

INDIA
What Now?

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A STUDY OF THE
REALITIES OF INDIAN
PROBLEMS

by

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*"War and Agriculture," "Problems of
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To
ALL THOSE
ON WHOSE MORAL ATTITUDE
TOWARDS INDIA THE TRUE SOLUTION
OF HER PROBLEMS LIES, THIS
BOOK IS DEDICATED

PREFACE

The query which was chosen as the title of the book occurs in a story of a king named Bhartihari. "What," he asks, "if all your desires are fulfilled; what if you are able to subdue your enemies, or by your good fortune have gathered allies around you; what, even if you have succeeded in keeping mortal bodies alive for ages—what then?" The king thus emphasises the truth that "Man is greater than all these objects of his desire."

To me, my country is greater than all the political controversies and bargainings. To-day there confronts us an abyss of poverty so deep and dangerous, an ever-widening disharmony between the congeries of races and classes so fatal, and a bankruptcy of ideas in regard to the revaluation of our national life so conspicuous, that our primary task must be to embark upon a period of deliberate adjustments of our social and economic life. The organic elements that supply the compelling forces of integration and cohesion have to be assembled prior to the construction of a stable national polity. The dispute over political terms is non-essential. What really matters is to arrest the corrosive influence permeating the entire structure of our socio-economic life, and to let constitutional development evolve along such lines as would ensure healthy politics. "The fate of all reform in India, no matter what kind of constitution is now set up, will be decided, not in the political field," writes Sir Frederick Whyte,¹ "but by the reaction of

¹ *Future of East and West*, by Sir Frederick Whyte, the first President of the Legislative Assembly, India.

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Hinduism to the religion and science of the West." Ever since the beginning of reforms, we have been splitting hairs over political shibboleths; our demand is to build a twentieth-century constitution on a mediaeval social structure; and our organised privileged classes, in their anxiety to strike a bargain with the Government, not only confuse the issue with emotional interpretation, but ignore the realities of the situation supplied by an unbiassed picture of the Indian masses.

Bearing in mind these realities and the circumstances of the economic world, driven to-day almost to desperation by the vagaries of politics, one may indeed ask, What, if all the wishes of the propertied classes in India are conceded; what, if they are able to seize the supreme control over the machinery of the State; what, even if they succeed in gaining what is known as "Dominion Status"—what then?

In the following pages I have tried to depict the life and labour of the bulk of the Indian population, the last chapter of which is devoted to an attempt to understand the constitutional proposals from the point of view of the inarticulate masses. The book is not a treatise on Indian economics, but the problems relating thereto have been briefly discussed in order to furnish a background so necessary for grasping the stupendous difficulties that confront the future government of the country. A chapter is devoted to the position of the Depressed Classes.

For over six years the Government has been considering schemes for a new constitution for India. The reports of the various commissions, committees, sub-committees,

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and conferences have filled our bookshelves; declarations, debates, and letters to the Press continue to pour in from all sources. And yet many friends of India view with misgiving the advisability of introducing an untried and expensive constitutional experiment at this stage of her development. Has the time come for dividing India into a series of undeveloped federating units? Will they not add to the increasing complexities such as arise from a nascent democracy? If we go on stressing Provincial Autonomy and fail to stress coördination under a strong central Government, shall we not inevitably produce a state of affairs which may lead to chaos and confusion in that vast sub-continent already cursed with the communal dissension? Above all, in the constitutional proposals, does the good of the masses prevail over the interests of a privileged few?

No honest student of Indian affairs will deny that the needs of the great masses of the Indian peoples are economic and social rather than political. It is with that conviction this book is written, and I trust it will be a useful addition to the flowing tide of publications for the guidance of the British public in Indian affairs.

N. GANGULEE

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