



BHAVAN'S BOOK UNIVERSITY

**THE SOUL
OF
INDIAN HISTORY**

S. R. Sharma

GENERAL EDITORS
K. M. MUNSHI
R. R. DIWAKAR



BHARATIYA VIDYA BHAVAN, BOMBAY



What

Bharatiya Vidya Stands for

Bharatiya Shiksha must ensure that no promising young Indian of character having faith in Bharat and her culture Bharatiya Vidya should be left without modern educational equipment by reason merely of want of funds.

2. Bharatiya Shiksha must be formative more than informative, and cannot have for its end mere acquisition of knowledge. Its legitimate sphere is not only to develop natural talents but so to shape them as to enable them to absorb and express the permanent values of Bharatiya Vidya.

3. Bharatiya Shiksha must take into account not only the full growth of a student's personality but the totality of his relations and lead him to the highest self-fulfilment of which he is capable.

4. Bharatiya Shiksha must involve at some stage or other an intensive study of Sanskrit or Sanskritic languages and their literature, without excluding, if so desired, the study of other languages and literature, ancient and modern.

5. The re-integration of Bharatiya Vidya, which is the primary object of Bharatiya Shiksha, can only be attained through a study of forces, movements, motives, ideas, forms and art of creative life-energy through which it has expressed itself in different ages as a single continuous process.

6. Bharatiya Shiksha must stimulate the student's power of expression, both written and oral, at every stage in accordance with the highest ideals attained by the great literary masters in the intellectual and moral spheres.

7. The technique of Bharatiya Shiksha must involve—

(a) the adoption by the teacher of the *Guru* attitude which consists in taking a personal interest in the student; inspiring and encouraging him to achieve distinction in his studies; entering into his life with a view to form ideals and remove psychological obstacles; and creating in him a spirit of consecration. and

(b) the adoption by the student of the *Shishya* attitude by the development of—

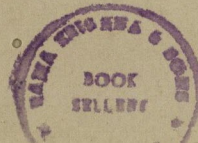
(i) respect for the teacher,

(ii) a spirit of inquiry,

(iii) a spirit of service towards the teacher, the institution, Bharat and Bharatiya Vidya.

8. The ultimate aim of Bharatiya Shiksha is to teach the younger generation to appreciate and live up to the permanent values of Bharatiya Vidya which flowing from the supreme art of creative life-energy as represented by Shri Ramachandra Shri Krishna, Vyasa, Buddha and Mahavira have expressed themselves in modern times in the life of Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Swami Dayananda Saraswati, and Swami Vivekananda, Shri Aurobindo and Mahatma Gandhi.

9. Bharatiya Shiksha while equipping the student with every kind of scientific and technical training must teach the student, not to sacrifice an ancient form or attitude to an unreasoning passion for change; not to retain a form or attitude which in the light of modern times can be replaced by another form or attitude which is a truer and more effective expression of the spirit of Bharatiya Vidya; and to capture the spirit afresh for each generation to present it to the world



आ नो भद्राः क्रतवो यन्तु विश्वतः ।

Let noble thoughts come to us from every side

—Rigveda, I-89-i

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By

S. R. SHARMA

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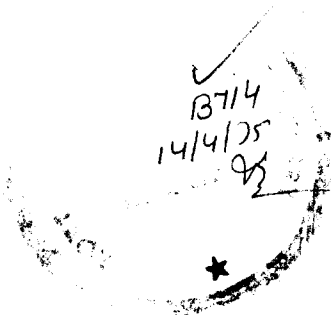
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GENERAL EDITOR'S PREFACE

THE BHARATIYA VIDYA BHAVAN—that Institute of Indian Culture in Bombay—needed a Book University, a series of books which, if read, would serve the purpose of providing higher education. Particular emphasis, however, was to be put on such literature as revealed the deeper impulses of India. As a first step, it was decided to bring out in English 100 books, 50 of which were to be taken in hand almost at once. Each book was to contain from 200 to 250 pages and was to be priced at Rs. 1.75*

It is our intention to publish the books we select, not only in English, but also in the following Indian languages : Hindi, Bengali, Gujarati, Marathi, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam.

This scheme, involving the publication of 900 volumes, requires ample funds and an all-India organisation. The Bhavan is exerting its utmost to supply them.

The objectives for which the Bhavan stands are the reintegration of the Indian culture in the light of modern knowledge and to suit our present-day needs and the resuscitation of its fundamental values in their pristine vigour.

