider point of view of the general national well-being. Hence, they argued that even if the verdict of economics were clear about the merits of a policy of free trade, it could not be accepted as final. They quoted Mill, who had spoken of Political Economy as "a branch of Social Philosophy, so interlinked with all the other branches that its conclusions even in its own peculiar province are not only true conditionally, subject to interference and counteraction from causes not directly within its scope; while to the character of a practical guide it has no pretension apart from other classes of considerations."<sup>94</sup>

Mr. Telang has given us in a learned paper a full and luminous exposition of the Indian point of view in the problem of Free Trade vs. Protection.<sup>95</sup> In every country this battle has raged more or less fiercely, and it must be said that in spite of a strong theoretical case on behalf of Free Trade, the world on the whole has remained protectionist. In India, the policy of the Government has been influenced by the policy of the Government at home, and by the weight of the economic theories in Great Britain, and above all, by the weight of certain imperial interests. But the Indian politician thought it his duty to attack the theoretical case for Free Trade and establish a case for Protection in the existing circumstances of India.

A protective duty was objected to in the interests of the Indian

consumers. The price of the article on which the duty falls will surely rise and the result is that the poor consumer is penalised. But this is the immediate result; it does not last for long. If the country otherwise is adapted to the manufacture of that article, the temporary application of a necessary measure of protection will give the desired stimulus to that industry; and eventually not only the producer will gain but also the consumer.

It is alleged that protection diverts capital from its natural channels. This argument has force only if the whole capital and labour of the country were already fully and remuneratively employed, a supposition which is never yet realised in any country, but least realised in India. In India, it was capital which was previously idle that turned to the textile industry the moment it got a small measure of protection by the cotton import duty.

It is further stated that protection demoralised and was a clog on industrial progress. Telang pointed out that a distinction must be here drawn between the case of an industry to be newly established and the case of an already established industry to be maintained. There need be no demoralising effect upon the industrial classes where the protection was avowedly given in order to allow an industry the opportunity of taking root and where it was clearly understood that the protection was temporary only.

Protection further was stated to be in principle destructive of all foreign trade.

But it must be understood that India did not want to reverse the natural order of things, but only a course of events brought about by a series of accidents. India should be enabled to produce the articles for which she was by nature fitted, which she was producing right up to the nineteenth century, and which she was disabled from producing largely by political factors. Qualified protection would not lead to "the intellectual and moral loss which would result from the withdrawal of the principal motive to the intercourse of mankind."<sup>96</sup>

It is stated that Protection involves the great evil of State interference with trade and industry. Here also, it was useless, it was mischievous to argue in the abstract. The example of England was misleading. India was just a baby in the field of modern economics, while England was a full-grown being. "With an entirely different civilization from our own such as we now stand face to face with, with entirely different modes of work, with the needs for kinds of knowledge rarely, if ever, cultivated amongst us, our nation is, to all intents and purposes, of immature judgment in the matters we are considering. Without State protection, without State guidance and aid, we should know but little of the resources of our country; knowing these resources, we should have no knowledge of the modes of developing them; or having a knowledge both of the resources and of their modes of development, we should still be at a loss for the means of developing them, without Government encouragement."<sup>97</sup>

Poverty is permanently the lot of purely agricultural peoples; and with chronic poverty and famines in the land, both the present and the future of India is very dark indeed. If India, therefore, is to develop a many-sided civilisation, worthy of her past tradition, she must make a bid for a certain amount of industrialisation. No one pleads for a policy of an all-round indiscriminate protection for all industries. What is proposed is that if there are some industries to which the country is adapted by reason of its natural possessions and capacities, such manufactures only should be protected for a reasonable period.

The Liberals frequently repeated that there could not be a fair competition between a dwarf and a giant. To talk of free and equal competition between England and India was nonsense. The bracing air of free competition would be welcome to us when our industries found themselves firmly planted on their feet. "It is a mockery and a delusion," said Telang, "to speak of liberty, when the native endeavouring to develop the resources of his country, can be undersold and commercially

ruined by the unlimited competition of the foreigner."<sup>98</sup> The Government should, therefore, be advised, both on principles of economic science and on the wider considerations of general welfare, to give a fair trial to a qualified discriminating type of protection to certain limited industries to which the country was adapted, for a temporary period.

Dadabhai repeatedly prayed to the authorities not to kill the goose that laid the golden egg. The Liberals following him have always tried to show that in the long run whatsoever benefits India economically is bound to benefit the Empire also. A contented India, a prosperous India, a progressive India would be a source of unlimited strength to the Empire. If India could materially improve and her purchasing power rose, she would be a better market for the goods of Great Britain; and this was the view which Liberal statesmen in Great Britain sometimes took. "On the most selfish view," said Macaulay, "it would be far better for us that the people of India were well-governed and independent of us, than ill-governed and subject to us, that they were ruled by their own kings but wearing our broad-cloth and working with our cutlery, than that they were performing their salaams to English collectors and English magistrates, but were too ignorant to value and too poor to buy English manufactures. To trade with civilized men is infinitely more profitable than to govern savages. That would be doting wisdom which would keep a hundred million of men from being our consumers in order that they may be our slaves."<sup>99</sup>

Indian public opinion has been, therefore, on the whole, overwhelmingly protectionist. But here Gokhale uttered a warning. There were two kinds of protection, he said: the right kind and the wrong kind. The right kind of protection gave the necessary stimulus and encouragement to the growing industries of a country; but under it, care was taken to prevent influential combinations, prejudicial to the interests of the general community, from coming into existence. But

under the wrong kind of protection such selfish combinations of interest received support at the expense of the community. He feared that under the existing conditions in India, a policy of free trade was the least harmful and the safest: "otherwise influential interests, influential combinations, influential parties in England, who can have ready access to the Secretary of State, to whom we have no such access, will take the fullest advantage of the situation; and this huge engine of protection, which is a vast power, will be employed, not in the interests of the people of India, but in the interests of those parties."<sup>100</sup> Until, therefore, the Indian nation was strong enough to assert its voice in the supreme government of the country, a policy of Free Trade was on the whole, the best policy of the country.

#### 6. The Swadeshi Movement.

Under the existing circumstances, what then is the best line of action for the people? The Indian Liberals, finding that the Government was not likely for some years to come to take the industries of the country under its special protection, turned in despair to the people. The old industries were dead or were disappearing fast under the pressure of new forces. The country was being more and more inundated with cheap machine-made goods from foreign countries, and people were driven more and more to the one permanent industry of the country, viz. agriculture. The annual drain of wealth continued and the people were fast sinking into hopeless poverty. The heroic measure of Swadeshi was then advocated as the one only resource of the people to fight the adverse economic forces in the country.

"Swadeshi" means "of one's own country." It means that the true national interests, especially economic interests, should be paramount with every son and daughter of India. The essence of the conception is its demand for a genuine patriotism, a real love for and devotion to India's interests by Indians. It is, therefore, in the first place a sentiment: a sentiment to

some extent new and, therefore, revolutionary, a sentiment of Indian nationalism making itself felt in the life of the country. "The devotion to motherland," said Gokhale, "which is enshrined in the highest Swadeshi, is an influence so profound and so passionate that its very thought thrills and its actual touch lifts one out of oneself. India needs to-day above everything else that the gospel of devotion should be preached to high and low, to prince and peasant, in town and hamlet, till the service of motherland becomes with us as overmastering a passion as it is in Japan."<sup>101</sup> At its highest, Swadeshism is "a deep, passionate, fervent, all-embracing love of the motherland...it invades the whole man, and it will not rest until it has raised the whole man."<sup>102</sup>

The Swadeshi movement in its essence is a comprehensive national movement—co-extensive with the entire circle of Indian national life. But the form of Swadeshism preached by the Indian politicians is what we may call economic Swadeshism. It is meant to encourage and organize the economic life of India on the basis of Indian effort, Indian skill, Indian capital and Indian patriotism, independently of the Government of India. In a general sense, therefore, every attempt by Indians to advance India's economic interests comes under the head of Swadeshi. Gokhale mentions four ways of helping the cause of Swadeshi. The cultivation and diffusion of sound knowledge of the economic conditions of India and of the world and of the ways by which India could best advance her economic interests, is one way of promoting the Swadeshi cause. Capitalists, small and great, could render valuable assistance to the cause by financing Indian industrial enterprise. The spread of technical, scientific and industrial education was another profitable line of action of the Swadeshi spirit. These three ways were, however, open to a limited number of persons. But there is a fourth way, which is open to all Indians: and it was perhaps the only way in which everyone can help the Swadeshi movement. It is to use, as far as possible, the articles manufactured in the country and to preach

to others that they should do the same.

Here, then, was a field in which every Indian could do something. It meant a little voluntary sacrifice on the part of every one; a sacrifice which gave him or her an opportunity to show his or her love for the country in a concrete form. It was difficult for an ignorant rustic to understand the complexities of Indian political problem. What did he understand about the merits or demerits of a representative government? But he understood one at once when he was asked to do his mite in removing or modifying the poverty of the country by trying in his own humble way to keep the wealth of the country in the country, by using Swadeshi articles.<sup>103</sup>

The Swadeshi movement, therefore, became the rallying cry of all India. It opened a field for the expression in a practical form of the patriotic spirit of every Indian—a form equally in the interests of all classes and castes. It marked, therefore, a turning-point in the history of the Indian national movement. The national struggle ceased to be merely a verbal agitation,—a fight on the platform or in the press; it began to assume a practical form. Secondly, the struggle now began to extend from the classes to the masses. The earlier efforts of the Congress were meant to bring the educated community throughout the country on to a common platform. Swadeshim was meant to bring the classes and the masses upon a common platform. An official said, "Mr. Bose, if the masses were to interest themselves in public affairs, the Government of the country would have to be conducted upon totally different principles."<sup>104</sup> The Swadeshi movement was precisely an effort to interest the masses of the country actively in her problems.

Thirdly, the movement marked a stage when people began to look to themselves more and more for their salvation and less and less to the Government. The Swadeshi movement was essentially a movement of self-reliance. It was the first serious attempt on the part of the Indians to take their economic desti-

nies into their own hands. / Mr. R. C. Dutt said, "Gentlemen, the Swadeshi movement is one which all nations on earth are seeking to adopt in the present day. Mr. Chamberlain is seeking to adopt it by a system of protection. Mr. Balfour seeks to adopt it by a scheme of retaliation. France, Germany, the U. S. A. and all the British colonies adopt it by building up a wall of prohibitions. We have no control over our fiscal legislation and we adopt the Swadeshi scheme, therefore, by the laudable resolution to use our home manufactures, as far as practicable, in preference to foreign manufactures. It will relieve millions of weavers and other artisans from the state of semi-starvation in which they have lived and bring them back to their handloom and other industries, and will minimise the terrible effects of famines which the Government have always endeavoured to relieve to the best of their power. It will give a new impetus to our manufactures which need such impetus...In one word, it will give a new life to our industrial enterprises. If we succeed in this noble endeavour, we shall present to the world an instance, unparalleled in the history of modern times, of a nation protecting its manufactures and industries without protective duties."<sup>105</sup>

Fourthly, the Swadeshi movement brought into relief and lay very just emphasis on the economic factor in the Indian problem. It was the economic problem which gradually overshadowed the Indian political and social scene; and in taking their stand upon this problem, the Indian politicians lay their finger on the exact source of India's hundred and one difficulties and the exact nature of the remedy which would in course of time remove or modify India's grievances. Gokhale said rightly: "The Swadeshi movement has come here to stay. We often have movements which make a little noise for a time and then disappear without leaving any permanent mark behind. I think it safe to say that the Swadeshi movement is not going to be one of that kind, and my own personal conviction is that in this movement we shall ultimately find the salvation of India."<sup>106</sup>

Swadeshi, as generally understood, stood for a policy of



guaranteeing a market for the articles manufactured in India in their early stage, when their quality was inferior and their prices higher than the articles imported from abroad. Indian industry required raw materials, technical skill, capital, and, above all, a market. It was the demand which tended to be the dominant factor, giving direction, substance, shape to productive activity. There was set up a regular competition for markets all over the world. The Indian producers should have a prior claim over the Indian market. They had no Government to protect them, to set them on their feet in their early and difficult days. (On the other hand, their Government stood primarily for British industrial and commercial interests and had converted India into a vast plantation for the production of mere raw materials for their finished goods. The competition between these organised nations and the unorganised industry of India was manifestly unequal. The so-called purely economic forces, if allowed to operate unchecked, would finish India's economic ruin. In these circumstances, the Indian politicians turned to their one resource, and asked their countrymen to place India's interests in the forefront and to give an honest trial to the industrial and manufacturing talent of their countrymen. There was a conflict—an apparent conflict—between the temporary interests of the consumers and the interests of the producers.) The whole appeal was directed to the patriotic instinct of the consumer, who was called upon to prefer a costly and unsuitable article to a cheap and refined one, in the permanent economic interests of both consumers and producers. /

India was no longer cut off from the rest of the world. Her economic isolation was a thing of the past. Whether she liked it or not, her destiny was switched on to the currents of international trade. She had become one of the prizes—an object of ambition to the financial and industrial magnates of the advanced nations of the world. In order to avoid a fight with other great powers, Great Britain, on the whole, had stood for a policy of an open door for all—an unrestricted right of exploita-

tion to any and every nation of the world. "The ordinary weapon used by these nations," said Diwan Ambalal, "is that of making their goods cheap to the consumer, of lessening the cost of transport by subsidizing shipping lines, of practising economies in production, and utilising scientific inventions. They rely in the last resort on an appeal to the *avarice* of the foreign consumer. Now it is permissible to inquire why a nation situated like ours and deprived of all means of enforcing its will by collective action, may not seek to extend its industries by appealing to a higher sentiment than avarice, viz. patriotism."<sup>107</sup> Thus, the Swadeshi movement was the assertion of the economic instinct for self-preservation on the part of India against the world-forces which were let loose upon her in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The Swadeshi movement as confined to the consumption of goods produced in India did not go very far; there was Swadeshi as applied to the production as well as distribution of goods. The ideal of Swadeshi was the building up of an economically self-sufficient India as regards all essentials. It meant the development of our industries, our own manufactures, our own banking and financing institutions, our railways, our navigation, our commerce. It also meant the reconstruction of our entire educational system. It meant the organization of the whole economic life of India by Indians, with Indian labour, Indian capital, Indian raw materials, Indian skill and enterprise, and above all, in Indian interests.

The Indian Liberals took care to emphasise the purely economic aspect of Swadeshi in order to avoid misunderstandings in the mind of the British people and the Government. The movement was based on the love of the country, not the hatred of the foreigner. "Swadeshism," said Bannerjee, "does not exclude foreign ideals or foreign learning or foreign arts and industries, but insists that they shall be assimilated into the national system, be moulded after the national pattern, and be incorporated into the life of the nation."<sup>108</sup> Ranade suggested that the economic sphere was one where all shades of opinion, all differences of

views on social, political and religious subjects, might unite and co-operate. "Here we eschew politics altogether, for there is really no conflict of interest between the rulers and the ruled, who all alike desire to promote the industrial and economic progress of the country."<sup>109</sup>

Swadeshi is superior, to some extent, from the economic and political points of view, to State protection. It takes its stand on a voluntary co-operation on the part of the consumers; the element of compulsion which was present in a policy of protection was absent here. The Swadeshi movement made a moral appeal to the national idealism of the consumers, there was no such appeal in a policy of protection. Swadeshi did not involve countries in tariff wars, as a policy of protection did. Swadeshi did not attempt to secure by legislation concessions, favourable to certain groups as a policy of protection did. Its one weakness was that it depended for its continuous application on the patriotic sentiment of the consumers: it was here that a policy of protection had been found to be a superior weapon, because the weak, hesitating, selfish, uninformed consumer had to accept the policy followed by the State. "The present excitement," said Arundale, "cannot last for ever; and then these associations, companies, firms, and what not, which have had a hot-house growth under the exceptional warmth of popular favour will burst, as the South Sea Bubble burst, and the last condition will be worse than the first, for people will begin to mistrust." <sup>110</sup>

Swadeshi, however, is to be sharply distinguished from 'boycott'. The Moderates reluctantly granted that a resort to boycott of foreign or British goods might be justified only on extreme occasions. "On an extreme occasion, a boycotting demonstration is perfectly legitimate, but that occasion must be one to drive all the classes, as in Bengal, to act with one impulse and make all leaders sink their present differences in the presence of a common danger." <sup>111</sup> The fundamental objection to boycott from the Liberal point of view was that it was based on the hatred of the foreigner, and not on the love

of one's country. It had unsavoury associations: it implied a vindictive desire to injure another. It was bound to raise angry passions on both sides: and it threatened to embitter the normal relationships between the two peoples. It, therefore, provoked retaliation, and the results would be disastrous to India. Secondly, here were obvious risks involved in its failure; and the weapon could not be used with sufficient effectiveness, unless it had behind it an extraordinary upheaval of popular feeling. In the very nature of things, such an upheaval of emotion could not last for a long time; and the boycott was bound to fizzle out. Thirdly, it could not be reasonably directed against the whole world; and if it was directed against British goods only, it left us free to purchase the goods of other foreign countries, and the cause of Indian industry did not gain at all. Fourthly, boycott was indiscriminate, it shut out certain non-Indian goods without considering the fact that they were capable of being economically produced in India or not. Fifthly, a strict boycott of foreign goods was not practicable at all under our present industrial conditions; "for when you boycott foreign goods, you must not touch even a particle of imported articles; and we only make ourselves ridiculous by talking of a resolution which we cannot enforce."

In all these respects, Swadeshi was necessarily a superior weapon. Politically, it worked by conciliating and not by alienating the British opinion which certainly counted. Economically, it carefully discriminated between goods which could be produced in India and goods which could not be equally economically produced in India, and concentrated on the former. Morally, it was a tremendous constructive force, while boycott was merely negative and destructive. "It turns their thoughts to their country, accustoms them to the idea of voluntarily making some sacrifice for her sake, enables them to take an intelligent interest in her economic development, and teaches them the important lesson of co-operating with one another for a national end."<sup>112</sup>

The Moderates accordingly advised the country to prefer a policy of Swadeshi, which might look tame and unexciting com-

pared to the more sensational policy of boycott, and further tried to preach economic Swadeshism, divorced from controversial and sometimes heated politics. They felt that if Swadeshi were mixed with politics, both would suffer. As one of their leaders put it, "As a political force, it might do for a time, but real politics are concerned with the golden doctrines of silence and not with the silvery speeches; and whether these speeches and writings might not expose us to unforeseen dangers is a phase which the thinking public of the country might take into consideration. A sword is an instrument which will no doubt cut, but it requires some force at its back to be effective; if any person handles a sharp instrument, he stands the chance of being cut by his own weapon."<sup>113</sup>

#### 7. Weaknesses of the Situation.

The impact of economic forces was now being more and more felt: and the Indian industrial interests were beginning to be conscious of the necessity of putting their economic house in order. The liberal politicians continued, of course, their ceaseless and very relevant criticism of the policy of the Government in taxation, currency, expenditure and land revenue, but they slowly began to realise that unless they took their affairs into their own hands, things would not much improve. A mood of introspection came upon them; and they turned their eyes to the weaknesses of their own countrymen. His Highness the Maharaja of Baroda, with his usual shrewdness and penetration, exposed clearly and mercilessly the possibilities—good and evil—inherent in the political system fastened upon India as well as those inherent in the social and religious systems of the Indians. "Our weakness," he said, "lies in this, that we have for many years lain prostrate under a fictitious sense of our own helplessness and made no adequate attempt to react against our circumstances. We have succumbed where we should have exhausted every possibility of resistance and remedy."<sup>114</sup> It is caste which has made us a stationary people, wedded to old customs, and incapable of

adopting the new ones. It prevents us from choosing the line of activity most consonant with our abilities, or from seeking abroad the knowledge of new industries. The restrictions against foreign travel constitutes one of the most serious obstacles to our commercial success. How absurd it is that a mercantile community like the Bhatias cannot go to Europe or America under the influence of caste!