Let me make our goal more explicit :

We seek the dignity of man, which necessarily implies the creation of social conditions which would allow him freedom to evolve along the lines of his own temperament and capacities ; we seek the harmony of individual efforts and social relations, not in any makeshift way, but within the frame-work of the Moral Order ; we seek the creative

* Since raised to Rs. 2.50

art of life, by the alchemy of which human limitations are progressively transmuted, so that man may become the instrument of God, and is able to see 'Him in all and all in Him.

The world, we feel, is too much with us. Nothing would uplift or inspire us so much as the beauty and aspiration which such books can teach.

In this series, therefore, the literature of India, ancient and modern, will be published in a form easily accessible to all. Books in other literatures of the world, if they illustrate the principles we stand for, will also be included.

This common pool of literature, it is hoped, will enable the reader, eastern or western, to understand and appreciate currents of world thought, as also the movements of the mind in India, which, though they flow through different linguistic channels, have a common urge and aspiration.

Fittingly, the Book University's first venture is the *Mahabharata*, summarised by one of the greatest living Indians, C. Rajagopalachari; the second work is on a section of it, the *Gita*, by H. V. Divatia, an eminent jurist and a student of philosophy. Centuries ago, it was proclaimed of the *Mahabharata*: "What is not in it, is nowhere." After twenty-five centuries, we can use the same words about it. He who knows it not, knows not the heights and depths of the soul; he misses the trials and tragedy and the beauty and grandeur of life.

The *Mahabharata* is not a mere epic; it is a romance, telling the tale of heroic men and women and of some who were divine; it is a whole literature in itself, containing a code of life, a philosophy of social and ethical relations,

and speculative thought on human problems that is hard to rival; but, above all, it has for its core the *Gita*, which is, as the world is beginning to find out, the noblest of scriptures and the grandest of sagas in which the climax is reached in the wondrous Apocalypse in the Eleventh Canto.

Through such books alone the harmonies underlying true culture, I am convinced, will one day reconcile the disorders of modern life.

I thank all those who have helped to make this new branch of the Bhavan's activity successful.

1, QUEEN VICTORIA ROAD,

NEW DELHI,

3rd October 1951

K. M. MUNSHI

P R E F A C E

INDIA is too rich and important a subject to be ignored. To understand her correctly is one of the vital needs of our time. This book seeks to acquaint its readers with the truth about INDIA in all things that matter: political, economical, social, and cultural. Though separate studies are available on each of these several aspects, there is hardly a volume which integrates all of them in a balanced and harmonious combination—and so concisely as attempted here.

Unimpeachable facts are the bricks of this edifice; the architecture aimed at is anciently modern; and the deity enshrined in it is Veracity—not verisimilitude.

Without disturbing the familiar anatomical structure, I have tried to present, as well as I could, the personality of INDIA in all its vital aspects derived from an essentially spiritual nature. I have endeavoured to give a picture whose truthfulness may not be impugned by those who have carefully studied the facts, and at the same time to evoke, through colour and intonation, interest in the minds of those who have little liking for mere “matter-of-fact” history, however authentic its contents.

This chaplet of twenty-five chapters is offered to those who cherish the ideals nursed by INDIA during twice twenty-five centuries to fulfil her destiny. It is a garland of flowers culled from various gardens, and strung on the flimsy thread of my slender comprehension. If it should possess any attraction, it will be due to the inherent charms of the lily, the rose, and the lotus luckily found by the florist rather than to his skill in weaving them together.

Like the ancient Indian ‘lotus-lamp’ in our temples, this multi-flame candle is lit to throw some light on the noble figure of MOTHER INDIA whose image I have sought to illumine with my feeble fingers. I shall feel grateful if others

who may be drawn to the shrine trim the charring wicks, burnish the brass lamp, and add their own quantum of oil—as the pious do in the temple—and increase the total illumination.

My indebtedness to various source materials is obvious, and I crave the indulgence of all publishers on whose preserves I may have unwittingly poached without a specific *parvana*.*

INDEPENDENCE DAY
1956

S. R. SHARMA

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

I am thankful to Sri Brij Narain Agarwala of Messrs. Lakshmi Narain Agarwal, Publishers, Agra, for kindly permitting me to have the present reprint in the popular Bhavan books. I must also express my sincere gratitude to his late father, Lakshmi Narain Agarwal, and his late elder brother, Raj Narain Agarwal, for the original edition, styled as "India As I See Her."

I also heartily thank the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan for reprinting the book with its present title: "The Soul of Indian History".

S. R. S.

REPUBLIC DAY
1967

Ever since my boyhood, I have been fascinated by this India of ours. It has been a mystery often, a revelation sometimes, and the more I have sought to understand her the more I have been impressed by her powerful personality which has endured through the ages. In a sense, my life has been a quest, an attempt to understand this great motherland of ours with its infinite variety and its basic unity. No one who sees a part of India only and not the rest can have a full picture of her. No one who sees the present only and no realisation of the panorama of her past, can understand her, for our roots go deep down into the past of the history of man. Innumerable weeds have grown up from time to time. But they have never succeeded in uprooting those deep roots which have fashioned our destiny for good or ill. Out of that distant past, which is history, and the present, which is the burden of today, the future of India is gradually taking shape. We must have an intellectual understanding of these mighty processes of history. We must have even more, an emotional awareness of our past and present, in order to try to give a right direction to the future.

JAWAHARLAL NEHRU
(In *The Discovery of India*)

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INTRODUCING INDIA

Like the far-famed frescoes of Ajanta, India is a polychromatic unity. As those antique and variegated mural paintings depict in form, colour and tone, the several lives of Buddha (The Enlightened One), so the story of India unfolds through the centuries, a panorama of men and events, of changing moods and situations. In both, the frescoes and our narrative, there is a subjective unity which imparts to the objective diversity a unique significance and meaning. It is the purpose of this little volume to bring home to the reader that uniqueness in the creative idealism of India running through her outer realistic history.

Our annals run through at least five millennia and cover a sub-continent of enormous extent. India is as large as entire Europe west of the Soviet Union. To those familiar with the evolution of modern Europe the contrast presented by India will become readily intelligible. If the beginnings of Western civilisation are traced from the Homeric age, Indian civilisation had its birth more than fifteen centuries earlier. There is nothing in Europe today, excepting archaeological remains, to remind us of the pre-Homeric culture. In India, on the contrary, there has been no break in the continuity of civilisation from the Indus period (3000-2000 B. C.) to our own time. The following pages will, I hope, authenticate the validity of this claim with convincing evidence.

But contemporary Europe really owes very little even to Homeric Greece; certainly less than what India owes to her epics (the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*). Except intellectually, and in art and literature, the paganism of Greece and Rome has vanished from Christian Europe. In

epoch. After well nigh two centuries of disruption, she is now resuming her interrupted national growth, along her self-chosen path, in her own way, but in a totally changed world. In the past, she absorbed her foreign invaders or assimilated them culturally. That last synthesis was effected with the Muslims to an appreciable degree, but not completely,—as evidenced by the divorce of Pakistan. The British stood out socially, and remained exotics to the close of their regime. But their powerful impact brought about a fresh orientation in India's outlook. 'When light comes, it comes not only through the eastern window', says the poet. India to-day is alert and awake to all the vital currents in the contemporary world. Nevertheless she stubbornly refuses to be drawn into vortices repugnant to her millennial spiritual traditions. She will not lose her soul to gain the world. Her singular quest through the ages has been to realise herself. What that means will be revealed in the rest of this story of India.

II

A PRIMARY PEEP INTO THE PAST

Geography and Chronology are said to be the two eyes of History. It may be more appropriate to suggest that Space and Time are the warp and the woof of the texture of our existence. At any rate, it will be helpful to perceive the perspectives of our story along these two dimensions. The Present continually recedes into the Past, leaving its foot-prints on the sands of our memory. Since our national history is the memory of our race and country, we shall recall it in the mode of its genesis: its progression in space and time simultaneously.

The geographical vastness and diversities of India have given rise to the plausible-looking myth that her unity is

a concept of modern times. But these very factors are forgotten in relation to China, Russia and the U. S. A., which are vaster and not less varied in composition. Leaving out the U. S. A., which is a child of the eighteenth century, and even Russia, whose history was nebulous before the time of Peter the Great, only the antiquity of China is coeval with that of India. Though there were rebellious sub-states within the vast Celestial Empire, few outsiders denied the unity of China at any time. Her claims over Formosa today are based on the hoary tradition of national integrity. The sense of Indian unity is equally deep-rooted. A verse in the *Vishnu Purana* declares:

*Uttaram yat samudrasya Himadreshaiva dakshinam,
Varsham tad Bharatam nama Bharati yatra santatih.*

'Bharata-varsha is the name of that country which is the home of the race of Bharata, situated to the north of the (Indian) ocean, and south of the Himalayas.'