“One of the worst results, it may be of the continuous foreign rule, is that we have lost all confidence in ourselves. How can we start new industries or build up new trade, if we have no confidence in ourselves? The initial years are bound to be trying years, ‘when the only dividend is hope, and the best assets an unfaltering courage and faith in oneself.’”<sup>115</sup> How could we build up a credit system if we had no confidence in one another? “It is this want of co-operation, this mutual distrust which paralyses Indian industry, ruins the statesmen, and discredits the individual even in his own household. I believe that this trait of our character, though in some cases arising from our obvious defects and instances of actual misconduct among ourselves, is mainly due to the fact that the nation has long been split up into incoherent units, but also to the ignorance and restricted vision which result from our own exclusiveness. Our view of the conduct of friends, of the policies of administration, of the success and integrity of commercial undertakings, are all vitiated by a readiness to believe the worst. It is only when we learn to suspend judgment and know the man and the motive before we criticise, that we shall be able to repose trust where trust is due. We must stiffen our character and educate ourselves up to a higher moral standard.”<sup>116</sup>

India must realise that salvation did not lie in a blind and meaningless adherence to some imaginary or historical past. Granted that our system was a glorious one at one time, it did not follow that it could continue to be the same for two thousand years without any change. There had been a record of steady decline in our standards during the last 1500 years. In

clinging to our obsolete institutions, we were clinging to the very tendencies, the very forces, that had dragged us down. The old order must go and give place to the new. The old régime of custom and prejudice must be replaced by a new Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity—"a liberty of action, equality of opportunity and the fraternity of a great national ideal."<sup>117</sup> If India wanted to start her career of economic progress and prosperity, she must be prepared to part with or modify or recast many of her old cherished beliefs and institutions. "There is no reality in our social reform, our political progress, our industrial revival, because as you know, there is scarcely one of us who dares to act even in his own household."<sup>118</sup>

Look at the West, and what did they notice? His Highness drew attention to four historical movements. The first was the capitalistic organisation of industries, with its attendant system of credit, banks and exchanges, with its economy of production and its facility of distribution. The second movement was the separation of the ecclesiastical and social life, and the taking of social, political and commercial affairs, which was purely secular in nature, out of the hands of the priests. "I merely desire to point out that in so far as India's religious ideas tend to keep many of our brightest and best minds out of practical affairs, out of the scientific, political, and commercial relations of the time, by so far do the religious and philosophical systems stand in the way of her progress towards economic independence. Why have the people of India been tardy in grasping the scientific principles of Western industrial organisation? We must look well to the religious and social foundations of our national life. Break the monopoly of caste prerogatives and social privileges. They are self-arrogated, and are no more inherent in any one caste than commercial predominance or political supremacy in one nation."<sup>119</sup>

The third great current in the West was the spirit of nationalism. Throughout Europe, petty states and warring principalities had given way to strong, compact, and homogenous nations,

each working through the patriotic impulse of 'all its people for the preservation of national well-being. But we in India were disunited and incapable of unselfish co-operation for national ends.

The last movement in Europe which had gone towards the making of the present civilization is the marvellous development of science.

India's part in these great movements had been shamefully small. India must make a supreme effort to shake off all those parts of her past which merely serve as so much deadweight. She must no longer build on caste; she must build the new order on the principle of individual freedom. The masses must be trained to a sense of their paramount importance and dignity in the social structure. Mechanical inventions were slow in developing in India, because mechanical work was left to hereditary castes somewhat low in the scale of society. The intellectual classes had been divorced from manual industry for thousands of years. This divorce between the brain and the hand had been fatal to our society. "The nation that despises its humblest castes, that provides for them no opportunity to rise in the social scale and in self-esteem, is building its house upon the sand. The wealth of a nation is the quality of its manhood."<sup>120</sup>

If we were to fight the West, we must cultivate the Western spirit and fight it with the Western weapons. The grim law of the survival of the fittest prevails in this world. An unintelligent adherence to stupid and obsolete customs of the past would surely lead us to complete destruction. It was no use despising a foreign civilisation; we must understand it and, if necessary, assimilate as much of it as is necessary for our advance. "If the rush of the steam engine and the whiz of electricity, combined with cheap and easy means of transport have succeeded in dumping your bazaars with the cheap and attractive products of foreign marts, rise to the occasion and learn how to withstand the inroad with intelligent anticipation and skilful adaptation."<sup>121</sup>



Mere traditional belief, mere reactionary sentiment or sentiment of respect for the past, mere emotional patriotism would not save us against the onslaught of the West. We must master the technique of modern industrialism or we perished.

The ultimate remedy lay in our own hands. This idea now begins to dawn upon the Indian horizon. A new realistic spirit which faced facts and a new optimism which believed in the possibilities of the country working her own salvation were in the air. It was no use being dreamy and self-contained, and turning back from our present opportunities to a past which could not be recalled. It was true that we had to work against heavy odds: old traditions, poverty of resources, the hostile competition of advanced races and the free-trade competition of the Government; but these difficulties should only sharpen our wits and stiffen our muscles. Thus Ranade emphasised facts which made for our economic betterment: "Natural aptitudes, undeveloped but unlimited resources, peace and order, the whole world open to us, our marvellous situation as the Emporium of all Asia, these priceless advantages will secure success, if we endeavour to deserve it by striving for it. This is the creed which will ensure a permanent triumph of the modern spirit in this Ancient Land."<sup>122</sup>

#### 8. Necessity for Industrialisation.

It is thus clear that the Indian Liberals were out to realise the modern ideal of industrialisation for India. India was in the past an economically advanced country; there was no reason why she should not once more take her place along with the other great industrial nations. Here, again, we find in His Highness the Maharaja of Baroda a fearless and outspoken exponent of this ideal. If we were all that we could be, and should be, economically, there would be no need for any gospel of Swadeshi. The Swadeshi was essentially a recognition of our national weakness in matters scientific and industrial, and a determined effort to

overcome it. The ideal behind Swadeshi was the ideal of economic freedom, of industrial self-sufficiency. This ideal could not be achieved by our fighting shy of Western industrialism. What was industrialism? It was the application of scientific invention and collective capital to the production and distribution of all the articles required by society to satisfy its wants.

India had to choose between the ideal of a purely agricultural economy, supplemented by a few handicraft industries and the ideal of an industrial society making full use of all modern devices to bring to the highest level possible, both in quality and quantity, her production. The Indian Liberals had no illusions on this matter. They wanted a complete economic transformation of society. They were wholeheartedly for large-scale production, for a capitalistic organization of Indian resources. Compare, His Highness said, the condition of our handicraftsmen of India, working from day to day, from century to century, for the minimum of subsistence, with the condition of the factory labourer of the West, begrimed it may be with soot, but nevertheless on the whole well-fed and well-housed. It was true that the workman under the industrial régime lost to some extent his independence, that he tended to become the slave of a machine. But we had to consider the tremendous accumulation of wealth and the diversified production, which industrialism brought. Under industrialism, a larger proportion of the population was acquiring wealth, and the whole mass of the people was lifted up to a higher standard of living. It was true that vast private fortunes were made; but these did not constitute treasure privately hoarded; they consisted in stocks, bonds, and securities which were representative of factories, railroads, mines and other agencies of production and distribution, through which the labourer of all trades obtained his employment and wages.

Private fortunes acquired under this system, made for public welfare. The worker got a higher wage and lived on a better plane than would be possible under the old handicraft organization of industries. Secondly, the foodstuffs could under this

system be transferred easily in large masses from continent to continent, from place to place, thus making starvation and famine comparatively rare. Thirdly, this system of mass production led to the diffusion and development of culture to an extent previously unknown. Schools, colleges, libraries, museums, art galleries, hospitals, multiplied until they were brought within the reach of every class of society, even the lowest. Thus, the door of opportunity opened for every individual.

The development of industry had enabled mankind to transfer a large part of their drudgery to machine. The masses would always work. The real question was which economic system led on the whole to the higher standard of living, the larger opportunity of the education of children, and the slow but steady development of the individual personality of the workman?

Industrialism in India was bound to make not only for material prosperity but also for moral progress. The whole outlook of the people was bound to change. Petty chicanery and craftiness would give way to an increasing straightforwardness of dealing between men and men. We should slowly evolve under its influence a higher standard of commercial morality. It would give us also an increasing capacity for political affairs; for business was a good school for many administrative qualities.

"It is my profound conviction," concludes the Maharaja of Baroda, "therefore, that the line of least resistance in the progress of India at this time lies in the hard, sturdy, and consistent application of the paraphernalia of industrialism to Indian conditions. Only in this manner can we as a people expect ever to enter the heaven of economic independence. As the West owes its progress of the last couple of centuries to the application of scientific invention to all phases of life, so India must look to the same formula. I do not in the least minimise the necessity of reform in the social organism and reform in the political administration, but change in these directions is apt to be slow unless forced from beneath by an ever-increasing sense of industrial

independence and economic self-respect."<sup>123</sup>

But complete and unqualified Westernisation was neither possible nor desirable for India. There was much in the Western industrialism which was positively bad. The centralisation of population in over-grown industrial centres constituted a menace to the future of the races in the West. These had created many problems of administration, of morals, of public health which even the West with all its ingenuity, had not been able to solve. The air in the West was surcharged with a spirit of greed. There was everywhere a sordid worship of material wealth and power.

Hence, we must not forget our petty handicrafts and cottage industries. These added to the wealth and comfort of the people without bringing in their train all the evils of industrialism. "India," said His Highness the Gaekwad, "is and will always remain a country of cottage industries. Where hundreds and thousands can work in mills and factories, millions and tens of millions work in their own huts; and the idea of greatly improving the condition of the labourers of India merely by adding to mills and factories, is only possible for those who form their opinions six thousand miles away. No, gentlemen, any comprehensive plan of improving the condition of our industrial classes must seek to help the dwellers in cottages."<sup>124</sup>

## 12. CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM.

### 1. Failure of Bureaucratic Rule.

Indian public opinion was gradually becoming more and more conscious of the radical incapacity of the existing administrative machinery with its old and obsolete ideals, to cope with the Indian problem. As this conviction deepened, the ideal of good and enlightened government gave way to a different ideal of a modified type of self-government.

The administration of India was largely in the hands of the bureaucracy the standing body of Indian Civil Servants. There

is no doubt that the members of the bureaucracy brought to their work a high level of ability and a keen sense of duty. There was also a sincere desire to do what good they could do to the people "within the limits of the restricted opportunities permitted by the predominance of other interests."<sup>195</sup> What was wrong with them then? In the first place, they have come to constitute a caste, with all the exclusiveness and love of monopoly which characterised castes. The uncontrolled power which they possessed impaired their sense of responsibility and made them intolerant of criticism. Secondly, they were satisfied with their own positions and they wanted the people, therefore, to be satisfied with theirs. Hence, they generally placed themselves on the side of the existing order and the reforms which they disapproved of had, as a rule, little chance of being adopted. Thirdly, most of them were mere birds of passage; the moment they earned their pensions, they returned to their country. All the experience they acquired in this country was lost to her; and this went on generation after generation. Even if any individual civil servant were inclined to do some good to the country, he was not important enough because of the centralised character of the system. All great measures could only emanate from the centre; but the centre consisted of men who held office for five years, and then went back to England. Thus, no one was interested in or permanently identified with the interests of the people. Fourthly, the officials looked at every question from the standpoint of their own power. The interests of the people were, therefore, often sacrificed at the altar of the interests of the service. "You, thus, see the revenue of this country eaten up by the enormous and steadily growing military expenditure, the increasing home charges, and the extravagant salaries paid to the English officials, while next to nothing is spent on primary education, and industrial education is absolutely neglected."<sup>196</sup> Fifthly, the system shut out the educated classes from power and responsibility. Our natural abilities, therefore, slowly disappeared owing to sheer disuse, and the growth of the educated class which had no part or lot in the administration of their coun-

try, made for a state of acute discontent all over the country.

The highest ideal of British rule in India had been efficiency. It was true that the system of Government had realised this ideal to some extent, by introducing into the country the appliances of material civilization and by elaborating a modern type of administrative machinery in the country. But the efficiency which the country could get from an enlightened foreign administration could be only a mechanical efficiency. The higher efficiency which would come of self-government could never be the result of the present system. Machinery was, after all, a means to an end—it was not the end itself.

Thus, in India, the constitutional aspirations of the people were outgrowing the administrative machinery. In 1911, Pundit Dhar put the case against the bureaucracy in a nutshell from the Congress Presidential platform. "The root cause of most of our misfortunes which, if not corrected, forebodes serious disasters in the future, is the growth of an unsympathetic and illiberal spirit in the bureaucracy towards the new-born hopes and ideals of the Indian people. While a new India has gradually been rising up, that spirit, too, has been growing, and so the critical situation has arisen; on the one hand, the educated classes, filled with new knowledge and conscious of new political rights, but hampered by the bars and fetters of a system perhaps good enough for other days, but now obsolete; on the other, the bureaucracy with its vested interests, its domineering habits, its old traditions of obsolete and unquestioned authority, suspicious of knowledge, and adverse to innovation like every close corporation, but cut off from the people by its racial exclusiveness, and wedded to a paternal system of Government, under which it has so long enjoyed power and pelf, but which is discordant with the more liberal ideas of the present day."<sup>127</sup>

Bhupendranath Basu presided over the Congress in 1914. He summed up even more powerfully the Indian case against the government of India by a foreign and, therefore, unsympathetic

Civil Service. "The Government of the country was still vested," he said, "in a foreign civil service, there being only 70 Indians out of a cadre of 1,400 men. This service remained, while all the higher officers came and went, and it was responsible to no one. They form the Executive Council of the Viceroy, save for one Indian member; the India Council, save for two. They are, thus, their own court of appeal. Six Governments out of nine are furnished by them with rulers. All the great departments of the State are under their control. They could be more than human if they did not desire to remain as they are.

"Against this state of things, we have a people rapidly awakening to consciousness; thousands of our boys are receiving education on Western lines in Indian Universities, based on Western models; hundreds of them are daily flocking to the Universities of Europe, America, and Japan, and on their return home, spreading the knowledge that they have acquired. You may chain Prometheus; but the fire is lighted and cannot be extinguished. India wants a higher life, a wider sphere of activity and usefulness. India wants that her Government should be consistent with her growing self-respect and intellectuality. India wants that the presumption which has all along existed, and which the Board of Directors in 1833 made a vain attempt to dispel, that Indians can only rise to a certain limit, should be removed from the precincts of her Court, as it has been from the Statute book, and the door to her services should not be closed by artificial barriers against her own sons. India wants that her children should have the same right of equal citizenship as other members of the Empire; and above all, India wants that her Government should be an autonomous Government under the British Empire...

"The Indian bureaucracy does not offer us any constructive programme for the future of India, no land of promise to her children. They are content to work for the day and take no thought for the morrow. An autocratic Viceroy or Secretary of State may put extra steam into the machinery of the Indian

Government, or try to shut the safety valve, but the great fly-wheel is not easily disturbed. And the Bureaucracy have given us honest and conscientious workmen, not troubled, it may be, with the visions of the future, but they have reason to be well-pleased with their work; they have given us internal peace and guarded us from external aggression; the blessings of an ordered administration are apparent on every side. Why should India resent? Her Government has always been that of one man's sway, whether she was an Empire or broken into small states of varying dimensions. Why should she object to the Government of an outlandish bureaucracy? My answer is: the days of the lotus-eater are gone; the world is swinging onward to the uplifting ropes of time, and in Europe, the war of nations, now in progress, will knock off the last weights of medieval domination of one man over many, of one race over another; it is not possible to roll back the tide of wider life which is flowing like the warm gulf stream through the gateways of the West into the still waters of the East. You may abolish the study of English history and draw a sponge over all its enthralling story of freedom; you may bar Milton and Burke, Mill and Spencer; you may bend the Indian Universities to your will, if you like, fetter their feet with obstructive statutes, but you cannot bar the imponderable influences of an expanding world. If English rule in India meant the canonisation of a bureaucracy, if it meant perpetual domination and perpetual tutelage, an increasing deadweight on the soul of India, it would be a curse to civilisation and a blot on humanity. '128

The form of government in this country might be characterised as despotism. Now, the despotic system of government is not necessarily a bad system of government; it is eminently suited to certain peoples at certain stages of culture. In the early years of British rule, such a system was a necessity. It fostered liberal education, established justice, restored peace and order in the country, introduced a limited form of self-government in the local concerns of the people, admitted the children of the soil to a limited extent into the administration of the country, and broad-



ened and liberalised the administration. But it could not do more. It degenerated into a system of barren bureaucracy, not accountable to the people, but responsible only to itself. "It is essentially conservative in its temperament and thoroughly unprogressive in its character. Its efficiency is indisputable, its honesty and integrity beyond all question; but it is bound hand and foot to a form, a precedent lacking in life and soul. It can contract but it cannot expand. It holds all the threads of the administration within the hollow of its palm and can ill afford either to release or to relax any one of them. It is extremely jealous of its powers and intolerant of criticism. It sincerely wishes to see the people happy and contented; only it cannot allow them to grow. It has its idea of beauty and its Chinese shoe to give effect to it, however painful to its subject the operation may be. Like Narcissus of old, it is so much entranced with the loveliness of its own shadow that it has neither the leisure nor the inclination to contemplate beauty in others."<sup>129</sup>

The fundamental defect of the existing form of government in India was that everything was done *for* the people and nothing *by* the people. Such a government made the people incapable of helping themselves. It might make men happy, but it could never make them resourceful or self-reliant. Mr. Muzumdar, in 1916, thoroughly exposed the inadequacy, both from the point of democratic ideals and of administrative efficiency, of the government of India by a foreign bureaucracy. There could be only one patriot in a benevolent despotism and that was the Government. The whole mass of the people became a mere drag both on themselves and on the Government.

## 2. The South African Agitation.

Thus, the Indian liberals became every year more and more convinced of the necessity of a radical change in the very form of government. Most of their demands remained unfulfilled: universal education for which they stood was not forthcoming; military expenditure went on increasing, and the policy of distrust

and suspicion continued; the policy of free trade was persisted in almost to the complete ruin of Indian industries; and now a policy of repression was adopted to stamp out the radical elements of society.

There was yet another source of irritation which further convinced them that the Indian Government could not be counted upon to champion their interests with vigour and success. This was the colonial grievance.

The abolition of slavery by Great Britain, in 1833, created a demand for cheap but reliable labour force in South Africa. Negro labour could no longer be relied upon; the negro was not accustomed to hard work, and did not care much for money. The English settlers in Natal negotiated with the Government of India for the supply of labour; and the first batch of indentured labourers from India reached Natal in 1860. These Indian labourers were followed by Indian traders, who traded not only with the indentured labourers but with negroes as well. The indentured labourers became free after five years; and many of them settled there as free Indians. Some of these Indians went to the Transvaal, the Free State, and the Cape Colony. Their children also very often settled there.

The European planters welcomed semi-slave labour; but they could not be reconciled to free Indians or Indian traders. Their monopoly of exploitation was disturbed, and they started an agitation against the Indians. In 1893, an annual poll tax of three pounds was imposed on the Indians. As most of the labourers had a wife and two or three children, the tax amounted virtually to twelve pounds a year.

Some Indians began to use their privilege for voting in the election for the legislative assembly of Natal. To shut them out a Bill was passed excluding Indians as Indians from franchise. The Indians at once started an agitation and sent a memorial with ten thousand signatures to Lord Ripon, the Secretary of State for the Colonies. Lord Ripon disallowed the Bill, on the

ground that the British Empire could not agree to the establishment of a colour bar in legislation. This was a great victory for the Indians.

But the Europeans continued their anti-Indian agitation. They were afraid of being swamped by Indians both in politics and in trade. An Act was passed prohibiting every one from trading without a licence. This meant much hardship to Indians. Another Act required those who would enter the colony to pass an education test in a European language.

The same agitation against Indians, resulting in similar anti-Indian legislation, developed in the Transvaal, the Free State and the Cape Colony. The success of the Indian traders excited the jealousy of the Europeans everywhere. In their petitions against Indians we find such sentiments as these: "These Indians have no sense of human decency. They suffer from loathsome diseases. They consider every woman as their prey. They believe that women have no souls."<sup>130</sup> President Kruger said to a deputation of Indians in the Transvaal, "You are the descendants of Ishmael and, therefore, from your very birth bound to slave for the descendants of Esau; we cannot admit you to rights placing you on an equality with ourselves. You must rest content with what rights we grant you."<sup>131</sup>

In 1895, a registration fee of three pounds was fixed for Indians. Indians were allowed to own fixed property in localities specially set apart for their residence by the Transvaal Government. These locations were selected in dirty places far away from the towns, where there was no water-supply, no lighting arrangement and no sanitary service.

In the Free State, a law was passed expelling all Indian traders, who were given nominal compensation.

In the Cape Colony, Indian children were not allowed to attend public schools and Indian travellers could hardly secure accommodation in hotels.

The Indian National Congress very early took up the question of the grievances of Indians abroad. Mr. Pillai said, in 1896, at the twelfth Congress: "In India we are permitted to become members of the Imperial Legislative Council. In England, even the doors of that august assembly, the House of Commons, are open to us. But in South Africa, we are not permitted to travel without a pass, we are not allowed to walk about in the night, we are consigned to locations, we are denied admission to the first and second classes on railways, we are driven out of tramcars, we are pushed off footpaths, we are kept out of hotels, we are refused the benefit of public baths, we are spat upon, we are hissed, we are cursed, we are abused, and we are subjected to a variety of other indignities, which no human being can possibly endure."<sup>132</sup> Mr. Kidwai, in 1908, showed no patience with the arguments usually advanced by the European colonists. "The passion of earth has been on Europe for a long time past and there is hardly a corner of the world where the white man has not penetrated and which he would not like to make his own. Will the whole world then become the white man's and all the coloured men have to move away from it? If the Transvaal is to be dubbed a white man's country, why should not then also Egypt, or India or Algiers? I fail to see, gentlemen, the logic of this arbitrary theory, that a white man's country should be a forbidden land for coloured men. Nor would the argument that the Indian should not be allowed to live in a country in which Europeans also live, because they lower their standard of living, hold water for a moment. The necessary corollary of that proposition would be that Asiatics may object to Europeans and Americans living in their midst, as their influence and example would lead them to live in a style unsuited to the circumstances of their country. Would the Europeans leave Asia on the ground that the coloured man's continent ought to remain the coloured man's continent?"<sup>133</sup>

The agitation was backed by the Government of India; but it did not bear much fruit. The conviction, therefore, grew

that the Government of India, as long as it was not a fully national government, would not be in a position to give effective protection to the Indian interests abroad.

### 3. The Fight for Representation in Government.

From the very first, the Congress took its stand on the principle of democracy. Side by side with the demand for redress of individual grievances, there developed a demand not only for better administration, but also for a more democratic government. In the very first Congress we hear that "the desire to be governed according to the ideas of Government prevalent in Europe was in no way incompatible with their thorough loyalty to the British Government. All that they desired was that the basis of the Government should be widened, and that people should have their proper and legitimate share in it."<sup>134</sup>

The Indian Liberals became much bolder in the second Congress not only in their criticism of the existing policy of the British Government, but also in their demands for a representative government. The agitation for a national government, at least on the Congress platform, began fairly early. Dr. Rajendralal Mitra pointed out that foreign government could never represent India adequately, simply because it was foreign. "We live not under a National Government, but under a foreign bureaucracy; our rulers are foreigners by birth, religion, language, habits, by everything that divides humanity into different sections. They cannot possibly dive into our hearts; they cannot ascertain our wants, our feelings, our aspirations."<sup>135</sup>

The existing Legislative Councils were declared useless for all purposes in the first Congress. Dadabhai Naoroji pointed out that without representative government, there could not be good government; and without it, he asked, what good was it for India to be under British sway? What difference was there then between the British Government and an Asiatic despotism? In the second Congress, we find Surendranath Bannerjee making

out a case for self-government. "Self-government is the ordering of nature and the will of Divine Providence. Every nation must be the arbiter of its own destinies - such is the omnipotent fiat inscribed by Nature with her own hands and in her own eternal book. But do we govern ourselves? The answer is no. Are we living in an unnatural state? Yes, in the same state in which the patient lives under the ministrations of the physicians. We are passing through a period of probation and a period of trial under the auspices of one of the most freedom-loving nations in the world. And we claim that the period of probation may now fairly terminate, that the leading-strings may be taken off, and the child having emerged into the dawn of mature manhood, may at any rate be partially entrusted with the management of her own affairs. If it were otherwise, the circumstances would imply the gravest slur upon the character of British rule in India, for it would mean that after more than a century of British rule and of English education, we are still unfit to appreciate the principles and the practice in the art of self-government. Our Panchayat system is as old as the hills and is graven on the hearts and instincts of the people. Self-government is, therefore, nothing new to the habits or the ways of thought of the people of India" <sup>136</sup>

In the same session, Pundit Malaviya appealed to the historical and constitutional traditions of the British people in order to make out the absolute reasonableness of the demand of the Indians for representative institutions under the British Government. "It is not to the great British Government that we need demonstrate the utility, the expediency, the necessity of this great reform. It might have been necessary to support our petition for this boon with such a demonstration, were we governed by some despotic monarch, jealous of the duties, ignorant and careless of the rights of subjects; but it is surely unnecessary to say one word in support to the British Government or the British Nation-to the descendants of those brave and great men who fought and died to obtain for themselves and preserve intact for

their children those very institutions which taught by their example, we now crave, who spent their whole lives and shed their hearts' blood so freely in maintaining and developing their cherished principle.

“What is an Englishman without representative institutions? Why, not an Englishman at all, a mere sham, a base imitation, and I often wonder as I look around at our nominally English magnates, how they have the face to call themselves English, and yet deny us representative institutions and struggle to maintain despotic ones. Representative institutions are as much a part of the true Briton as his language and his literature. Will any one tell me that Great Britain will, in cold blood, deny us her free born subjects, the first of these, when by the gift of the latter, she has qualified us to appreciate and incited us to desire it?”

“No taxation without representation. That is the first commandment in the Englishman's Political Bible; how can he falter with his conscience and tax us here, his free and educated fellow-subjects as if we were dumb sheep or cattle? But we are not dumb any longer. India has found a voice at last in this great Congress, and in it, through it, we call on England to be true to her traditions, her instincts, and herself, and grant us our rights as free-born British citizens.”<sup>137</sup>

Year after year, the Congress speakers returned to the same subject. The cry for more liberty, more responsibility was repeated in every session of the Congress. The case for a larger share in the Government of one's own country was kept always before the mind of the people as well as the Government. The example of European countries continued to stimulate and inspire the Indian patriots to ask for the same grand life for their own country. Pundit Malaviya drew precedents from the Colonies and made out a strong case for the Indian demand for a fuller political life: and argued that if there was a case for representative institutions in European countries, there was a stronger case for these in India. “Allow me to say,” he said in 1887, “this much, that placed as

we are in this country under a foreign Government, however benevolent and generous its motives, we stand in the greatest need of our own representatives in the Legislative Councils. Gentlemen, the whole of Europe, with the exception of Russia, has declared that the most efficient and best form of Government for any country, which has made any advance in civilisation, is a Government conducted not solely by the few for the many, but to a greater or less extent by the many for themselves—a Government, in fact, in which the representatives of the people had some potential share—and if this be expedient for European countries, where the rulers and the ruled are of the same nationality, and where they are of the same religion, I think it must be conceded that it is even more essential for India, which is inhabited by people whose habits, manners, customs, language, race and creed differ from those of their rulers. If we demand for India that there should be representatives of her people in the State Councils, we only ask for what, not simple Europe, but America, Australia and almost the whole civilised world have decided with one unanimous voice to be essential for any Government that is to be suitable to any country, as it is only where the representatives of the people are allowed to take part in the administration, that the wants and wishes, the aspirations and grievances of the people can be adequately set forth, properly understood or duly provided for.

“Gentlemen, it is nothing very great we are asking them to do. The British Government has already made this concession to so many countries. So many colonies, so many British colonies enjoy it. Canada, the Cape, the Australian colonies—all enjoy some measure and most of them the fullest measure of Representative Government. Britain has granted or conceded this concession to all these places. Why should she withhold it from the people of India?”<sup>138</sup>

Pundit Dhar in the same session waxed equally eloquent about the grandeur of the ideal of liberty and maintained that free institutions are the best practical school for mental and moral discipline. “To be called on from time to time to take



part in the affairs of your country, to discuss with the sense of responsibility that power gives, public questions, to have to employ your highest faculties in the management of affairs that have a direct bearing on your country's glory, and on the happiness of her people, these things, I say, are all steps in the education necessary for the unfolding of all the speculative and practical faculties of a nation."139 It was up to England to give us this instinctive sense of liberty, that robustness of character which are essential to all healthy and progressive national life. "England has moved us from our ancient anchorage. She has cast us adrift against our will, upon the wide waters of a seething proletariat; and we turn back to England, and ask her to grant us that compass of representative institution by which, amid a thousand storms, she has steered her prosperous course to the safe haven of regulated political freedom."140

In the fourth session, Mr. Mudaliar quoted the example of Pondicherry and pointed out that if Pondicherry was fit to be represented in the French Government, there was no reason why India was not fit for a similar privilege in the British Government. "England will not as yet allow us the smallest modicum of representative institutions, but in Pondicherry, every man has a right to elect his representative. He enjoys manhood suffrage! Not only that, but the people of Pondicherry have got a member of their own in the Chamber of Deputies and another in the Senate. Then, in Pondicherry itself, they have got a Council which is called the Council General, and which meets every year, and this is an elective body, elected by the whole people. Before this Council is placed the Budget and the Budget is freely discussed by the Members...Gentlemen, it is said that we are not fit for representative institutions, but it is our fellow-countrymen, our relatives in many cases, no better educated than and in no wise different from ourselves, whom the French Government has found to be fitted, not only for the small instalment of representative institutions that we ask for, but fully developed representative institutions, including manhood suffrage, which none of us even dream of demanding."141

Charles Bradlaugh attended the fifth session of the Congress. His eloquent plea for freedom rang through Indian ears and gave a fresh inspiration to their struggle. "For whom should I work, if not for the people? Born of the people, trusted by the people, I will die of the people. And I know of no geographical or race limitations."<sup>142</sup> It is true, he said, that the pioneers of reform are often treated as criminals; but their speech and thought live on. Imprisonment cannot crush a truth. "It may hinder it for a moment, it may delay it for an hour; but it gets an electric elasticity inside the dungeon walls, and it grows and moves the world when it comes out."<sup>143</sup>

It was a remarkable session in more than one way. The leaders of two great parties, Gokhale and Tilak, spoke from the Congress platform for the first time. The Congress demands became more emphatic; and Pundit Dhar showed his impatience with the mock legislatures of his day. "The chief plank of the Congress platform is the elective principle, and we are not going to be satisfied with a thing that will be a snare, a mockery, and a delusion, leading men to believe that they have something which they do not possess. What we want is not sham, but reality; not shadow, but substance; not nomination which is another name for deception, but representation, which is the essence of political reform."<sup>144</sup>

In 1895, Pundit Malaviya asked the people of Great Britain to realise the tremendous load of responsibility which they had to shoulder in being ultimately behind the Government of India in its shameful neglect of India's best interests. "We charge the Government of England with having saddled us with an unnecessarily costly expenditure on the Civil Service of India, we charge them with having forced upon us a crushingly heavy military expenditure; we charge them with indulging in a great waste of India's money beyond the borders of India; we charge them with want of fairness in their dealings with India in the matter of the home charges: nay, more, we charge them—the Government of India, the Government of England, and the people of England with

them – with being responsible by reason of their neglect to adequately perform their duty towards India, for the loss of millions of lives which are lost in every decade from starvation, largely the result of over-taxation and inefficient administration. We charge the people of England, because as someone has said,

‘Hear him, ye senates, hear this truth sublime;  
He who allows the oppression shares the crime,’<sup>145</sup>

#### 4. **Objections answered.**

The objection often raised against the Congress demand that the Congress, after all, represented only a portion of the intellectual classes only, and that the masses looked very naturally to the British for the protection of their best interests, called forth stern rejoinders from the Indian Liberals. The educated classes, said Gokhale, were in the present circumstances of India, the natural representatives of the people. They controlled and directed the Vernacular Press which could not fail to reach the masses of the people; and in a hundred other ways they had access to the mind of the people. It was only a question of time. What the educated man thought to-day, the rest of India would think to-morrow.<sup>146</sup> How could foreign officials, asked Bannerjee, who spoke their language imperfectly if at all, and who lived in a position of detachment and isolation from them, represent the masses better than the Indian intellectuals? It was also ridiculous to suggest that the interests of the masses would not be looked after by the intellectual classes. “Now let me ask,” he said, “who are the people who advocated primary education in season and out of season, pressed the claims of sanitation, abolition of the salt tax, the reform of the police, the separation of judicial and executive functions, all intended to benefit the masses? The responsibility of pursuing a policy of obstruction in regard to these matters must rest upon the shoulders of the bureaucracy who aspire to be the guardians of the interests of the masses.”<sup>147</sup>

The officials did not realise that their contention condemned their rule out of their own mouths. It meant that so long as the people of India were kept in ignorance, they accepted the present system of administration. The moment they were educated, they ceased to be loyal supporters of the present régime.

It was true that the masses were steeped in illiteracy and were not fully alive to the responsibilities of their situation. But look at England of the forties of the nineteenth century. Half of her male population and three-fourths of the female population were unable to sign their names on their marriage register. Still the Reform Bill of 1832 was passed. The prevalent illiteracy, therefore, could not be quoted as a ground for stopping India's advance. Education sharpened the intelligence, but it could not be the indispensable condition for the organization of a National Government. The Hindus were not lacking in education; but they fell an easy prey to superior Islamic national solidarity. Was not the Magna Charta wrested, asked Mr. Muzumdar in 1918, from a despotic king by a band of uneducated barons who could sign their names only by scrolls and marks? <sup>148</sup>

It was further said that it was difficult to secure proper representation in a country so wide and diversified as India. Here, again, the example of England might be cited with advantage. Prior to 1832, 70 members were returned by 35 places, which had no electors; 90 members were returned by 46 places with less than 50 electors; and 37 members were elected by 19 places having not more than 100 electors; while Leeds, Birmingham and Manchester were unrepresented; seats were openly sold and bought. Corruption was rampant. If then England could start the electoral experiment in such anomalous ways and develop it gradually to greater and greater perfection, what was there to prevent India from working out her representative system in her own way? <sup>149</sup>

Nor would it do to emphasise too much the religious differences. Here, also, the Congress President (1915) drew largely

upon British history to make out his case. Religious differences, he pointed out, carried a more galling sense of social and political disadvantage than they had ever done in India. Everyone knew of the disabilities of the Roman Catholics and the Dissenters. In 1880, an influential deputation waited on Gladstone to protest against the appointment of Lord Ripon as Viceroy, because he was a Roman Catholic. The whole question of Irish Home Rule was a question of religion, of the Protestant against the Roman Catholic. In India, the Hindus and the Muslims had lived in harmony "until it was found that their differences might be turned to their mutual disadvantage."<sup>150</sup>

Nor was it proper to urge the existence of castes among the Hindus as an insuperable obstacle to the working of representative institutions in India. There was, we were told, the danger of the Brahmin monopoly of all political power. Now, to this it might be replied that the educated Brahmins, like the other educated Indians, were generally opposed to caste pretensions. Secondly, it was no use condemning outright a class which included such illustrious names as Ranade, Gokhale, Surendranath Bannerjee and others. Thirdly, a good many first class politicians have been recruited from classes other than Brahmins. Mr. Sinha pointed out further that "ill-mannered and ill-informed attacks on a whole class held in respect and even reverence by large masses of the people of India will inevitably provoke reprisals which will seriously hamper all efforts for either political or social reform."<sup>151</sup> The Hon. Mr. Basu suggested that the caste system was thoroughly democratic within itself, that its rigidity was disappearing, that the spectacle of the more enlightened ruling the less enlightened in the same community was as old as the world, and that even the House of Commons, till 1832, was politically in the hands of the English aristocracy and the upper middle classes. Take the case of Italy or Japan in 1860. "Italy in 1860 was more divided in tradition, sentiment, and feeling than India is to-day or was at any time in its past history. Conflict between temporal and spiritual powers,

rivalry of cities and states, of republics and kingdoms, mutual jealousy and mutual hatred, the domination and intrigue of a powerful neighbour, these were the difficulties which stood in the way of Italy, since united under one Government”<sup>152</sup>

The caste spirit was certainly a baneful thing, but we must not exaggerate its effects. It imposed only social restrictions and no political disabilities. It had its redeeming features also; and above all, it was slowly giving way to the pressure of a new environment. All these differences, religious or racial, were present everywhere, but they were fast disappearing. It was not for the Government to bring forward these as pretexts for the endless perpetuation of their rule or to exaggerate their importance. “A nationality is now no longer either a religious or a social federation, but a political unit. Diverse races professing different forms of religion and following distinct varieties of manners, customs, and traditions easily submit to a common political faith to work out their common destiny. The Picts and the Scots, the Saxons and the Normans, the Protestants and the Catholics are now all welded into the great British nation.”<sup>153</sup>

The whole question, then, was: is India a nation? It was difficult to give a categorical reply to this question. It was said that “there is no Indian Nation; there can be no Indian National Congress; there is no Indian people; there are only two hundred millions of diverse races and diverse creeds.”<sup>154</sup> The Congress movement itself was a great attempt to weld together all the heterogeneous elements of the Indian society into one political whole. In the second Congress, Dr. R. Mitra said: “It has been the dream of my life that the scattered units of my race may some day coalesce and come together; that instead of living merely as individuals, we may some day so combine as to be able to live as a nation. In this meeting, I behold the commencement of such a coalescence. It is highly gratifying to me that we are here assembled together, delegates from the North and from the South, from the East and from the West...Diverse we are in origin, in religion, in language, and in

our manners, but we are none the less members of the same nation. We live in the same country, we are subjects of the same sovereign and our good and evil depend entirely on the state of the government and the laws passed in this country. Whatever is beneficial to the Hindus is equally beneficial to the Mahomedans and whatever is injurious to the Hindus is equally injurious to the followers of Mahomed. Nations are not made of sects but of tribes bound together in one political bond. We are all bound by the same political bond, and, therefore, we constitute one nation."<sup>155</sup> The President of the third National Congress continued in the same strain. "Where but a few brief decades ago, ignorance alike of the rights and duties of citizens had reigned supreme, there a keen and growing appreciation of both had been substituted. The mutual hatred and scorn of rival creeds and clans which rendered all contact but as enemies impossible, had been replaced by tolerance, a willingness to co-operate and a growing sense of brotherhood. An exclusive devotion to family interests had been tempered by public spirit and a wide sense of duty; and through the fading mists of local and sectarian prejudices, the outline of a new born nationality has become clearly distinguishable."<sup>156</sup>

The Congress leaders, in fact, were feeling the stirrings of a new consciousness. They dreamt of an Indian nationality more as an ideal in the process of realisation than as a fact already accomplished. "That is undoubtedly the noble ideal—the national ideal that we have before us, the realisation of which will be the political kingdom of Heaven. The various races, sects, and creeds of India will blend together into one imperial whole in which privileges, and rights will be obtained and enjoyed, not by one sect or creed, but by all."<sup>157</sup>

The political horizon of the educated citizen, said a speaker in 1894, "is no longer his village, or district, not even the capital city of his province, but it is now the whole Indian Continent."<sup>158</sup> In 1895, the chairman of the Reception Committee, in the same way, took his stand on the prevalence of a common

administration, but looked forward to the gradual realisation of the genuine national ideal to the process of time. "All the elements which go to make a common united nation are now present with us—a common political citizenship, a common loyalty to the Queen Empress, a community of interests, under the influence of which it can prosper or suffer without the whole sharing in the prosperity or misfortune and a common language or literature which binds us morally and spiritually together and connects us with the wider world outside. Difference of race and creed there still exist, but they are getting more and more tolerant of each other, less and less angular every day, and it is the function of the Indian National Congress, its chief and most glorious function, to induce in all the electric current of enlightenment which will hasten the union and make it strong to bear the strain which time may place upon it. The watchword of the Congress is Indians first: Hindoos, Mahomedans, Parsees, Christians, Punjabees, Mahrattas, Bengalees, and Madrasies afterwards, and it is for us by the moderation and business-like character of our deliberations, by the mutual tolerance of each other's feelings and prejudices to justify in act and word the hopes and aspirations of those who, in the near future, seek to realise the dream of a united and federated India, resting secure in its loyal dependence on the great British Nation and able to lead the Nations of Asia in the path of progressive advancement in all directions of human activity."<sup>159</sup>

The nationalist idea, in fact, was born; and its further development depended largely upon the spread of political education among all classes of Indian society. If the masses were dumb and inarticulate, it was because they were not yet trained in the great principles of democratic life. The Congress asked for constitutional advance and received the reply that the masses were silent and apathetic, ignorant and illiterate. The Congress asked for universal compulsory elementary education and it was told that the time has not yet arrived. Surely, this looked like "Heads I win, tails you lose."<sup>160</sup> But the Indian Liberals hoped that with



the advance of education the whole outlook of the masses would change and age-long superstitions and ignorance and prejudice which blocked the path to any progress would melt away. "Education," said the Hon. Mr. Basu, "is the bed-rock on which we must lay the foundations of our national life. To it alone I look for the removal of those galling distinctions resulting from the institution of caste, of those petty misunderstandings which mar the beauty and serenity of our religious life." <sup>161</sup>

The argument that the genius of the East was peculiarly adapted to forms of despotic rule and was a stranger to free institutions and, therefore, not only unprepared but incapable of being prepared for a political democracy was disposed of by Congress spokesmen, by an appeal to the golden past of India. Pundit Dhar, at the third Congress, quoted from a speech of Sir John Lawrence (1864), who said: "The people of India are quite capable of administering their own affairs and the municipal feeling is deeply rooted in them. The village communities, each of which is a little republic, are the most abiding of Indian institutions. Holding the position we do in India, every view of duty and policy should induce us to leave as much as possible of the business of the country to be done by the people."<sup>162</sup> Replying to the declaration of Lord Curzon that by our environment we were unequal to the responsibilities of high offices, Surendranath Bannerjee said, in 1904, "In your name and on your behalf, gentlemen, I desire to record my most emphatic protest against this assumption of our racial inferiority. Are Asiatics inferior to Europeans? Let Japan answer. Are Indians inferior to Europeans? Let George Hamilton answer and L. George Hamilton is not a friend of the people of this country. Gentlemen, are we the representatives of an inferior race, we, who are the descendants of those who in the modern world, while all Europe was steeped in superstition, held aloft the torch of civilization?"<sup>163</sup>

The Congress politicians generally avoided references to past history to prove their case; for they thought they were

on surer ground when they appealed to facts of contemporary history. The Hon. Mr. Mazumdar, in his Presidential Speech (1916), took his stand on the record of Indians in high offices under the Native States as well as the British Government. The Native States were entirely managed by Indian administrators and some of them were marching ahead of British India in certain directions. Thus, Dr. Sunderland writes : " A further answer to the assertion that India cannot govern herself—surely one that shall be conclusive—is the fact that in parts she is governing herself now, and governing herself well. It is notorious that very best Government in India to-day is not that carried on by the British, but that of several of the Native States, notably Baroda and Mysore. In these States, particularly Baroda, the people are more free, more prosperous, more contented, and are making more progress than in any other part of India. Note the superiority of both these States in the important matter of popular education. Mysore is spending in education more than three times as much per capita than in British India, while Baroda has made her education free and compulsory. Both of these States, but specially Baroda, which has thus placed herself in line with the leading nations of Europe and America by making provision for the education of all her children, may well be contrasted with British India, which provides education even for the poorest kind, for only one boy in ten and one girl in one hundred and forty-four."<sup>164</sup> Men like Sir Salar Jung, Sir Dinkar Rao, Sir T. Madhav Rao, Dewan Bahadur Raghunath Rao, Sir Vishveshwaraya, Sir Prabhashankar Patani and Sir V. T. Krishnamachariar have shown consummate ability in the highest administrative offices. Sir S. P. Sinha and Sir Syed Ali Imam were not unworthy successors of Sir James Stephen or Sir C. P. Ilbert. In fact, Indians have given an excellent account of themselves as members of Executive Councils, as Presidents of Assemblies, as Vice-Chancellors of Universities and as Chief Justices in High Courts. If they have not done more, "it is their misfortune, not their fault."

It was true that self-government implied the capacity for

self-defence and India might not be quite prepared to organize her own military, naval, and aerial defences all at once. But it was here that the necessity for self-government made itself specially felt. India certainly did not lack martial spirit or martial capacity. What India had been persistently asking for was more opportunities for training and exercise of the latent talents of India in this as well as every other sphere. Military unfitness of India was not congenital. It was the outcome of a definite policy of distrust pursued in the past. An ignorant, mercenary army cannot be a source of the same strength as a truly national army. The Arms Act, with its galling sense of racial inferiority and its overt imputation of universal disloyalty<sup>163</sup> must go, and the beginning of a National Army in India should be made at once.

#### 5. The case for Self-government.

For the Moderates this demand, like every other demand, was based on considerations of both patriotism and loyalty. Their fundamental axiom was that what was good for India was good for the Empire and what was good for the Empire was good for India. They asked for the right of self-defence; they asked for the right of self-government, not merely in the interests of India, but always equally in the interests of the Empire. They never imagined, they never wanted to imagine, India except as an integral part of the Empire. They offered unstinted loyalty; they asked for unlimited trust. To them the Empire was not a cruel necessity, an arbitrary infliction; but a god-sent institution meant for the development of the best interests of India. They stood primarily for India and not for the Empire; but to them Indian interests unmistakably pointed in the direction of the Empire. They wanted India to be strong and vigorous and self-reliant and prosperous because both India's development demanded it and the Empire's development implied it. The ultimate foundation of the strength and prosperity of India and the Empire were according to them the same. As Mr. Asquith says, "The Empire rests not upon the predominance,

artificial and superficial, of race or class, but upon the loyal affections of free communities, built upon the basis of equal rights."<sup>166</sup>

"I say," said Bannerjee (1916), "we want self-government in the interests of the Empire. Who knows what will happen twenty years hence? Is it not the duty of statesmanship to be forewarned and forearmed, to take the necessary measures of precaution against a contingency of this kind? We are as multitudinous as the stars in the heavens. Marshman says that the grandsons of those who fought against Babar became under Akbar, governors of provinces, ministers of the Councils, etc. Let that trust be reposed in us and then England may view with serenity the mightiest combination that might be formed. Self-government is the cement of the Empire. It has knit together the self-governing colonies of the Empire. It has converted hostile Boers into loyal citizens, shedding their blood for the purpose of suppressing a revolution of their countrymen against the Empire."<sup>167</sup>

The Indian Liberals based their case to a great extent upon the charters and proclamations and promises issued from time to time by the authorities in Great Britain. There was a time when Indians did not fully understand what their position in the Empire was, but even in those days, when political consciousness was not born, liberal British statesmanship declared in no unequivocal terms the ideal of British rule in India. The principle of equality in the Commonwealth was implicit in the Charter of 1833 and above all in the Proclamation of 1858. Dadabhai Naoroji called it the Magna Charta of our liberties. "In it are embodied the germs of all we aim at now, of all that we can desire hereafter (1886). Our case was complete: all that we had to ask was the translation into literal fact the promise of the Proclamation". In 1905, after twenty years, the Grand Old Man of India returned again to the same Proclamation and demanded the redemption of the pledges contained therein. What position, he asked, did the Indians hold in the Empire?

They were, he answered, British subjects and were entitled to claim all British citizens' rights. In the charter granting territorial rights to the East India Company, when Bombay was acquired, we read: "And it is declared that all persons being His Majesty's subjects inhabiting within the said island, and their children and their posterity born within the limits thereof, shall be deemed free denizens and natural subjects, as if living and born in England."<sup>169</sup> All the terms of this first grant were extended in it to all future British territorial acquisitions. Hence, every British Indian subject was entitled to vote and even to become a Member of Parliament in England. Next, in the Queen's Proclamation we read: "We hold ourselves bound to the natives of our Indian territories by the same obligations of duty which bind us to our other subjects, and these obligations by the blessing of Almighty God we shall faithfully and conscientiously fulfil."<sup>170</sup> The Queen Empress wired to Lord Lytton that all, from the highest to the humblest, "may feel that under our rule the great principles of liberty, equality and justice are secured to them."<sup>171</sup> On the basis of this, the patriarch of Indian politics demanded that "just as the administration of the United Kingdom in all services, departments and details is in the hands of the peoples themselves of that country, so should we in India claim that the administration in all services, departments, and details should be in the hands of the people themselves of India."<sup>172</sup>

But above all, the case for self-government rested upon the new spirit that was born in India and that was demanding self-expression, both for its own sake as well as for the sake of the broader world. In India, we had neither good government nor self-government, because self-government was the only guarantee of good government. But even if we granted that there was an efficient system of government, could it ever be a substitute for self-government? In the years following 1905, even the Liberal politicians were becoming more and more outspoken as regards the fundamental needs of India. Here is an Englishman's confession of his faith in a well-known

British periodical. "Every Englishman is aware that, on no account, not if he were to be governed by an angel from heaven, would he surrender that most sacred of all his rights, the right of making his own laws ... He would not be an Englishman, he would not be able to look English fields and trees in the face, if he had parted with that right. There have been beneficent despots and wise law-givers in all ages who have increased the prosperity and probably the contentment and happiness of their subjects, but yet their government has not stimulated the moral and intellectual capacity latent in citizenship or fortified its character or enlarged its understanding. There is more hope for the future of mankind in the least and faintest impulse towards self-help, self-realisation, self-redemption than in all the laws that Aristotle ever dreamt of."<sup>173</sup> Sir S. P. Sinha drew from this the inference that what was true of Englishmen is also true of Indians. If an Englishman found it impossible to swallow the domination of others, even when it spelt efficient and better government, there was no reason why it should be reserved for Indians to accept passively the blessings of a good government doled out to them by a paternal alien government. The ideal of self-government was implicit in English character, English tradition, English literature, English political philosophy, English declarations and charters. It was the ideal for which the newly awakened mind of Young India now began to pant.

What was the meaning of this yearning? The highest ground upon which the case of Liberty for India rested was the inner necessity which the Indian mind began to experience for giving all expression to its own genius, in its own way, in the broader life of humanity. How could the great Indian nation for ever reconcile its self-respect with its position of permanent political tutelage? If Indian character were not to be stifled and dwarfed, it must be allowed full autonomy in the political sphere. The Indian nation, therefore, now found it difficult to be treated as an eternal baby. It was becoming more self-conscious; it was throbbing with new life. This, then, was the meaning of this new cry. It was the

desire to be oneself, to play one's own part, to make one's own contribution in one's own way. Said Bannerjee, in 1916, "We want self-government finally for the highest ends of national system, for the moral elevation of our people. Political inferiority involves moral degradation. It is galling to our self-respect. The mind and the conscience of a free man are not the mind and the conscience of a slave. A nation of slaves would never have produced a Patanjali, a Buddha, or a Valmiki. We want self-government in order that we might wipe off from us the badge of political inferiority and lift our heads among the nations of the earth and fulfil the great destinies that are in store for us under the blessings of Divine Providence. We want self-government not only for our own interests but for the sake of humanity at large ... Our mission may be fulfilled so that Europe may be rescued from gross materialism, from the degraded culture which at the present moment have heaped the battlefields of Europe with hecatombs of dead. But we cannot fulfil that mission unless and until we ourselves are emancipated, we ourselves are free... Our campaign of self-government is not a political one. It is a religious and moral mission in which the fate and destinies of humanity are involved. Such are the ideals, the aspirations that inspire us to-day." 174

### 6 The Swaraj within the Empire.

The Indian Liberals, with their characteristic caution, avoided for a long time the task of clearly formulating to themselves the goal of all their political strivings. But since 1905, the colour of Indian politics had changed beyond recognition: and the Moderates realised that unless they coped with the requirements of the times, they would be swept away. The question of ideal appeared to some as unnecessary and academic, while it appeared mischievous to others. Sinha, however, felt, in 1915, "that the positive danger in the path of the future well-being of the country is the want of a reasoned ideal of our future as would satisfy the aspirations and ambitions of the rising generations of India, and at the same time meet with the approval of those to whose hands our destinies are committed. It is my belief that

a rational and inspiring ideal will arrest the insidious and corrupting influence of the real enemies of our motherland. . . . It must be obvious to all sincere and impartial judges that no mandate, whether of the Government or of the Congress, will be able to still the throbbing pain in the soul of awakening India, unless the ideal which is held up by the Congress and accepted by the Government commends itself first to the heart and then to the head."<sup>176</sup> Here, we see, for the first time, clearly enunciated, the necessity of a well-defined objective in Congress politics. The Liberals felt that the other parties carried all before them because they were bolder and clearer in the enunciation of their goal. The ideal must be, however, such as to appeal not only to the heart but also to the head. It must be, in other words, not only emotionally inspiring, but also intellectually acceptable. In order to satisfy this double test, it must be one which both the Government and the people would willingly and enthusiastically accept. Sinha, however, could not or would not define self-government except in terms of President Lincoln as "government of the people, for the people, and *by the people*." The administration of the country was, in fact, a government of the people, it was thought to be, by one school, a government for the people, but it was not a government by the people. The ideal of good government, thus, gave way to the ideal of self-government.

But the Moderates became now more emphatic than ever about (a) the indispensability and desirability of the British-connection and (b) the attainment of the ideal by peaceful constitutional methods. Taking the second condition first, Sinha laid down three ways of attaining self-government: (1) by way of a free gift from the British nation; (2) by wresting it from them; and (3) by means of such progressive improvement of our mental, moral, and material condition, as would, on the one hand, render us worthy of it, and, on the other, make it impossible for our rulers to withhold it. A free gift of self-government to India was not possible; the English Government would not part with their most cherished dependency in such a cavalier fashion. Se-



condly, it would not be worth having, because we must grow into freedom and not merely get it. Nothing was so bad in political institutions as prematurity. Thirdly, India freed in this way was not real India restored. There was no absolute isolation possible for India and she would be plunged soon in the thick of another struggle of nations.

The second alternative appealed to extremist minds. A serious conflict with the British Power was impossible, if not inconceivable.

The third alternative, then, was the only feasible one. The moment we were really able to manage our own internal affairs peacefully and prevent external aggression, it would be in the interest as it would be the duty of England to concede the fullest autonomy to India. It was idle to object that history did not record any such peaceful transfer of power from one country to another. But the situation in India was without a parallel. For India there was only one goal and only one path. "Has there been a nation whose ideas of political morality have ever reached those of the great English nation? Has there been any other nation which has fought so continuously and strenuously for the freedom and liberty of other nations as the English? My faith is based not on emotion, not on unreasoning sentiment, it rests on the records of what has already been achieved by the undying labours of far-sighted English statesmen and noble-hearted Indian patriots, both those who are still working for the cause and those whose labours are done and whose spirits hover over us to-day to guide and to inspire us."<sup>176</sup>

This seemed like playing into the hands of the Government; but the Moderates pointed out that it was not so. This doctrine of preparatory fitness for Swaraj was shared by almost all schools of Indian politics: but each one interpreted it in its own way. The Indian Liberals made it clear that they did not share the views of those who would for ever postpone the advent of self-

government on the ground of unpreparedness. Gokhale quoted Gladstone and laid down that "it is liberty alone which fits men for liberty." This proposition, like every other in politics, had its bounds; but it was far safer than the counter-doctrine, "wait till they are fit."<sup>177</sup> Macaulay also had said that if men were not fit to get into water till they knew how to swim, they would never go into water at all, or learn how to swim. The Government persisted in saying always "not yet." The Indian Liberal rejoined - "when?" Mr. Muzumdar quoted Edwin Bevan's parable of the "Patient and the Steel Frame" and warned us that the patient in the "steel frame" required a gradual relaxation and occasional readjustment of his splints and bandages, and above all, it was the food and nourishment, and not the splint and bandages, which were calculated to give him strength and cure him of his injuries. Could one expect a man to be an expert jockey without training him on the back of a horse, any more than one could expect a man to be an expert swimmer without allowing him to go into the water? Efficiency could not be attained without repeated falls and duckings. "Admitting for argument's sake - and there can be no prejudice in such an admission - that the Indians are not as fit for self-government as the Europeans are, does it follow that they must only patiently contemplate in their steel frame without a stir till the day of their final release? If that be so, the day of their redemption will, in all probability, maintain its ever-receding distance, and the vision of the patient never realised. There is a school for the lawyer, the physician, the educationist, and the engineer, where he can obtain his passport and begin his profession; but is there any school or college where an aspirant can attain to his degree for self-government? It is through self-government that the art of self-government can be either taught or acquired."<sup>178</sup>

Still, the Indian Liberals maintained that the goal was not yet. It was not so distant, we were reminded by Sinha, as to render it a mere vision of the imagination. It was not so near that we had merely to stretch our hands to grasp the coveted prize. There was no royal road to the goal; what was required was

a patient, persistent, strenuous co-operation in all measures necessary for that purpose. The spirit of mutual trust and toleration between the Government and the people was absolutely necessary. The ground for self-government could be prepared only by an ever-increasing direct participation of the people's best representatives in the legislation as well as administration, civil as well as military, executive as well as judicial work of the Government. The bid for office should not be run down as a bid for loaves and fishes, honours and emoluments. Some of the great Liberals, like Telang and Tyabji, had accepted high office only at considerable sacrifice. They intended to take part in the work of the Government not as tools and agents but as members of the Government itself. The more Indians were able to share the responsible work in the administration, the more they would secure the identification of the people with the Government. It was perfectly true that we were yet a long way off from free institutions, that there had been no concession of real power to the people so far. But the privileges already acquired, if used with industry, moderation, and tact, would surely enable us to press for further expansion and still further expansion till we attained our goal "not by any sudden or revolutionary change, but by gradual evolution and cautious progress."<sup>179</sup>

The second condition was equally vital. The self-government here alluded to always meant self-government within the Empire. The alternative ideal in the field was separation from England and absolute independence. This ideal, like the other one of violent and revolutionary change, appealed irresistibly to impatient youth—whose privilege it is to be fancy free. But we must be practical and face the issue boldly and squarely. Who desired or supported a separation, asked Basu, as the President of the 1914 Congress. The Indian princes, secure in their dignity and status; the Indian aristocracy, safe in its possessions and influence; the Indian middle classes, free in their vocations; the toiling masses, sure of the fruit of their labour; were all moving onwards to one common goal with the impetus which a central Government, a

common vehicle of thought, common ideals, and a growing sense of unity and nationality have given to them. Would they support this separation and lose sight of their goal altogether? India, high or low, had published her answer to the world. It was but a dream and might come, as dreams do come, when the senses were held in the bond of sleep, or as they came in the impetuous days of youth when the senses lacked the control of wisdom which came with age. But when one took the idea firmly into his grasp, it broke into the dust of the past, bringing no solace but disappointment and sorrow.<sup>180</sup>

Autonomy within the Empire was, therefore, the accepted political faith of the Liberals. It avoided extremes—the Scylla of separation on the one hand and the Charybdis of subordination on the other. The ideal was that of co-ordination and comradeship, of a joint partnership on equal terms. It was too early in the day to define in concrete terms the precise form which this partnership might assume. But there was no reason why the highest patriotism could be reconciled to the ideal of a commonwealth in which “all will find a place—the Englishman as well as the Indian, the prince as well as the peasant, and all communities, by a judicious combination, of the methods of election and selection in the case of the less advanced.”<sup>181</sup> It would be a “common and splendid heritage all of us bringing our special talents to bear co-operatively for the common good of the whole.”<sup>182</sup>

The Liberal cried: Is not this ideal sufficiently inspiring for the most ardent patriotic imagination of our youth? Patriotism of the purest type is the need of the hour. There are patriotisms and patriotisms; the appeal of the Liberal is not to that ‘morbid sentiment which rises like a rocket and falls like a stone, not that sentiment which takes a man off his feet and lands him in disasters; not that sentiment which panders to passion and does not appeal to reason; but that supreme virtue which enlightens the head and ennobles the heart, and under the heavenly inspiration of which a man forgets his self and merges his individuality like a drop in an ocean, in the vast all-absorbing interest of his

country, feeding only on self-sacrifice and growing on what it feeds." <sup>183</sup> Our country must be our religion; and her welfare our common faith. Nations are not born, but made. They must grow from within.

'What avail your wealth, your learning,  
Empty titles, sordid trade ?  
True self-rule were worth them all !  
Nations by themselves are made.' <sup>184</sup>

### 7. The Liberal Ideals.

It is one thing to define one's fundamental political ideals; but it is quite a distinct thing to insist upon their immediate translation into practice. The Congress Liberals laid down certain ideals which enabled them to examine and judge the existing political and administrative institutions in their light. The root of their political and economic thinking was a faith that there was such a thing as India, that it was not a mere geographical expression, that it was made up of peoples, different though they may be in religion or caste, or race or culture, having a common economic and political destiny, that these peoples were more and more becoming conscious of a common national self, and that only a truly representative body like the Congress was the fit spokesman of the common longings and aspirations. The ideal of good government is no new ideal in India; but for a body constituted as the Congress was and is, a body apart from and independent of the Government, a body made up of people's representatives, to assume the rôle of an impartial and discerning critic of the administrative system and its day-to-day working was certainly a new and revolutionary thing in the history of modern India. The Congress Liberals, therefore, brought to bear upon the existing system the light of modern criticism and insisted upon suitable changes in its machinery and working. Secondly, the democratic ideal of bringing the government more and more into harmony with the people's aspirations and interests was always

kept steadily in view; and the existing institutions were considered adequate or inadequate also from this new point of view. Thirdly, the ideal of progressive Government was always there requiring the whole system to be brought into line with modern social and political ideas. Fourthly, the ideal of a new and growing Indian nationalism to a very great extent dominated the Congress thinking and demanded radical reconstruction, social and political, of a type calculated to help the Indian people as a whole towards the fulfilment of their national destiny. Fifthly, the ideals of British Liberalism naturally had a very decisive sway on the minds of those students of Bright and Gladstone and Macaulay. These standpoints are seen more or less to interact and to give a general pull in the same direction, but they may be distinguished and their distinct influence may be to some extent perceived and traced in the Congress literature of criticism and suggestion.

#### 8. The Limitations of the Existing System.

We may summarise, in the words of Gokhale, the specific limitations of the whole machinery of administration from the point of view of the Congress. Gokhale made two important points: (1) the existing system was autocratic and irresponsible; and (2) there was no provision anywhere for a body capable of giving a sound direction to Indian policy in Indian interests. (1) There was no effective safeguard against the vagaries of administration. The buffer of the Company's Government, which fairly protected Indian interests was gone; and there was no effectual substitute: (2) there were no effectual safeguards against the misapplication of Indian revenues for extra-Indian requirements; (3) the control vested in the Council of the Secretary of State under the statute of 1858 was rendered almost nugatory by the alteration of its status under recent Amending Acts; (4) the control of Parliament, as against the Secretary of State, had become almost nominal, because the latter was a member of the Cabinet, with a standing majority behind him. The old periodical en-

quiries by Parliament into the working of the Indian administration were gone: India being a non-party question, the responsible Opposition in Parliament left it alone; (5) there was no salutary check of public opinion, either in India or in England on the financial administration of India: Parliament was ill-informed and indifferent; the supreme and provincial legislatures had no power to control expenditure.<sup>185</sup>

So much about the absence of checks upon maladministration. But more important than that was the fact that the existing system of administration favoured largely a policy of mere drift. The actual work of administration was carried out by the Civil Service,—but individually members of that service could not command the prestige which was so essential for inaugurating any large scheme of policy involving a departure from the established order of things. The administrators who came out direct from England had the necessary prestige: but they were mere birds of passage, their stay in India being limited to five years. These men had not, therefore, the will or the opportunity to deal in an effective manner with the larger problems of the administration. There was, thus, an inveterate tendency merely to keep things going. “What the situation really demands is that a large and comprehensive scheme for the moral and material well-being of the people should be chalked out with patient care and foresight, and then it should be firmly and steadily adhered to, and the progress made examined almost from year to year.”<sup>186</sup>

#### 9. Morley-Minto Reforms.

The Congress agitation for revision of the constitution is seen to develop *pari passu* with the actual statutory changes in the Indian Constitution from time to time. Thus, we have a few well-marked stages: (1) movement before 1892; (2) movement from 1892 to 1909; and (3) movement from 1909 to 1917. The fourth stage is from 1919 to 1929 and after.

The real constitutional fight, however, centred round the Legislative Councils in India. The Congress stood boldly for the principle of election and commenced from the very start a vigorous campaign for making these Councils more and more representative of public opinion.

The very first Congress demanded that "the supreme and existing local legislative councils should be expanded by the admission of a considerable proportion of elected members; that all Budgets should be referred to the councils and that the right of interpellation be granted."<sup>187</sup> In 1904, a resolution was passed in favour of direct representation to the House of Commons, the right to divide the House on financial matters in Indian legislation, the right to be represented by Indians in the India Council and the Executive Councils in India. In 1905, the Congress desired that the system of Government obtaining in the self-governing Dominions, or Colonies, as they were still called, should be gradually introduced into India, and asked for a fuller representation of the people on the Councils and greater control over the financial and executive administration of the country.

The Morley-Minto Reforms of 1909 were the first serious response to the persistent constitutional demands of the Congress. The Congress passed the following resolution on it: "That this Congress, while gratefully appreciating the earnest and arduous endeavours of Lord Morley and Lord Minto in extending to the people of the country a fairly liberal measure of constitutional reforms, as now embodied in the India Councils Act of 1909, noted that the regulations had caused widespread dissatisfaction throughout the country by reason of:—

- (a) the excessive and unfairly preponderant share of representation given to the followers of one particular religion;
- (b) the unjust, invidious, and humiliating distinctions made between Muslim and non-Muslim subjects of His Majesty in the matter of the electorates, the franchise, and



the qualifications of candidates;

(c) the wide, arbitrary, and unreasonable disqualification and restriction for candidates seeking election to the Councils;

(d) the general distrust of the educated classes that runs through the whole course of the Regulations, and

(e) the unsatisfactory composition of the non-official majorities in the Provincial Councils, rendering them ineffective and unreal for all practical purposes." 188

Gokhale's appreciation of the reforms is thoroughly characteristic of the whole school. Important concessions were made, if not in fact, at least in principle, and further opportunities for work were placed at the disposal of the Constitutionalists. These opportunities should be utilised to the full for further developments. "Hitherto we have been engaged in agitation from outside. From now we shall be engaged in what might be called responsible association in administration. There is plenty of scope for growth here; and as we grow and discharge the responsibilities that devolve on us properly, I am sure there will be progress further and further towards our having what may be called responsible administration. Now, these are large and generous concessions and must receive at our hands the response which they require. They impose upon us two responsibilities in particular. The first is that a spirit of co-operation with the Government must be now evoked amongst us, instead of mere criticism of Government... The second is that the new power should be exercised with moderation and with restraint and that they should be used solely for the promotion of the interests of the masses of the people...

"Let us, therefore, not go in pursuit of mere idle dreams and neglect the opportunities which the present offers us...None of us wants to be satisfied with things as they are. But first we must prove that we can bear these responsibilities before we can ask for any more.

"I have often said that I do not want any limits, any res-

trictions, on the growth which should be open to our people...I want the people of our country, men and women, to be able to rise to the full height of their stature, as men and women of other countries do. But our growth can only be through the discharge of responsibilities; they must first be discharged before we can think of further responsibilities."<sup>189</sup> In these words which sum up the attitude of the Liberals towards reforms, the leader of the Liberal Party recommended the new regulations to his countrymen.

#### 10. Communal Electorates.

There were two problems over which the Liberals continued to be specially bitter during the years that followed the Morley-Minto Reforms. The one was the problem of communal electorates and the other was the problem of freedom of press and speech. The communal principle accepted by the Morley-Minto Reforms gave a very serious shock to the Liberals' faith in the British Government. Pundit Dhar, in 1911, as President of the Congress, examined the whole position. It was true that India was unfortunately split up into many communities, each of which was entitled to its proper share of representation. There could be no objection to securing adequate representation to every important community by a general electorate, but a communal electorate was a different matter. The non-communal electorate was a unifying agency which enabled men of each community to co-operate with those of others in the common interests of the whole country; a communal electorate was a disintegrating agency by which sectional interests tended to claim the first regard of every community. The Hindus felt that they were badly let down by the new scheme. The argument of 'political importance' of the Mahomedans was beyond the pale of rational discussion. Thus, the Hindu mind became very much embittered and the seeds of further division were sown. The separatist spirit would thus gradually pervade the whole Indian system from top to bottom and "all hopes of building up an

Indian nationality must be abandoned for many generations to come."<sup>190</sup>

The most important thing, insisted the Liberal, was the effect of separation and class privileges upon Indian national character. In every civilised country, knowledge, property, and numbers were considered the measure of political fitness; but in India, henceforth, the reverse would be the case. Caste, or religion, became the basis of fitness or unfitness: and once the people realised that the Government had ceased to value justice and equity and had preferred to base its foundations upon the principle of political expediency and opportunism, they would lose all faith in it.<sup>191</sup> This was the calamity of which the Liberal was most afraid.

The Liberal found himself confronted by a dilemma. One article of his creed was to help the Government to the full measure of his ability in the performance of its legitimate functions. He stood for loyalty to the constitutional authority; he stood for active co-operation with its principles. But there was another article of his creed which he held even more important. The Government, after all, existed for the people, and not the people for the Government. To preserve that nation and to oppose every measure which threatened its existence was, therefore, an even more important duty. Here was a situation full of potential dangers to the best interests of India and the Empire. For long, the Liberal had quarrelled with the authorities on matters of detail which were always capable of being settled by accommodation and compromise; but now, he was fated to disagree with the Government on a point of vital importance. It was impossible for him to be loyal at once to the nationalist ideal and the imperius ideal on this point. "If they submit to separation and in a country already torn by social and sectarian differences allow those differences to be stereotyped into the permanent features of their political institutions, in view of the expediencies of the day, they sacrifice their most cherished convictions and destroy the nationalist ideal. If they resist it, they weaken the chances of their securing the good will of the Government, under which the realisa-

tion of their nationalist ideal is possible. For, it is clear as day that British rule in India with all its faults and failings, all the shadows resting upon its career, is yet the symbol, the pledge, the guarantee of peace and progress, knowledge and freedom; to weaken it is to weaken the cause of civilisation. This is the dilemma which confronts the thinking portion of the Indian community, and there is no escape from it as long as, on the one hand, the people are taught, in colleges and schools and by hundred other means, Western ideals of liberty and nationality, Western conceptions of State duties and the rights of individual man; while on the other, they have to live under institutions which contradict these ideas. Is it reasonable to expect a people living in the midst of these cross-currents of opposite and irreconcilable forces, to give for any length of time their moral allegiance to one set of principles and their practical allegiance to another? "192

The main contention of the Moderates against the Morley-Minto scheme was this principle of deliberate injustice done to one community with a view to prevent a united front between the two great communities of India in their fight for freedom, which it embodied. It was again and again pointed out that the Mahomedans were specially protected in those provinces even where they were in a majority, while the Hindus were ignored even where they formed minorities, that the Muslims were given representation "somewhat in excess of their numerical strength," that the Mahomedans were given excessive representation by means of their separate electorates and also the right to contest seats in the joint electorate and so on. But the Congress, above all, deplored the introduction of the principle of separation and disunion into the very heart of Indian politics. Nothing, said the President of the Congress, in 1912, "is more calculated to retard the concord and harmony between Mahomedans and Hindus, to obstruct the intellectual and political advancement of the Mahomedans themselves, and the growth of a sturdy catholic public spirit and life amongst them than these water-tight compartments of separate electorates." 193

It must be said to the credit of the Indian Liberals that they always stood for the one Indian nation, which at least, in their belief, stood above all sectarian and communal differences. Caste—both as a principle which divides Hindus into high and low, and as a principle which divides Hindus and Muslims into a majority community and a minority community; caste, both in the social and in the political sphere, was repudiated categorically by the Indian Liberals. They stood for a policy of progressive education, the elevation of all people, and the obliteration of lines of caste and creed in the social and political life of the country. This was the task which appealed to their patriotic imagination, and they appealed to both the Hindus and the Mahomedans to recognize the essential unity of their lives and to sink all petty differences for a common ideal. President Basu made an eloquent appeal to substitute a broad humanitarian nationalism for the narrow forms and formulae of sectarian creeds. “What does it matter if I spring from the head of the Creator or his feet? Is not the whole universe his footstool? And what does formula matter in religion? God reveals Himself to all who seek Him. Whether we hearken to the voice of the Muezzin, or to the pealing of the bells, whether the minaret or the trident attracts our gaze, whether we assemble in temples or in mosques, whether we are high or lowly born, it makes no difference; beyond these, is the sanctuary of the mother, where the voice of humanity is calling us to worship. There we stand united before her sacred altar with our feet on the past and our gaze on the future. If only we bear in mind that we are Indians first and Indians always, what does it matter whether one community advances more rapidly than another, whether one receives more favours than another? Let us bear in mind that the advancement of a part of the body politic means the progress of the whole, that favours to our brethren mean favours to us all.”<sup>194</sup> Another President simply brushed aside the whole question by asking, “What are special electorates and communal representations when there is really no electorate and no representation among a people?”<sup>195</sup>

### 11. Freedom of Press, Platform, and Association.

The other problem which engaged the attention of the Liberals was the problem of freedom of expression and association. The cry of sedition was raised against the early Congressmen. The Government was not much accustomed to public criticism of the type the Congress was offering, and it felt that the Congress indulged in wild and irresponsible rhetoric, calculated to impair its own prestige. Then '*The London Times*' declared that "Congress was merely an affair of discontented place-seekers, -men of straw, with little or no stake in the country...persons of considerable imitative powers...of total ignorance of the real problems of Government...delegates from all the talking clubs... might become a serious danger to public tranquillity."

The line between legitimate criticism and illegitimate criticism is not always easy to draw. In all countries and particularly in countries like India, attacks on Government policy are liable to be misunderstood. The men whom the country calls "Moderates" to-day were looked upon in their time as "Radicals." There was a certain section of the Governmental and pro-Governmental opinion which always regarded the National Congress as a body of mischievous agitators. Mr. Eardley Norton was called "a veiled seditionist" by his friends for associating himself with the Congress. In the third Congress, he replied, "If it be sedition, gentlemen, to rebel against all wrong, if it be sedition to insist that the people should have a fair share in the administration of their own country and affairs, if it be sedition to resist tyranny, to raise my voice against oppression, to mutiny against injustice, to insist upon a hearing before a sentence, to uphold the liberties of the individual, to vindicate our common right to gradual but ever-advancing reform; if this be sedition, I am right glad to be called a 'seditionist.'" <sup>196</sup>

The Congress Report asked whether there was any wisdom in persecution. Such persecution would only drive agitation underground and convert an open, above-board, constitutional movement into a secret, underground, and unconstitutional body.

The Congress claimed the credit of having swept away all this fungoid growth and raised the level of all political agitation by working in the wholesome light of open day. Come what may, "the Congress idea has now such a hold upon the mind of the country that no earthly power can extinguish it. If ten thousand of the most prominent Congressmen were deported to-morrow, the idea would still creep on, spreading from mind to mind, till it had seized every man, woman, and child amongst the Indian population, ever growing stronger and stronger in every mind which had received the seed."<sup>197</sup> The Congress, however, persisted in its peaceful educational propaganda in the teeth of official misunderstanding and opposition.

Things, however, went on fairly smoothly till the nationalist agitation assumed a somewhat serious form after the Partition of Bengal. The Government had to launch a series of measures to control and check the wild activities of the new agitators. The Congress Liberals did not associate themselves with either the radical agitation of the new Party, or with the defensive measures of the Government. The leaders appealed to the innate good sense both of the people and of the Government. Mr. Bannerjee asked the people in the depths of their desperation not to forget the immemorial traditions of their race, or renounce the unalterable faith in the ultimate triumph of constitutional and righteous means for the attainment of national regeneration. Mr. Dhar pleaded for greater enthusiasm on the part of the Moderates and greater wisdom on the part of the Extremists in an eloquent passage. "Our agitation, in order to be effective, must be national, not sectarian: persistent, not spasmodic; directed by intelligence and wisdom, and not impulsive and reckless. Enthusiasm is good and idealism is good, and even crying for the moon is sometimes good; and I for one can sympathise with those who are called visionaries and dreamers, for I know that in every active and reforming body, there is always an extreme wing that is not without its uses in great human movements. I know that moderation sometimes means indifference and caution timidity, and I hold that India needs bold and enthusiastic characters—not men of pale hopes and

middling expectations, but courageous natures, fanatics in the cause of their country." 198

The Moderates unequivocally condemned all lawlessness and disorder; but they pointed out that repression was no remedy. Repression had nowhere succeeded and it was bound to fail in India also. It had converted prison-houses into seats of martyrdom. There was a conflict between the forces of the old constitution and the new spirit. People, as Burke said, had no interest in disorder, and in all disputes between the people and the rulers, the presumption was generally in favour of the people. Revolutions were not the result of chance or popular caprice. It was impatience of suffering and not passion to rebel which inspired the populace. It was no use, therefore, trying to suppress by measures like the Press Act and the Defence of India Act, the outward symptoms of a disease without attempting its diagnosis or its cure. "Anarchism is the common enemy of mankind throughout the world. In every country and every age civilized humanity has refused to recognize the brotherhood of the secret murderer and the dastardly assassin; and none but an anarchist need defend or support an anarchist. But a general crusade against a community in the name of anarchism is justified neither by reason, nor logic, nor considerations of expediency. The rats are a recognised nuisance and for aught we know, they may be also responsible for the plague and the pestilence. But if the rats are so sly as to elude our grasp and so subtle as not to come into the cage laid for them, no man in his senses and even under the greatest provocation, should so far forget himself as to be induced to set fire to the house to get rid of these pests." 199

If the Press were gagged, if men were to be punished without trial, if criticism of the Civil Service were considered treason, if want of affection were deemed disaffection, what remained of the freedom of the individual? The Executive had a right to arm itself with extraordinary powers of coercion if there were in the country a native and widespread movement of resistance to authority, and if breaches of the public peace were



frequent. So far the Liberals agreed with the Government. But was there such a state of things in the country? There might be discontent, but there was not much active disaffection. The authorities attached exaggerated importance to the utterances of a few visionaries and often represented an agitation for reform and for the removal of specific grievances as a movement of revolt. The Government might be able to prevent the wild talk of a few by such legislation; but it would drive hundreds to acute discontent and a sense of injury.

What was sedition? It was a very difficult question to answer. Gokhale distinguished three views. There were those who thought that unless an Indian spoke to them with "bated breath and whispering humbleness" he was seditious. There were others who thought that any one who comments on the actions of the officials or criticised the administration, or took part in political agitation, was seditious. But to those who took a large view of the situation the term 'sedition' was confined to attempts made to subvert the Government. Unless the authorities firmly restricted themselves only to the last interpretation of sedition, they would indiscriminately drive all the critics of the Government into the camp of the seditionists.

It was extremely unwise on the part of the authorities to talk of the disloyalty of the educated classes and then to suppress them. If such a state of affairs existed, the moral foundations of the Government must have gone, and no policy of repression could replace them. But the educated classes were loyal; they desired the stability of British rule from motives of enlightened self-interest. It was perfectly natural, however, that they should be dissatisfied with their own position in the country and with the existing system of administration. They were behind the great constitutional agitation set up by the Congress for political and administrative reform. The more they felt that their cry was a cry in the wilderness, the more their discontent grew. The remedy for such a state of things was clearly not wholesale repression, but a policy of wise and steady conciliation on the part

of the Government. A policy of indiscriminate repression would not facilitate the work of administration, would enhance the very evil which it was intended to control, and would associate the administration of the country with harsh memories which even time might not soften.<sup>900</sup>

### 12. Morley-Minto Reforms: Further Criticism.

The Congress Liberal Party felt the inadequacy of the Morley-Minto reforms more and more as time went on. The introduction of the communal principle had given the whole Indian political life a wrong direction. But in other respects also, the Reforms fell far short of the Liberal demands. The principle of representation was accepted; but it was applied in a very halting way.

(1) The representation of the middle classes had been secured by indirect elections. "For the Imperial Council, the general population has no vote whatever—Indian members of each Provincial Council themselves elected by a certain number of delegates from the local boards, including one member from the local University, return two members to the Imperial Council. The process of election of members to the Provincial Council may be broadly stated thus: a limited proportion of the general population elects a certain number of members to the municipal and district boards, to which a certain proportion of nominated members is added. The boards composed of both the elected and nominated members elect two or three delegates (except in Madras). To call this process 'indirect election' is not accurate, because there are so many stages of the filtration of public opinion that you cannot say that the people have any real voice or choice in the election of councillors. The councillors are not responsible to the delegates who serve a temporary purpose and then disappear; the delegates are not responsible to their respective boards, for it matters little to them what these boards think of their actions; the boards are not

responsible to the people, for the people elect them for quite different purposes, and the election of members to the Council is certainly not one of them. ...To call a member elected by this tortuous process a representative of the people is a misnomer. What is the extent of the franchise upon which even this peculiar election is based? Some twenty or twenty-five votes in a city of a hundred or two hundred thousand souls. If one of the principal functions of popular institutions is to give political education to the people, what can you say of a system in which not more than one in a thousand can have the slightest interest? As an instrument of popular education the present system is a failure."<sup>201</sup> It was necessary, if the representative system were to be given a fair trial in India, to do away with the system of indirect elections altogether, to abolish the delegation system, and to form new constituencies of men with certain educational and property qualifications.

(2) The great advance claimed by the Morley-Minto Reforms was that they for the first time allowed non-official majorities in Provincial Legislatures. But when these non-official majorities were analysed, what did we find? They were made of partly elected and partly nominated members. The official bloc and the nominated bloc generally pulled together in support of Government measures when necessary. Among the elected members there were representatives of special constituencies—like the landlords, the Chambers of Commerce, and so on. The landlords could be elected from the usual constituencies; and some of them were nominated also. They, therefore, got a representation out of all proportion to their number or usefulness, and could only be useful to the bureaucracy as a counterpoise to the opinions of the advanced classes. The educated middle-classes who alone could be expected to help the Government to mould Indian institutions in accordance with the needs of the time were practically nowhere. The non-official majorities were, therefore, purely illusory.

The Reforms were not, however, mere make-believes. They were necessary steps in the right direction; and if properly utilised, they prepared the people for the next advance. Granted that the defeat of a measure was a foregone conclusion, even then the debate put the Government upon its defence, and made it necessary for it to bring its justification before the public. These Councils "have supplied the motive force where it was lacking, they have infused energy where it was needed, they have attempted to act, though not always with success, as a brake when the wheels of the State were running over slippery rails and they have corrected errors; what is more, they have made their influence felt on the administrative machinery of Government." <sup>202</sup>

The Liberals wisely stressed the necessity of taking a really responsible and sober view of the opportunities so far offered to Indian talent and character. The success of the Reformed Councils rested upon Indians. Institutions in themselves could do little good, if the spirit and intelligence which should animate them were not there. There was, henceforth, in local bodies, in provincial legislatures, the Imperial Legislative Council, the Executives, a greater demand on Indians for genuine interest in public affairs, burning zeal for the welfare of all classes, a conscientious and thorough-going study of all national and local problems, freedom from bias, class prejudices and, above all, sound and calm judgment, wide outlook and far-reaching statesmanship. New institutions made new calls and Indians must show themselves equal to these demands.

### 13. Movement for Responsible Government.

The years that followed the inauguration of the new reforms were years of constitutional restlessness. Lord Morley's concessions were to some extent far-reaching: but they could not satisfy even Moderate opinion. His decision to open the doors of the India Council and the Viceroy's Executive Council was a great decision made against heavy odds. It was felt in many

officials that Indians could not be trusted with the civil and military secrets that would inevitably come before the Viceroy's Cabinet; but Lord Morley had made up his mind, and his decision has been amply justified by subsequent experience. It opened positions of the highest honour and dignity in the Government to Indians of ability and integrity.

But the Government's task was not easy. They had to suppress the Extremists and to rally the Moderates. They, therefore, had to pursue a policy of repression, pass reactionary measures, gag the Press, and send to jail or exile a number of popular leaders. This policy seemed to achieve temporarily a certain measure of success: but it inevitably embittered the public mind. The gulf between the people and the Government became wider and wider: and when Lokamanya Tilak returned from the jail in 1914, he soon became a great popular hero. In 1915, Gokhale passed away: and the Congress of that year amended its constitution to facilitate the reunion with the Extremist Party.

The year 1916 was a great year in the history of the Congress. It marked the beginning of a new national life all over the country. The union of the Moderates and the Extremists for the first time after the Surat split of 1907 changed the very complexion of that body and made it really representative of the most advanced political opinion in the country. Since 1907, the Congress had ceased to be a really popular body. Its Presidential addresses had become bolder and bolder: but it lacked touch with the life of the masses. The return of the Extremist to the Congress undoubtedly gave the Congress a new life and enabled it to be much bolder in its constitutional demands.

But this was not all. The Muslims had so far chosen to stay away from the Congress as a body. But year after year, after the Morley-Minto Reforms, the Muslims became more and more nationalist, more and more comprehensive in their demands. Identical resolutions were passed by the Muslim League and the

Congress on matters of fundamental importance: and both the bodies felt that they would gain immeasurably and lose nothing, if they combined their forces. In 1913, at the Karachi Congress, the Congress "placed on record its appreciation of the adoption by the All-India Muslim League of the idea of Self-Government for India within the British Empire," and agreed with the League that there should be harmonious co-operation between the Hindus and the Muslims. It was further agreed both by the League and the Congress that the "leaders of the different communities would make every endeavour to find a *modus operandi* for joint and concerted action on all questions of national good and earnestly appealed to all sections to help the object they had at heart." In 1916, the Lucknow pact was signed; and the Congress had to accept the principle of communal elections.

In the meantime, the Government was busy devising ways of conciliation. In 1911, the King-Emperor visited India and a great Durbar was held at Delhi for the purpose of proclaiming His Majesty's accession to the throne. It was calculated to strike the imagination of an Oriental people and to rouse their loyalty. The Partition of Bengal was annulled and the capital was transferred from Calcutta to Delhi. In 1914, the Great War broke out, and India rallied to the cause of the Empire. Lord Hardinge made notable Pronouncement in 1915.

"England has instilled into this country the culture and civilisation of the West with all the ideals of liberty and self-respect. It is not enough for her now to consider only the material outlook of India. It is necessary for her to cherish the aspirations, of which she has herself sown the seed, and English officials are gradually awakening to the fact that high as were the aims and remarkable the achievements of their predecessors, a still nobler task lies before them in the present and in the future in guiding the uncertain and faltering steps of Indian development along sure and safe paths. The new rôle of guide, philosopher, is opening before you, and it is worthy of your greatest efforts. It requires in you gifts of imagination and sympathy, and imposes

upon you self-sacrifice, for it means that slowly but surely you must divest yourselves of some of the power you have hitherto wielded. Let it be realised that great as has been England's mission in the past, she has a far more glorious task to fulfil in the future, in encouraging and guiding the political self-development of the people. The goal to which India may attain is still distant, and there may be many vicissitudes in her path, but I look forward with confidence to a time when strengthened by character and self-respect, and bound by ties of affection and gratitude, India may be regarded as a true friend of the Empire, and not merely, as a trusty dependent. The day for the complete fulfilment of this ideal is not yet, but it is to this distant vista that the British official should turn his eyes and he must grasp the fact that it is by his future success in this direction that the British efficiency and prestige may be judged." 204

This inspiring pronouncement put a new life into Indian politics. Hon. Mr. Sinha, as President of the Congress, urged immediately afterwards that there should be an authentic and definite proclamation with regard to which no evasion or misunderstanding may be possible. The Congress merely wanted a frank and full statement of the Government policy, an ungrudging approval of the goal to which India aspired, an "inflexible resolution to equip India for her journey and to furnish her escort on the long and weary road." 205 Such a declaration of policy was expected to touch the heart and imagination of a despairing people.

In the meantime, the Congress welcomed the invitation by the Imperial Government to India to send a representative to London to help the Imperial Conference with advice and information.

#### 14. The Congress-League Scheme.

The Indian Liberals were not satisfied with the existing administration either as regards its structure or as regards the

policy it pursued, both in fundamentals and in details. Criticism of parts soon ceased to be instructive and developed into criticism of the whole. The fiction of representative government became practically an obsolete fiction, and the reality of it now became an overdue reform. There was a stir and palpitation in the whole body politic and the politicians felt that the opportune moment had come when India must boldly speak out her innermost feelings and wishes. The revival of the Extremist Party and its identification with the Congress, the union of the Hindus and the Mahomedans, the quickening forces set in motion by the great war, all helped to make a great constitutional effort inevitable.

Let us take a general survey of the whole Constitutional problem as the Liberals saw it in 1917.

The position of India in the Empire had for some years caused serious misgivings to the Indian political mind. There was the problem of emigration. Here, India wanted the full right of citizenship which included the right to settle in any part of the Empire. But the right of free movement within the Empire was limited by the right of the local governments to restrict immigration. The Indians, however, felt that there was not sufficient reciprocity, that they were not respected as a people or nation, that they were treated worse than the nationals of other Asiatic powers, that their status of British citizenship was completely ignored, and that the Indian Government did not champion their interests and honour adequately. The acute discontent felt by India on this point touched both Hindus and Mahomedans, Liberals and Extremists equally, and drove them to secure an adequate recognition of their proper place in the Empire.

The problem of immigration into overseas British territories was partly a racial and partly an economic question. The problem of Tariffs was an economic question pure and simple. The former was looked at from the point of view of the white races; the latter more from the point of view of the economic interests of the United Kingdom. This question was less a question



of sentiment and more of material interests. Had India any special economic needs and interests of her own? If she had, who was to represent them, who was to fight for them, who was to look after them? The more Liberal politicians thought about India, the more they were driven to the conclusion that economics was at the root of all politics, that the question for India as well as every other country was the question of material self-preservation and that this question, more than any other, demanded that India must evolve Governmental organs which could do full justice to her needs in this vital matter. The British Empire was a giant organisation, with its main centre at London and many subordinate centres in the various Colonies and dependencies. The Colonial centres became early self-conscious and fought hard for internal autonomy in all economic and fiscal matters. They had won their point: but India still remained tacked on to the Empire and was not supposed to have needs and interests and problems different from or opposed to the needs and interests of the Empire and especially of the United Kingdom. If a policy of protection suited England at one stage, it was adopted and Indian products were shut out from the English markets by tariffs; if a policy of free trade suited England better at another stage, India was asked to accept, to keep her doors wide open for the manufactures of all countries and to specialise in certain agricultural industries in the name of sound economics; if a policy of imperial preference was suggested as the best economic policy of the Empire as a whole, India was expected to fall into line and to think that what suited the Empire was bound to be in her best interests as well. The imposition of the excise duty on Indian cotton manufactures only served to bring out into glaring relief the palpable iniquity of the whole system and gave a proof, if a proof were needed, of the complete subordination of the economic interests of India to the economic interests of Lancashire. Even Sir Valentine Chirol had to write: "No measure has done greater injury to the cause of free trade in India or more permanent discredit to British rule than the excise duty on the Indian manufactures in cotton and none has done more to undermine the Indian faith in

principles of justice upon which British rule claims, and on the whole legitimately claims, to be based." 206 Hence the growth of the school of protectionism in India. In 1915, the Indian National Congress adopted a resolution demanding that in the best interests of the people of India, the Government of India should have complete fiscal freedom. But the Government of India owed its position to and derived its mandate from the British Government. It had not been able, therefore, to stand up for India's interests in that unequivocal fashion which Indians had desired it to do. It must be said to its credit that now and then it had championed the Indian point of view: but then it had generally proved not particularly effective because of its own position. Hence Indian politicians were driven, step by step, by the relentless pressure of facts, to the ideal of Self-Government.

The question, therefore, of real constitutional importance was: who controlled the ultimate direction of affairs in India? Could the ultimate authority be expected to understand and represent the best interests of India? Were Indians to expect from its past record and its present constitution an effective assertion, whether in the domestic or the foreign sphere, of India's just claims and desires? The ultimate sovereignty of India, so far, lay in the British Parliament representing British democracy. British democracy was too busy with its problems to care to understand what India really wanted or needed; and its interest in India might well be different from India's interest in herself. The British Parliament undertook the complete direction of Indian affairs in 1858. There was a general lack of knowledge as well as of interest among Members of Parliament on Indian matters; and Parliament was, in any case, too busy to devote much time and attention to Indian problems. "A broken head in Cold Bath Fields produces a greater sensation among us than three pitched battles in India." (Macaulay) It had been further generally agreed to keep Indian questions outside party politics, one consequence of which was to make Indian questions non-controversial, and, thus, not likely to receive their full measure of criticism from the Opposition. This had sometimes meant according to the special view-point that it would

be better if Indian problems were decided on their own intrinsic merits without reference to party loyalty and party fortunes; or, alternatively, that India was to be the object of exploitation and domination by both parties and, therefore, should not be dragged in to divide them. The result was that India attracted very little attention in Parliament. Individual members, like Fawcett, for example, who was called the "Member for India," might rouse Parliament from its usual lethargy; but, in a sense, every member was a "Member for India," that is to say, India was everybody's business and, therefore, nobody's business.

The real power, thus, was lodged with the Home Government. The Cabinet, through a Secretary of State, "have an inexpugnable right, subject to law, to dictate policy, to initiate instructions, to reject proposals, to have the last word on every question that arises and the first word on every question that ought to arise." The Secretary of State for India was assisted by a Council which was a purely advisory body. It was intended that the main function of the Secretary of State in Council was "not to direct the details of administration but to scrutinise and revise the past acts of the Indian Government, to lay down principles, and to issue general directions for their guidance and to give or refuse sanction to great political events which are referred home for approval." There had been controversies regarding the exact spheres of the Home Government and the Government of India respectively *vis-a-vis* one another; but as the Duke of Argyll said, as Secretary of State: "the Government of India are merely executive officers of the Home Government, who hold the ultimate power of requiring the Governor-General to introduce a measure and of requiring also all the official members of the Legislative Council to vote for it."

Such was the constitutional position as regards the ultimate power with regard to India for all major questions of policy. Now, the cry of the Indian Liberals was for a Government in India which would derive its mandate not from the people of Great Britain but from the people of India. They demanded the appli-

cation of the democratic principle to the government of their own country. They were convinced that under no other system Indian interests were absolutely safe. Self-government in India, as Lord Morley said, meant two things. "In one sense, it touches the relations of the indigenous population to the European authorities, whether central and paramount, or provincial and local. In another sense, it concerns the relation between both the people and the organs of European authority in India on the one side and the organs of Home Government on the other. The distinction is in the highest degree important. The popular claim under the first head, though not easy to adjust, is easy to understand; it founds itself on democratic principles borrowed from ourselves both at home and in the self-governing Dominions. The second is different. It has not yet taken formidable shape, but it may soon. The ruling authority in India is sure to find itself fortified from pressure from the new councils in forcing the Indian interests, and what is more, the Indian view of such interests, against any tendency in England to postpone them to home interests."<sup>107</sup> The Indian problem was thus twofold. It had to emancipate the Government of India from the fetters of "Home" influences, and also to bring it under the control of the Indian democracy.

The Indian politicians tried to revive the interest of the British Parliament in Indian affairs. They always welcomed a broadside of criticism on Indian measures from non-official members of Parliament. They suggested that the salary of the Secretary of State should be placed on the British estimates: this would subject the debate on his salary to a party vote and arouse attention. Secondly, they often suggested that India should be directly represented in Parliament. In 1904, the Congress passed a resolution to the effect that each province or presidency of India should be allowed the franchise of returning at least two members to the British House of Commons. The President of the 27th Congress argued that the scheme was originally Disraeli's, that Pondicherry elected members to the

French Chamber, and Goa to the Portuguese Parliament, that when Parliament was the ultimate directing power, it was but proper that the Indian view might be placed before the Houses for consideration, and that it would find India and England together in close union. It had been further pointed out that the presence of India's own representative in the House could alone generate a new and intelligent interest among members of Parliament, that Parliamentary pressure then would be a very valuable check on the autocracy of the Indian bureaucrats, that the right of representation in Parliament was a part of the privilege of equal citizenship offered to India by the Queen's Proclamation, that Ireland was able to make an impression upon English politics largely by the presence of Irish members in the House of Commons, that if India were to be redeemed through the British connection, the battle must be fought on British and not on Indian soil. It was said that "it is not England's heart that is steeled against India, but it is her ear that is deaf to her cries." Hence it was necessary to gain access to the ear of England by carrying on agitation in Great Britain, and above all, in the British Parliament.<sup>208</sup>

The Congress proposed to make the governing authorities in India more and more independent of the Home Government and bring them more and more under the influence of the people. The control should be relaxed gradually from above. In the meantime, a partial reconstruction of the Home Government was proposed by the suggestion of mending or ending the India Council. The India Council was condemned in the early Congresses as a body of Anglo-Indians sitting in judgment on themselves, an oligarchy of fossilized Indian administrators. The main objection was to the composition of that body. The retired Anglo-Indian officials were held to be reactionary with regard to all progressive measures and keen on the preservation of the claims of vested interests. "True, they have had a great experience of Indian affairs, but it is an experience naturally one-sided; it is no disparagement to them to say that they have hardly been

in touch with the main currents of Indian life which have flowed unnoticed past their feet. I do not entirely blame them. Ability and efficiency may be the heritage of the Civil Service, developed by training and tradition, and may go a long way, but they are not of much help when one has to penetrate the screen which differences in religion, language, customs and modes of thought have set between us, a screen rendered denser by a false sense of prestige on the one side, and not unnatural reserve and sensitiveness on the other..... Thus they have become a second check on the Viceroy and the Secretary of State instead of being a guiding and motive force." 209 In these words, President Basu exposed the useless and the mischievous character of the Council from the Indian point of view. He welcomed the Marquess of Crewe's Council of India Bill, which made statutory provision for the inclusion in the Council of two Indian members and enabled the Secretary of State in certain matters where he had to act with the advice of the majority of his Council, to dispense with such advice. The Indian Liberals greeted Lord Morley's decision to have two Indian members on the Council: but they desired that these members should be elected in some way and not nominated. Their whole aim was to bring the Secretary of State for India into line with the other Secretaries of State and place him under greater Parliamentary control. They felt that they were hundreds of miles away from freedom, away from representative government, as long as the whole fiscal, financial, currency policy of the Government of India was in the hands of the Secretary of State in Council, over whom Parliamentary control in fact was purely nominal.

It follows that if the imperial control were to relax, there should be a simultaneous growth of democratic institutions in India to take its place in due course of time. The Congress ideal was indeed self-government within the Empire: it had to be evolved by stages and at each stage the surrounding limitations and safeguards were to be relaxed in favour of a more and more complete democracy. The position given to the Indians in both

the Provincial and the Imperial Legislatures under the constitution of 1909, was very unsatisfactory. It was now proposed that the standing official majority in the central legislature should go. Instead of the official majority in the central legislature, and the non-official majority in the provinces, there should be elective majorities. The Congress-League scheme (1916) suggested that (1) the strength of the Imperial Legislative Council should be 150; (2) four-fifths of its members should be elected; (3) the franchise should be broadened; (4) the President of the Council should be elected by the Council itself. The same principles were to be applied to the Provincial Legislatures. In this way the Congress pressed for a fuller application of the representative principle to the Legislatures of India.

If the Legislative Councils were not to be mere automata for the registration of Government decisions, there should be further development of their scope and functions. The Congress proposed that (1) the right of asking supplementary questions should not be restricted to the member putting the question; (2) a special meeting of the Council should be summoned on a requisition by not less than one-eighth of the members; (3) all bills other than money bills should be introduced into the Council in accordance with the rules made in that behalf by the Council itself and the consent of the Executive Government should not be required there for; (4) the Budget as a whole, as well as the individual Bills embodying financial proposals should be submitted for the vote of the Legislative Council. Similar rules were proposed for the Provincial Legislative Councils.

The ideal for which the Congress was fighting was the establishment of autonomy in internal matters both in the Provinces and in the Central Government, so far as possible, consistently with the maintenance of the imperial authority. It declared the necessity for a fuller representation of the people's wishes and interests and a larger scope for criticism of the Government policy. But the formulation of the people's will on the floor of the Legislature was one thing; and its embodiment in legislation

and administration was a different thing. Thus, there were two problems which confronted the exponents of this partial democracy in India : what subjects should be set apart as subjects of imperial importance, and, secondly, as regards domestic questions, how far should the voice of the Legislatures prevail ?

Thus we come to the constitution of the Executive and the relation of the Executive to the Legislative. The general framework of the executives was to remain unaltered; it was suggested that the Governors should not belong to the Indian Civil Service or any of the permanent services. The Congress proposed that (1) half of the members of the Executive Councils should be Indians; (2) the Indian members should be elected members of the Legislatures; (3) members of the Indian Civil Service should not be ordinarily appointed to the Executive Council. It was laid down that the Government of India should limit itself to general supervision over the Provincial Governments and should avoid interference in the local affairs and that it should be as far as possible independent of the Secretary of State in all legislative and administrative matters.<sup>210</sup>

The crucial question was the relation of the Executive to the Legislatures. The Congress wisely pressed for autonomy in internal matters only. The supremacy of the Executive was to be safeguarded in all matters relating to army, navy, and foreign affairs. The Indian States were kept outside the scheme as they did not desire to interfere or to be interfered with. The essential point of the whole scheme was that as regards all other matters, as regards the fiscal, financial, and general economic policy, the voice of the Legislature was to prevail. The Congress concentrated its attention upon fiscal autonomy: it wanted freedom to organise the economic life of the country in accordance with India's needs and interests and not in obedience to perpetual dictation from Whitehall.

Here was a new ideal for the first time authoritatively put forth by Indian politicians. The old ideal of representative



government was now being replaced by the ideal of responsible government. The proposal to introduce the principle of responsibility into the heart of the Indian Government was certainly revolutionary; it was a daring proposal because it at once transferred the centre of gravity from Whitehall to Delhi, from the British people and the British Parliament, to the Indian people and the Indian Parliament. The aim of the Congress was to bring the whole internal policy under the control of the people. The vague idea of self-government was thus defined and brought within the range of practical politics.

Yet this scheme fell short of the ideal of full responsible government. Expenditure on the army and the navy was not to be subject to the sanction of the legislature. This was one serious limitation on financial autonomy. The scheme proposed an irremovable Executive; it might or might not command the confidence of the Legislature; its life was independent of the Legislature. There was further the right of the Governor-General to veto any provincial legislation, and of the Crown as regards all legislation, provincial or imperial. Subject to some such safeguards, the Legislature was to have power not only to criticise and discuss Government proposals, but to pass resolutions which were meant to be binding on the Executive as well.

This was the first great effort on the part of the Congress at constitution-making. This effort was the outcome of all the schools of Indian political thought. The Muslim had joined hands with the Congress in drafting the scheme: and the Extremists had joined the Moderates in taking a united stand on these constitutional demands. It was this fact of a union of national forces, communal and political, which lent such weight to the scheme. It was no longer an effort in academic thinking; it was a part of political life itself. The long continuous effort of the Congress in the direction of a fuller share in the Government and a greater control over it thus expressed itself in this constitutional document. The Nineteen Members' Memorandum, Gokhale's scheme, and

above all, the Congress-League Scheme are all epoch-making in this sense.

### 13. A General Survey.

The Indian Liberals are a much-neglected and much-abused party to-day, and are condemned by the average man in India as a body of sycophants and self-seekers. This verdict is primarily passed upon the Liberals of to-day, but it is then, by a convenient fiction, extended to the whole School of thinkers and workers from the dawn of the new Indian political consciousness until the present time. This is due to a number of factors: but above all to the neglect of the historical method in our study. What is bad to-day, we argue, must be bad always and bad in itself. If Indian Liberalism fails to be the great driving force in Indian life to-day, it is argued, then it must always have been a senile doctrine incapable of giving a lead to a great people. The result of this attitude of contempt towards this great school of thought is a neglect of the study of the sources from which it derived its inspiration, the conditions which gave rise to it, the leading personalities which gave it body and shape and stood for it, through good report and evil, the nature of its essential ideas and their bearing upon the country's well-being, the relations in which it stands to other rival schools of Indian thought, the element of vitality which it contained not only for the age in which it flourished, but also to some extent for our age to-day, and in a way, for all ages, the limitations which brought it to an early end as the fundamental current in Indian thought and life to-day, at least in appearance. But such an attitude, though to some extent justifiable in the school which immediately follows it, is not at all proper in the student of Indian political thought. It is the outcome of a habit of sloppy thinking, a superciliousness born of ignorance and superficiality and political prejudices. It leads the unthinking Indians of to-day into practical blunders; it goads them on to false courses of action and lands them in false situations. The Indian problem, it has been said a thousand times, but it may continue

to be said a thousand times more, is a very complex problem. This is the first fact to be grasped about it; and whoever neglects it neglects it at his and his country's peril. As the problem is complex, there are necessarily many approaches to it: and each of these approaches, each of these ways of understanding and tackling it is worthy of our study, if not our trial. If ever we are to solve it, if ever we are to get at the heart of it, it can only be by a patient study of the possibilities of each of the diverse methods tried in the past and capable of being tried in the future. Truth is great and will prevail: but in the meantime, the most important question not only academically but as a most serious practical proposition, is--what is truth? It may not be easy to answer this question; but the attitude of jesting Pilate or of the mocking patriot of to-day is certainly not the right attitude towards it. It is, therefore, very important that the Indian mind should not be so immersed in the present as to lose sight of the past, because in losing sight of the past, it deliberately lets go a very valuable instrument of insight both into the present and the future. Let not the zealous patriot of to-day spurn aside this long episode in our thinking as irrelevant or useless or mischievous. Let us not, like ignorant and silly children, show ourselves incapable of understanding or revering our past, because even if this attitude is a valuable one, it is certainly born of the past. The present is always the outcome of the past: and granted that the present is an immeasurable advance over the past, even then it owes its existence to that past and is conditioned by it. It is not necessary for us to accept all the results of their thinking; it may be even necessary for us at some time to kick away the ladder by which we have risen to truth; but still let us call it a ladder which helped us in some way or other to our attainment of our present position.

The Indian Liberals, like every great school of thought, had their characteristic strength and characteristic weaknesses. The characteristic weaknesses of this school have been most unsparingly exposed and dilated upon again and again by the School

which immediately succeeded it. Historical developments have no mercy for individuals or parties; they ruthlessly punish our weaknesses and bring out all that we really stand for, for good or evil in the life of ourselves and our people. This work of criticism may thus be safely left to the outstanding representatives of the opposite school and we may confine ourselves to a summary of the essential characteristics and valuable contributions of the school of Liberals. The school of Liberals has certainly not passed into history for all time; it will be truer to say that it will continue to flourish for all time. But as a dominant force in Indian thought and life, it tends to disappear from 1917.

The history of Indian politics, not as a series of outer facts or happenings, but as a development of inner thought, (under the British, from 1885-1905, is the history of the Indian National Congress; and the history of the Indian National Congress from 1885 to 1917, is the history of the Indian Liberal School. This school, therefore, primarily formed a body of politicians and not political philosophers. They were thinkers: but they were thinkers who thought not for the sake of thought as such but essentially for action. (To some extent this is the characteristic of modern Indian political thought. In a way all thought is pragmatic) conditioned by the concrete situations which confront thinkers and developed under the pressure of certain dominant interests and ends. But there is a difference between the political thinking of a Plato or an Aristotle, a Green or a Bosanquet, and a Gladstone or a Disraeli, a Baldwin or a Lloyd George. The Political thinking of philosophers is an effort in speculative politics; it has fewer assumptions, it generalises too much, it is necessarily deeper and more thorough-going. In other words, there is the mark of system upon it; it tries to be as scientific as possible. The political thinking of politicians primarily takes into consideration the actual situation to which it addresses itself, does not ask fundamental questions or try to answer them, takes much for granted, and is above all interested in solving concrete problems

which confront them, their party, their people, as best as they can, leaving the wider bearings of their thought to more abstruse and philosophic thinkers. Thus, we have men of action like Napoleon or the Kaiser who primarily act and do not think; politicians who fight with their ideas and theories but fight their immediate antagonists with a view to overcome specific situations; and, lastly, philosophers and thinkers who may start from and return to particular political facts but whose main interest is in pure truth, truth for truth's sake, truth for humanity's sake, truth for all, truth as such. The Indian political thinkers belong to the second type. They develop theories, but mainly as weapons to fight their particular battles. A Gokhale or a Bannerjee will never have a place, therefore, in the history of political thought of the world as a Hegel or a Green or a Bosanquet, because he does not put forth new theories, because he does not reinterpret old theories, because he does not make any contribution to the illumination of any basic political concepts. His subject is not pure politics, but applied politics; his essays in thinking are essays in applied politics.) The line, however, between pure and applied politics is a thin and fluctuating one and the one ever passes into the other. The universal is always implicit in the particular; what is true in one case is likely to be true in all similar cases. It is so with Indian thought. Indian thought is the response of the Indian intellect to the Indian environment. But the problems which engage its attention are the same which engage every nation when it passes through the same stage of culture. The effort of the Indian mind to do justice to Indian problems in the light of its own experience certainly deserves the attention of the world not merely because India comprises a population of three hundred millions of people, but also because indirectly it throws some light on the common problems of humanity everywhere. /

Indian Liberalism is the product of European Liberalism. The Indian intellectuals have almost literally sat at the feet of English Liberals and derived their inspiration from them. They repeated

the same arguments which were advanced by Mill and Macaulay. Their ideals were the same. Parliamentary Government in those days was considered to be the panacea for all ills: it, therefore, was assumed to be the ideal suited to India also and capable of solving her problems. Give us democracy, they said, give us the same Parliamentary institutions which you Englishmen enjoy, and we will do the same wonderful things which you did. They were the genuine disciples of Bentham and Rousseau. Their great merit lay in being the interpreters of European Liberal ideal to the people of India. They were fired by the constitutional history of Great Britain and the self-governing Colonies: and they naturally concluded that the same history would have to be repeated in India. Indian history to them was an extension of English history: Indian politics was the further development of English politics.

Thus they were always closely allied with the official school or the English school of Indian thought. The literature of the Congress and the speeches of its stalwarts bristle with quotations from the official and non-official thought of England about India. Indian Liberalism and British Liberal Imperialism often appeared to shake hands with each other. Both schools appeared to have the same ideals: both schools thought in almost identical terms, as regards Indian problems. The difference was only as regards the tempo of national progress. The Moderate mind thoroughly appreciated each constitutional advance: the Morley-Minto reforms and still more the Montague-Chelmsford Reforms did appear to them really great gestures on the part of Great Britain. They saw in them clear and convincing proofs of the sincerity of British statesmanship to stand by India and to do justice to her. Both these schools believed in the theoretical doctrine of equality of citizenship and the gradual evolution of that citizenship under the protecting wings of the British Empire. The ideal for India for both was national autonomy in some form or other consistently with the imperial paramountcy.

The Indian Liberals always congratulated themselves on the essentially practical character of their demands. This practicality or healthy realism again allied them with the Liberal Imperial mind of Great Britain. The realisation of the complexity of the Indian problem—the vastness of the country, its traditional weaknesses, its horrible ignorance and superstition, the selfishness of the castes, the communities, and individuals, the backwardness of the women and the degradation of the depressed classes—was shared by the Indian and the English Liberal alike. Hence they were pitted against any precipitous change, and both believed absolutely in the development of self-government by stages. Hence both believed in the essentially civilizing mission of Great Britain and the period of apprenticeship which the Indian nation must go through, before it was qualified for full-fledged freedom. Both schools realised the complete helplessness of India, both within and without, apart from the powerful support of Britain. Both of them deeply appreciated the blessings of peace and order which flowed from the British connection; both felt that without this peace and order, it was impossible for constitutional freedom to grow. The ideal in both cases was a gradual liberalization of political institutions, till India attained something like Dominion Status in the vast British Commonwealth. Hence both sincerely repudiated all violent methods in politics and feared nothing more than anarchy.

The Indian Liberal had the strength and the wisdom to face facts fairly and squarely. He was not necessarily a coward or a craven, when he hugged the British connection to his bosom. He considered the co-operation of Great Britain as absolutely indispensable, not only for the maintenance of the conditions of law and order, but also for the development of genuine democratic institutions. The Britisher, he accepted not merely as a policeman, as a sentinel at the gate, but also as a teacher, a guide, a friend, and a philosopher. The inspiration to a larger life had come, according to him, from Great Britain; what was the use of attacking this very fount of inspiration? Great Britain was the

spiritual home of the Indian Liberal, it was not a country which held India by force against her will, but a country which was linked by Divine Providence with his own for the mutual advantage of both. It was not in a spirit of self-seeking, not in a desire to play for safety first, that the Moderate clung to the Empire, as a child clings to the mother. It was a passionate conviction with him that Britain must continue to play her rôle if India ever were to rise to the level of modern civilized communities.

Let it be firmly planted in our mind, if we are to do justice to this school, that the Moderate never accepted the mere *status quo*, never acquiesced in the existing order, taking it to be the best of all orders in the best of all worlds. He was not a foolish, self-complacent optimist, with an incurable attachment to his own interests, his own safety, and the cause of his Empire, making a curious synthesis of loyalty, patriotism, and individual and class enlightened self-interest. He was fired, as patriots of other schools were, with a divine discontent; he did rise up with all the conviction of his soul against the sordid realities of the actual bureaucratic rule; he had his moments of revolt against the existing order as much as any extremist. His faith was kept alive by the Empire-ideal, by the magnificent promises of British statesmen, by the soothing and consoling music of the Queen's Proclamation, by the spirit of British history, and above all, by his faith in higher human nature generally, and the higher nature of the British in particular.

But granted that Britain was very slow and halting in her policy of real reform, and that she was becoming more and more a drag upon India's progress, less and less a help to her, the Liberal asked, what was the alternative? The Indian Liberal knew as well as the English Imperialist, the weaknesses of Indians and the tremendous difficulties of their task. What was the task? The task was the building up of a National State on a democratic basis. He felt that in this task the sympathy and co-operation of the British could always help and that their active antagonism or



subtle opposition would always hinder endlessly our progress towards our goal. We might not succeed easily in converting the British statesman to be a warm and disinterested friend of India; but we must not do anything to convert him into a bitter and implacable foe. We should be merely increasing our difficulties a hundredfold by violent tactics. Thus President Dhar utters a warning to the political hotheads: "In the pursuit of a high ideal we must not forget the difficulties that beset our path. Long and weary is the journey, said Burke, that lies before those who undertake to mould a people into the unity of a nation. Enthusiasm is good and idealism is good.....but enthusiasm and idealism cannot achieve impossibilities. Human nature is conservative and national progress is slow of foot. First the blade, then the ear, and after that the corn in the ear, this is the law of nature. Self-Government, such as obtains in the British Colonies, is a noble ideal, and we are perfectly justified in keeping that before our eyes; but is it attainable to-day or to-morrow or even in the lifetime of the present generation? Consider where we stand in the scale of civilization, when we have only four women and eighteen men per thousand who are literate, when there are millions of our countrymen whom we look upon as 'untouchables,' when we have about a hundred thousand widows of less than five years, and caste rules still forbid sea-voyage, and Mr. Basu's Special Marriage Bill is condemned as a dangerous innovation; when many Hindus do not sufficiently realise the fact that there are 65 millions whose interests and feelings have to be cared for and the Mahomedans are equally oblivious of the interests and feelings of 240 million Hindus-when this is the condition to which we have been brought by centuries of decay and degradation, to talk of a National Government for India to-day is to make ourselves the laughing-stock of the civilized world."<sup>211</sup>

Here we meet with another characteristic of Indian Liberalism. Political Liberals were really one with social and religious liberals; and both the political and social Liberals were practically one with the Imperial Liberals. Congressmen were deeply con-

scious of the social bearings of political reform and the political bearings of social reform. But they wanted differentiation of political from social activities with a view to facilitate concentration on each. The ideal of all these schools was the same: it was *the Modernisation of India*. A politically progressive India implied a socially progressive India and *vice versa*. They all looked to the West and not to the East for illumination; they all looked to the future and not to the past for inspiration. They considered the past of India to some extent glorious: but they generally liked to move away their eyes from the past to the future. They did not want to confuse political and social issues by invoking the dead ghosts of a fast retiring past; religion was no mysterious and elusive element to them; they saw superstition round them; they desired that science should take its place. They saw ignorance and prejudice masquerading in the name of religion; they wished that a new knowledge should make short work of all these doubtful heritages of the past. In fact, they considered the past to be a more of a burden than a help, more a source of mischief than a source of good. The British connection was specially welcome to them; because it meant the slow but sure emancipation of the Indian mind from its blind attachment to an unmeaning past. They wanted the whole man in India to be westernized not merely in form but in spirit; and they saw the salvation of India in a complete assimilation of the best western ideals. They panted for the ideal of a free man in a free State, a free Church in a free State, a free woman in a free society. The political Liberals observed a discreet silence with regard to the past and left the task of drastic criticism of social ways and customs to the party of social and religious reformers; because they did not want to alienate the sympathies of the orthodox masses. Their objective was social reform through education and legislation; and for both these agencies they looked to the British Government for help and guidance. They placed their hopes more in the British Government than even in an Indian Government for this work, because they thought the British Government would stand by progressive ideals to a greater extent than an Indian Government. When they

found that the British Government was hostile to active progress and did not want to antagonise the orthodox sections, they pleaded for a qualified type of representative government which would be run mostly by the advanced intellectuals of the Congress type. There can be no mistake about their ideal both in the social and the political sphere.

The Indian Liberals, therefore, stood boldly for the assertion of democratic ideals in all the realms of life. They were the first to dream the dream, they were ~~to~~ first to try to convert that dream into a reality—the dream of a democratic State in a democratic society in India. In trying to express this dream and give it bodily shape, they had to wrestle against heavy odds. They were pitted against the social die-hardism of the people on the one side and the political die-hardism of the Government on the other side. They had reason on their side; they had the great traditions of nineteenth century Europe behind them; they had the intellectual sympathy of the higher imperial mind of Great Britain in its best moments; but they had to oppose the deadweight of the bureaucratic tradition of the Government and the deadweight of ignorance of the caste-ridden masses. Their path was thus a difficult one; their loyalty to the British connection was soon interpreted by the rising intelligentsia of India as mere flattery of the authorities; their constant repetition of the democratic formulae earned for them the opprobrious nickname of mischievous political agitators at the hands of the British officials. But they had patience; they had sobriety; they had a sure grasp of facts; their judgment was on the whole sound; and, above all, they had faith in the greatness of their cause, the good sense of the people, and the liberty and justice-loving character of the British Government. As Prof. Thakore has said, “To seek to elevate one’s mother country to a high level of prosperity and civilisation, to look upon the decision of stricken fields and uprooted dynasties as the judgment of over-ruling Providence, to grasp fully and firmly both the halves of this double concept of Divine Judgment—as a deserved punishment to us for our sins, as our

*Karma*, as a no less deserved reward to the victors, as their *Karma*; to judge the paramount power and its agents by the best actions and the best thoughts and aspirations of their best representatives; to accept their professions about working for the prosperity and civilisation of this country as genuine, nay as inspired, and as doing them infinite credit, to accept their diagnosis of our downfall, at least as a working hypothesis; to exhibit the cosmopolitan fraternity (*brat̄ra bh̄va*) and wide toleration of Hindu culture at its best, by refusing to misunderstand even the excesses of proselytising zeal; to accept the missionaries in spite of their narrowness and prejudices as sincere and active friends with some really effective though novel ideas for the uplift of the country and as helpful checks upon the greed, cruelty, and assertiveness, natural to executive officers and soldiers armed with unlimited power, in a land densely ignorant and prostrate; knowing that half-hearted service was worse than none and that sullen non-co-operation was worse than disloyalty, open, active and manly, to serve every representative of the ruling power fully and faithfully in any and every capacity, however low, and finally, to apply themselves with all their might to English education and social reform, the purification of religion from superstitions and from corruptions, the removal of caste and local prejudices and limitations, the creation of a public opinion on public questions, and the training up of the people in the adoption of constitutional methods for the removal of constitutional grievances, and the progressive improvement of their position from the status of conquered subjects to that of equal citizens; these were the ideas which animated the best Indians of that generation: these were the ideas which enabled them to sow the seeds of Modern India. The motives and actions sprouting up out of a thought-bed of this description cannot be classed as mean or self-centred or materialistic or servile or denationalised. To suppose that these men, our grandfathers, merely pocketed their higher salaries and fees, that they merely caught the vices and rudeness of the unwashed sections of Anglo-Saxon humanity, that they merely learned from the foreign tyrants above them how to tyrannise more oppressively over their own coun-

trymen below them, and to question either their warm sentiments of loyalty to the British Raj, or the strong bonds of sympathy that grew up between them and the best of the local representatives of that Raj, is to be altogether blind to recorded history, or to discolour it most unjustifiably by the violent prejudices and passions of a later day."<sup>212</sup>

The essential mission of the Indian Liberal Party was to translate the great social and political ideals for which the Western Government in its highest conception stood, into the lives and thoughts, first, of the educated people of India and then, through them, of the masses. These ideals they saw in the march of, first, English and, then, European and American history; these ideals were enshrined in a classical form in literary writers like Burke, Macaulay, Morley or Mazzini; these ideals were again and again expressed in the Parliamentary speeches of the best English spokesmen and even in the authoritative declarations of the British Government. These ideals were in a germinal form actually planted on Indian soil by the British administration. Their business was to clarify these ideals in their relationship to Indian social and political life; to insist upon their proper interpretation and application to Indian problems; to hold forth and judge the acts and politics of the British bureaucrats and proconsuls in the light of these ideals; to ask them in the name of all that is best in the British character and British thought, to stand by them in their attitude towards India; and above all to educate slowly and to organise Indian public opinion in them.

These ideas are briefly expressed in the great mystical words which have been the dominant forces, in the life of modern civilized humanity, during the last two centuries; the words nationality, equality, constitutional rights and liberties, justice, democracy. The Moderates, however, were practical politicians and not doctrinaire philosophers; they were entirely unlike the metaphysicians of the French Revolution who tried to destroy and reconstruct a great society on a *priori* dogmas. They had profoundly assimilated the great conservative wisdom so eloquently set forth by Burke

in his thoughts on the French Revolution. They believed with Burke that politics is unlike metaphysics or mathematics; but a matter essentially of compromises between right and wrong, expedient and inexpedient. "Nothing universal," said Burke, "can be rationally affirmed on any moral or any political subject. Pure metaphysical abstraction does not belong to these matters. The lines of morality are not like ideal lines of mathematics. They are broad and deep as well as long. They admit of exceptions, they demand modifications. These exceptions and modifications are not made by the process of logic, but by the rules of prudence. Prudence is not only the first in rank of the virtues political and moral but she is the director, the regulator, the standard of them all." The Moderates made use of the concepts of liberty and nationality, for example; but they were never mastered by them. They used them as tools, as serviceable instruments suited to a particular occasion, subject to certain limitations. They never pressed for the logical application to the bitter end of any principle however great. They were not mere matter-of-fact politicians, or opportunists who were merely interested in setting a situation temporarily right by any methods, right or wrong; they were political thinkers, who did derive their inspiration from great principles, but who knew the limits of the application of those principles to specific cases. Here again Burke brings out their attitude most excellently. "I never govern myself, no rational man ever does govern himself—by abstractions and universals. I do not put abstract ideas wholly out of any question, because I well know, that under that name I should dismiss principles; and that without the guide and light of sound, well-understood principles, all reasonings in politics, as in everything else, would be only a confused jumble of particular facts and details, without the means of drawing out any sort of theoretical or practical conclusion. A statesman differs from a professor in an university; the latter has only the general view of society; the former—the statesman—has a number of circumstances to combine with those general ideas, and to take into his consideration. Circumstances are infinite, are infinitely combined, are variable and transient. He

who does not take them into consideration is not erroneous, but stark mad...he is metaphysically mad." The Moderates never forgot that these concepts are abstract; that abstractions like liberty and equality are powerful instruments both for good and evil; that they should be used with caution and with a full regard for time, place, and circumstance. It is circumstances, as the high priest of conservatism has taught, which give to every political principle, its distinguishing colour and discriminating effect.

The Moderates were clever lawyers; they knew how to construct a case as brilliant advocates do; they used largely these concepts and abstractions because and in so far as they were used by their British masters. Their appeal always was to actual, historical facts and declarations and not to abstract sentiments or principles. We do not find in the Congress literature any elaborate discussions about the nature of representative government or its limitations. We do not find any scientific or philosophic discussions of the nature, value, and limits of the doctrine of nationality or the doctrine of equality. The Liberal leaders never bothered their heads much about the philosophic basis of their fight, about the first principles of their subject. This absence of a strongly theoretical note may deprive their utterances of much speculative value; but it gives their utterances a severely practical and realistic character. Their whole effort consisted in trying to find out the precise limits of applicability at each stage of these great principles both in the social and the political system of the day.

They took their stand upon the principle of equality; but by equality they meant equality between Indians and Englishmen. They fought hard against the principle of racial discrimination in the sphere of justice; look at their attitude in the Ilbert agitation. The Congress was not born then; but the Congress spirit was there long before the Congress was formally started. They fought hard against racial discrimination in the distribution or award of the highest posts in the administration; hence their fight for the Indianization of the services. They were bitter against the Arms

Act partly because there was racial discrimination there. They wholeheartedly joined the struggle of the Indian Emigrants against the Colonial governments, again because it was a fight against the principle of racial discrimination. They agitated incessantly for the institution of simultaneous examinations for the Indian Civil Service, both in India and England for the same reason. Thus, they derived their inspiration from the abstract dogma of equality in a way, but in doing so they did not appeal to any theoretical equality, but to the equality promised to them in the Queen's Proclamation, or in the Charter Acts. It was a historic right, born out of historic occasions. It was not an abstract equality, but an equality in one sphere applied with regard to the relations between Englishmen and Indians.

Another principle for which they fought was that of liberty. Here again they deliberately interpreted liberty as that demanded by them in the political and the economic sphere. They wanted liberty of free criticism, subject to certain well-defined limitations. The right of free expression should be allowed in India in the same way and to the same extent as it was allowed in Great Britain. Thus, in a way, the principle of equality was partly at the back of this demand too. They would certainly welcome, justify, even demand Government action if they thought that in a particular case the right was grossly abused or, in general, if a state of things existed bordering on rebellion or active resistance to authority. But general restrictions on a Free Press in the name of imaginary danger, or the passing of Acts, like the Defence of India Act, again in anticipation of wide, lawless movements, they deprecated, all that put too much power into the hands of petty officials, all that interfered too much with the normal expression of free opinion, all that involved too great a threat to the continuance of the peaceful, undisturbed life of the masses, all that created more trouble, more discontent, more disaffection than it cured. The Congress always fought for the principle of free speech and free association. Criticism of the bureaucracy in a country like India was the only guarantee against a too great usurpation of power



or a too indiscriminate use of it at the hands of officials. There was no Parliamentary Government in the country and there was no responsible opposition in the Councils. How then were the people to express themselves? It was useless, it was mischievous, it might be fatal to disregard all criticism as the work of designing, disgruntled, irresponsible mischief-mongers, or of traitors who were always trying to run down and, if possible, to subvert the existing order. The supercilious attitude of the bureaucracy, which always congratulated itself upon its official infallibility, was the greatest bar to all progress in India; and the Congress leaders certainly did well in trying to safeguard the elementary right of public citizens to express in a perfectly legitimate and constitutional fashion all that they felt about the Government and its measures from time to time. Thus, K. T. Telang wrote criticising the Vernacular Press Act of Lord Lytton: "It appears to us to be a descent from the higher level of political status which under the wiser British Government we had already reached, into the slough of patriarchal rule and personal government. If there was one thing more than another which an advocate of the British Government could point as marking unmistakably the superiority of it to bygone Governments, it was after the liberty of speech and thought, this reign of law which is now become to a considerable extent a theory of the past under the provisions of the Gagging Act.

"We believe, we cannot yet rule ourselves, and we believe that we cannot get any foreign rulers as good as the English. Wishing then as we do, from whatever motives, for the continuance of the British rule, we are extremely anxious that our rulers should do everything which they reasonably and properly can and may do, to keep the people at large contented, for in the last resort, as eminent British statesmen have always maintained, it is on the contentment and good-will of the people that the British Empire can rest most securely. Therefore, it must keep itself fully informed of the wants and feelings and thoughts of their subjects. And by the necessity of the case, they

being foreigners in the land, they can have few better sources of information than the newspapers and journals written by persons who, as being themselves of the people, necessarily know a great deal about the people. We venture to say in spite of the boast, that the ruling race has not yet succeeded in understanding us."

Such was their rationale of the principle of liberty, of free speech, and free association. The same principle of liberty they demanded in the sphere of government. By political liberty they did not mean the emancipation of India from British or foreign rule. This was not the type of negative freedom for which they were fighting. They demanded the right of free expression not merely in the Press and on the platform, but also in the councils of Government, and for the same objects. The wishes, the interests, the feelings, and the thoughts of the people should enter materially into Government policy, for no Government could rest securely except upon the basis of the contentment of the Governed. Here they took their stand upon a fundamental principle of all sound political thought, that the Government exists for the governed, and not *vice versa*. The primary justification of any Government is that it promotes the happiness and well-being of the people. This is the right basis of all rule. Whatever may be the origin of the Government, whether it is conquest or peaceful penetration or usurpation or transfer, it must be based not on mere might, the sword of the conqueror, but on the contentment of the people. This being granted, the next question is who is to decide what is for the good of the people and how? The Indian Liberal did not quarrel with the British Government merely on the ground that it was a foreign government; but on the ground that it chose to maintain deliberately its foreign character. In other words, it chose to rule the people arbitrarily from above, in obedience more to the wishes and interests of the British people and less to the wishes and interests of the Indian people. It derived its mandate from the British Parliament; and it had to carry out that mandate in a

spirit of perfect loyalty to the real masters. The very nature, position, constitution and functions of the Government of India disqualified it from being the genuine spokesman and champion of the interests of the people of India. Its character must be, therefore, very much altered before it could place itself in genuine contact with the mind of the people. The Indian Liberal argued that, in the abstract, one might or might not agree whether Governments existed always for the governed or not; but the British had laid down their policy in the clearest terms in the Queen's Proclamation, as well as in other great official utterances, and that they were obliged to base their policy on this principle. The next question then was: how were they to know what the best interests of the Indian people were? What were their feelings and wishes? Here lay the rub. Unless, therefore, the representatives of the people were called into counsel it was impossible for the rulers to know the inside of the mind of the Indian as regards their acts and policies. The Indian demand for political liberty during these years of a Liberal Congress meant in the first place the establishment of genuine representative institutions in the country, which should place in an authoritative form the people's point of view in all affairs before the Executive. Secondly, it meant that its expression should be effective in all internal matters. Instead of the Councils being the bodies to register the will of the Government, the Liberals wanted the Government to register the country's will as expressed by its chosen representatives. This they called Self-Government.

The problem, however, immediately arose as to the basis of a representative system. Here appeared another great principle which they went on asserting—the principle of nationality. A democratic system was the government of a people, for a people, by a people. But who constituted the people? Self-Government was a great formula: but the question arose as to where that self of India was and how was it to be located? These problems were bristling with difficulties, both theoretical and practical, for all peoples and also for India. The Indian Liberals were bold

enough to assert their faith that India was no longer, if ever it was, a mere geographical expression or a congeries of loosely-knit peoples at various stages of culture and divided by various lines, racial, linguistic, religious. The basis of their whole creed was the belief that there had arisen or there was in process of formation a new entity called the Indian nation. The Congress represented the first great attempt to organise the whole of India on the basis of a common nationality. Here was a nucleus of a future self-governing India. Here was a platform, where the best brains of the country met and talked and discussed together their common problems. Here, year after year, the Government policy was analysed, dissected, criticised from a national point of view. Here were formulated common policies, common programmes for the acceptance of the Government and the people.

The Indian Liberals boldly assumed that the Indians had practically become one single nation, with a single purpose and will of its own. Indian nationalism was born at last, with the birth of the Congress. It had also grown with its growth and strengthened with its strength. This Indian nationalism became more and more vocal, more and more assertive. There was, therefore, a demand for the expression and fulfilment of the essential needs of this new-born child. In the political sphere, the demand first for representative and then a qualified form of responsible government was made on behalf of this newly awakened political entity, called the Indian nation. In the economic sphere, the same Indian nation demanded that it should be allowed to live its life in its own way, that it should be allowed to formulate and carry out a genuine national economic policy, which would conserve and develop the best national interests. Hence the demand for fiscal and financial autonomy. The Indian Liberal thus boldly stood out for a policy of economic nationalism as opposed to the policy of British economic imperialism. The fight for Swadeshi, the demand for protection, the demand for a reconstruction of the currency and financial system, the struggle for the industrialisation of the country, were all meant to further this

policy of economic nationalism. The root of the whole fight was the conviction that India was primarily for the Indians, that Indian interests should not be sacrificed at the altar of imperial or international interests, that India having found her own soul, was next demanding a perfectly genuine fulfilment of the essential needs of that soul.

The Liberals laid the foundation of a school of independent political and economic criticism in the country. That Indian problems are to-day increasingly studied from an Indian point of view is due to them. The spirit which demanded passive acquiescence in and active loyalty to the powers that be, now disappears from Indian life. India no longer accepts a vegetable existence; is no longer content with receiving more and more of good and enlightened administration. The patriarchal ideal of Government now gives way to a more arduous democratic ideal. Democracy as an ideal is accepted definitely by this generation of Congressmen. Democracy brings with it not only additional privileges but additional responsibilities. The problems which never appeared on the horizon under the old forms of Government now appear in hydra-headed form. But there is no going back.

The Indian Liberals did not for a moment think that mere agitation for reform would bring with it the necessary aptitude for it. Agitation, however, goes a great way towards preparing the public mind for great changes. Agitation, nevertheless, must be constitutional agitation, to be carried on ceaselessly both within the Councils and outside them. The insistence on and the application of constitutional methods of agitation was one characteristic and valuable part of the Indian Liberals' work. They had very great faith in the instrument of persuasion. They assumed that the British Government was made up of rational beings who required merely to be intellectually convinced of the necessity of liberalising Indian administration, both in their own interests and in the interests of the people of India, in order to be moved to do the needful. They had complete faith in the intrinsic reasonableness of their cause and they thought that they should

put their case properly again and again and hammer it into the consciousness both of the Indian people and the British Government. They, therefore, took great pains in mastering the facts of the case and presenting it in a very sober, well-balanced form before the public. Ceaseless knocking was bound to have its effect and if the same thing were shouted again and again, the mind had to respond to it. The searchlight of public criticism meant perpetual vigilance on the part of the leaders: and this criticism and this vigilance were sure to tell upon the mind of the administrators.

The weapon of constitutional agitation was meant not only to rouse the conscience of the Government, but also of the people. The whole structure of a democratic government which the Liberals were trying to rear in India, depended upon the active and vigorous public opinion of the country. It was one of the functions of Congress propaganda to rouse the interest of the people in public questions, to acquaint the public mind with the essential facts of the case, to equip it with the necessary arguments, to enable it to see questions in their proper perspective. Here the Liberals trusted largely to education to bring about gradually the necessary change in the mind of the people.

Constitutionalism further implied the active association of Indians, as opportunities developed, with all branches of political work, administrative and legislative. Parliamentary and administrative traditions do not grow up in a day. The Indian Liberals always advocated the fullest use of all available opportunities in local bodies, in the Legislatures, in high Government posts or in the Executive Councils, in order that Indians may get the necessary training for the successful running of these institutions. These opportunities were not to be considered as merely crumbs thrown to us, or sops to our spirit of grab, lust for power: but they were essentially means of training and bringing into full play our moral and intellectual qualities for great public tasks.

Constitutionalism therefore contemplated peaceful develop-

ment of the people in the great tasks of modern democracy. The sense of responsibility must grow. The Government must not be looked upon as an alien agency meant only to be destroyed by any means: it was something into which we had to grow by patient effort and discipline. The Government further was absolutely essential, with its prestige and force, to this process of peaceful development; it should not be, therefore, run down in a spirit of light-heartedness. As Gokhale once put it, "Why, my Lord, even if I could defeat the Government to-day, I would not do it. I would not do it for this reason: the prestige of the Government is an important asset at the present stage of the country and I would not lightly disturb it." Here is that sense of responsibility which fully realized that the prestige of the Government was absolutely vital to any process of slow, organic change. It must be said that the Moderates really formed His Majesty's Opposition because, although they had no hope of coming into power in the near future, they still behaved on the assumption that power might be some day transferred to the people's representatives, and, therefore, they never indulged in wild or irresponsible criticism.

The Indian Liberals accordingly stressed the necessity of law and order as much as the necessity of liberty. They were never tired of praising the British Government for the blessings of peace and order which it conferred upon India, because they knew too well that anarchy only led to despotism, and that peace and order were the only soil in which freedom could grow. The strongest point of Indian Liberalism was that it never allowed its passion for liberty to extinguish its love of order, or its passion for order to extinguish its love of liberty. This I believe to be the heart of their constitutional and political theory. The Imperial school was equally eloquent as regards the enormous utility of law and order: but often forgot that they are the conditions of life, but not life itself. The Liberals' love of order was of a different character; they stood for change, but peaceful, healthy, orderly change; and as order was absolutely necessary for this development, they stood by peace and order. A policy of coercion might

be occasionally necessary; but if there were widespread discontent, Government could not be permanently carried on by methods of repression. "There is only one way in which the wings of disaffection can be clipped and that is by the Government pursuing a policy of steady and courageous conciliation."<sup>213</sup>

National self-government, autonomous in all internal affairs, autonomous as regards its economic policy, to be attained gradually by methods of peaceful persuasion, universal education, and constitutional agitation was the goal of the Indian Liberals. But it must not be imagined that the Indian Liberal was confusing democratic forms with democratic realities. It is easy to set up forms of Parliamentary Government; it is not so easy to develop the democratic spirit necessary to run them. As Herbert Spencer puts it: "The forms which freedom requires will not of themselves produce the reality of freedom in the absence of an appropriate national character any more than the most perfect mechanism will do its work in the absence of a motive power." In the same spirit K. T. Telang writes: "An elective system is only machinery, and to derive good results from it, it must be worked by good men. An elective system does not create good electors, or good representatives. On the contrary, good representatives, good electors, and a good system of election are three factors to a considerable extent dependent on each other, which only in combination yield the best results. Therefore, if a good system of election were conceded by the rulers the duty which we shall have to discharge will be all the greater and more exacting."<sup>214</sup> It is this consciousness of the fundamental requirements of a genuine democratic system together with the consciousness that Indians were really yet very far from having attained them, that made the Indian Liberals sober and restrained in their demands, made them insist upon a period of gradual preparation for each stage of political freedom, and made them ready to utilise every available avenue of perfecting national character open to them.

National self-government was to be reared on the basis of



national wisdom, national character, and national strength. It was impossible for Indians to run such a system successfully without these basic qualities. The difficulties of Indians are, said Telang, "in us, they are not outside of us but inside us. They are in our inertia, in our weakness, in our physical inability to sustain hard work." Real progress consisted in the strengthening of our moral fibre, in the development of the muscle, character, and the spirit of self-sacrifice in the average man; in the growth of the intellectual capacity to grasp thoroughly the essentials of our situation and the moral capacity to persevere in the country's cause unflinchingly till the ends were attained.

The Liberals realised that unless the nation accustomed itself to place national rights above individual rights, and individual as well as national duties, before both individual and national rights, a democratic government would be a veritable mockery. Hence the Liberals in their heart of hearts always believed that the foundations of a political democracy should be laid in a sound social system. This consciousness was always there in the minds of the Liberals: the political reform movement and social reform movement were practically one: but the fight was carried on two different platforms with a view to facilitate concentration on each. A reconstructed political system presupposed a reconstructed social system: and even if it were possible for us to get a democratic political system without democratising our social system, it would not carry us very far unless we used that democratic political system to reconstruct our social system. The President of the 27th Congress concluded his speech with the following words: "Let us constantly bear in mind that there can be no real or solid political advance without social advance and spiritual regeneration. So long as the masses remain steeped in ignorance and the depressed classes are regarded as untouchable, so long as the mothers of families and the mistresses of households are kept without knowledge in the seclusion of the Purdah, not capable of participating in intellectual pursuits or public matters, so long as class is divided against class, race against race,

and clannishness and sectional selfishness sway the actions of the members of the different communities, so long as true brotherly feeling and devotion to duty do not become the main guiding principles of our life, so long shall our aspirations remain mere dreams. It is only when Indians become a virile nation whose intellectual powers and practical capacities are expounded by knowledge and training, amongst whom the moral virtues of truthfulness, courage, faithfulness, industry and perseverance have been fully developed and whose whole life is dominated by patriotism and duty, it is only then that our beloved Motherland will become:—

'...the land that freemen till,  
That sober-suited freedom chose,  
The land where girt with friends or foes,  
A man may speak the thing he will.  
A land of settled government,  
A land just and old renown,  
Where freedom broadens slowly down,  
From precedent to precedent.'"<sup>215</sup>

The Indian Liberals thus deeply believed that the State as well as Society was an organism. Like all organisms, its various parts and activities were inter-related. Like all organisms, it underwent change in response to change in environment. But these changes, to be really useful, had to be slowly worked up into the body and the spirit of society. Any precipitateness, therefore, was bound to recoil upon the heads of the actors. The Government sponsors also pleaded for patience and for slowness of all change: but this attitude was often inspired not by any respect for the deeply organic character of Indian society, but by Imperial necessities. The Indian Liberals' attitude appeared to be similar: but it was profoundly different. To them Indian society appeared to be a historic growth, not to be easily or properly manipulated at the will of impatient reformers into any or every shape. They did believe that it was not yet dead; that it had great possibilities before it in the future. They did believe that

the impact of the British meant one of those race and culture contacts fraught with great potentialities both for good and for evil to the East. It is the duty of the leaders of society in India to understand the value of the old as well as the new forms and to attempt the necessary changes in the old forms with a view to assimilate the best in both and then to recast the whole, in order that it might be fitted into the great process of modern civilisation. But these transplantations of institutions which they contemplated meant necessarily slow and cautious steps: because time must be allowed to let the spirit of the new civilisation sink into the soil. How could it be reasonably expected that a great society would cast off suddenly its age-long forms and adopt new ones? All reform, therefore, had to be evolutionary and not revolutionary and each forward step must be cautiously taken in order to avoid unpleasant reactions. This theory of society was at the basis of their political creed

Nevertheless, they wanted things to move as rapidly as possible; and they desired that in all these transformations the State should give a very active and vigorous lead. Here their Liberalism had shaken off the old negative view of the liberty of the individual and the external relationship of the individual to the State. Their whole intention was to bring the State and the individual into as organic and close relationship as possible. They wanted the State not merely to keep the ring fence, within which the forces of unregulated individualism might have free play. They, therefore, attacked furiously the "laissez faire" theory of the Government and demanded that it should reflect the most advanced mind of the country in its economic and social policy, and so lead the rest of the country towards the goal set before it by its own highest political and social intelligence. The liberty of free exchange had meant disaster to Indian industry; and they wished the State to control this play of unbridled competition, which in the name of liberty was bringing ruin to the country. The State must educate, must organize, must lead and must weave into a coherent, powerful, well-knit personality all the scattered

forces of modern Indian society. But in order that the State in India might be duly qualified for this purpose, it had to be completely democratised.

The great task that faced the Indian Liberals was the reconciliation of this Indian democracy with British Imperialism. But they had no misgivings on this point. In their theory the one implied, and was indispensable to, the other. It is the Imperial ideal which formed the coping stone of their political and social theory. They were nationalists because they were imperialists and they were imperialists because they were nationalists. Their faith in the Empire was unbounded. They felt that the Empire at its worst would still be indispensable for the maintenance of the outer fabric of law, order, and civilisation without which no progress was possible. The country must be adequately safeguarded against chaotic civil and communal struggles and designing invaders from without. The *Pax Britannica* and all that it implied was vital to the existence and development of the New India. The influence of British administrative institutions and of British education would of itself bring about the gradual transformation of the country's whole social system. But the Empire at its best could work miracles. The State then would not be a mere agency for the promotion of order but an agency also for the fullest development of liberty and culture in all directions. The British State in India was no arbitrary freak or fancy of a cruel Providence. Its very foreign character was a blessing in disguise: it gave it that detachment, that vantage-ground of superiority over all the warring castes and creeds. Its Western character again was a positive recommendation; it made it the harbinger of the new light of science and organisation in the East. Its foreign and Western character served to bring India into active and fruitful contact with the multitudinous currents of the life of to-day. Its autocratic character enabled it to avoid being the tool of petty class or race influences in India. The Indian Liberals concentrated their energies, therefore, not on expelling the foreign government but on transforming it, so that without losing its foreign or Western or auto-

cratic character, it might yet be a real national government. The transformation of an Imperial government into a national government was the goal of all their ambitions; but they did not want it to lose its Imperial character.

What they prized most in the Empire was its modern progressive character. It was an embodiment to them not merely of order and peace and unity, but also of the ideal of liberty, of social, economic and political growth, of modern culture. The national ideal in India was not contradictory to the imperial ideal: it was the product of the imperial ideal. Whether the two ideals could develop side by side, each strengthening the other, depended upon the genius and statesmanship of the leaders of both countries. But the Indian Liberals would not easily give up their faith in the interdependence of the two ideals, because all their hopes and ambitions were bound up with it. The national ideal was born; but its further development required the fostering influence of the Empire. The moment the Empire withdrew prematurely without doing its work, that moment India might revert to the old life of petty religious and racial divisions. The Empire must be there to guard against India's escape into either particularism or solipsism. These were dreadful alternatives—the isolation of India and its plunge into medieval chaos. It was for the imperialists to see that the further stages of the growth of genuine Indian nationalism were insured till India attained complete political maturity.

Such was the vision which inspired and sustained the great Indian Liberals in those days, and who can say that it was not a beautiful and a splendid vision?



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## APPENDIX

### **Raja Ram Mohun Roy. (1772-1833)**

Came from a Brahmin family of Bengal; was married at 12, and was a polygamist; studied at a Madresa (Mahomedan seat of learning) 1784-1787; was persecuted at home for his heretical views and had to leave his home; later studied Sanskrit and English; wrote a book on monotheism in 1804; founded Brahmo Samaj in 1828; went as an ambassador to London from the Moghul Emperor, and died in England.

### **Mahadev Govind Ranade. (1842-1901)**

Came from a middle class Mahratta Brahmin family; took a first class in English in 1862; got a gold medal in History in 1865; and passed LL. B. in 1866; was Professor, Law Reporter, Subordinate Judge and ultimately became a High Court Judge in Bombay; wrote *History of the Mahrattas*, *Essays on Indian Economics*, and identified himself with the Indian Social Conference ever since its inception.

### **H. H. Shrimant Sayaji Rao, of Baroda.**

Born in 1863. This ablest and most enlightened Indian ruler to-day hailed from an humble Mahratta family; was invested with full powers in 1881; made education free and compulsory for both boys and girls, raised the marriageable age of boys and girls, and has been a pioneer in social legislation ever since; made Baroda a premier state by his foundation of the Central Library, the Baroda College, Kala-Bhavan; opened the Industrial Exhibition in 1902 and presided over the Indian Social Conference in 1904, and recently presided over the World Fellowship of Faiths Conference at Chicago and London.

### **Dadabhai Naoroji (1825-1917)**

This great Parsee leader is well called the "Grand Old Man" of India; was appointed Professor of Mathematics in 1854; started a Gujarati



weekly, *Rast Goftar*; went to England in 1855; gave evidence in 1873 before the Parliamentary Committee on Indian Finance, became the Dewan of Baroda in 1874; was elected the President of the Second Session of the Indian National Congress in 1886; was elected a member of the House of Commons in 1892; was appointed a member of the Royal Commission on Indian Expenditure in 1895; presided over the Ninth Session of the Indian National Congress at Lahore; published in 1901 his *Poverty and Un-British Rule in India*; became the President of the Indian National Congress for the third time at Calcutta in 1906.

**Gopal Krishna Gokhale. (1866-1915)**

Born a Mahratta Brahmin; took his B. A. in 1884; became Professor of History and Political Economy in the Fergusson College, Poona; worked under the guidance of Mahadeo G. Ranade; went to England in 1897 to give evidence before the Welby Commission on Indian expenditure; in 1900-1 was elected a member of the Bombay Legislative Council; became a member of the Supreme Legislative Council in 1902; went to England in 1905 as a delegate of the Congress and returned to preside over the Indian National Congress at Benares; went again to England in 1908 in connection with the Morley-Minto Reforms.

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