The same concept of India as a national entity is expressed in the phrase *asetuhimachala paryantam* which means 'from (Rama's) bridge to the Himalayas'. To unify this entire land in one political system was the ambition of every Indian prince worth his name. The *asvamedha* or horse-sacrifice was celebrated from the Vedic period onwards as an imperial ritual confirming the suzerainty of its performer. There are elaborate descriptions of this ritual in the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. A prominent mention of the sacrifice is also made in the inscription of Samudragupta (4th century A. D.) etched on the Asoka pillar at Allahabad. That epigraph sums up the exploits of the great Gupta emperor whose route of conquests closely followed that of Raghu (the ancestor of the hero of the *Ramayana*) as described by Kalidas in his *Raghuvamsa*. Even if we should reverse the view, and suppose that Kalidas used the recent historical campaign as the basis of his epic narrative, we have in that poem an eminent illustration of the interweaving of tradition and

India's destiny brought to her shores a new race of men from across the seas.

Foreign invaders had hitherto crashed into India like a tempest from the North-West. Now they came again from the farther North-West—namely Europe—but not through the mountain passes. The peoples of Europe had caught the gleam of her gold and the more alluring flavour of her spices. They sailed half round the earth to reach her, and fought deadly wars between themselves to possess her treasures. The English at long last came on top and sucked India dry. Their East India Company, founded in 1600, subjugated the whole of India in the course of a century (1757–1857), only to get itself extinguished one year later. When the British crown took over the Indian Empire, in 1858, a new era was promised. But its tardy fulfilment proved more irritating than a forthright denial. "Promises made to the ear were broken to the heart." While the moderate, or optimistic, or timid, elements in the country were temporarily satisfied, the younger "extremists" refused to be taken in. The snobbish and purblind regime of Lord Curzon proved the last straw. It lit the fires of boycott, and provoked even more radical violence on the part of patriotic freelances. But the orthodox National Congress refused to countenance anything beyond "constitutional agitation", until Mahatma Gandhi appeared on the scene. His genius for effective leadership—like that of George Washington in America—compelled the British at last "to deliver the goods". India was declared independent, on the 15th August, 1947,—190 years after the battle of Plassey which laid the foundations of British rule in Bengal.

The largely "bloodless revolution" of India will go down in history as a unique political phenomenon. No other nation had until then attained its freedom through such means. *Satyagraha* is a new Indian phrase in the vocabulary of mankind. It is in perfect consonance with the essential trends of our civilisation, the exalted basis of our culture. *

Satyameva jayate, 'Truth alone triumphs' is the crest-motto of India today. It is derived from the *Vedas*. It runs like a golden thread through the beads of our epics and *Puranas*. Likewise, the national standard of independent India derives its inspiration from the palimpsest of her past. Her history has been recast several times. But each revision has served to confirm her original Vision of Unity in the midst of diversity, Harmony in the midst of conflict. The *Bhagwa Jhenda* of the Hindus, and the Green Flag of the Muslims, are here wrought into a harmonious synthesis with the all-inclusive white of Truth. At its centre is the *Dharma-Chakra*, the Wheel of Righteous Law, which is also a symbol of progress.

The unchanging East is a Western fancy. Speaking only of India here, the continuity of her culture—envisaged in the above 'Peep into her Past'—is not a symptom of stagnancy or arrested growth. It is to be clearly noted that, in the essential things of the Spirit, India's Vision is sempiternal. It is rooted in her soul. The vicissitudes and trials of her fifty centuries of history have only confirmed her in her idealism. She has taken the challenges of time as the tests of her truth of vision. How she has stood like a rock in a surging sea will be progressively realised as we proceed with the story.

III

THE BRICK AND BRONZE BUILDERS

India is a land of paradoxes. The first paradox we meet with in her long history is found in the material foundations of her spiritual civilisation. But this paradox is only on the surface. For a closer acquaintance reveals to us a capacity for assimilation and synthesis which resulted in her essentially integral view of life. 'Material' and 'spiritual' are contrasted terms of our analytical

necessity an insensitive medium." But he is careful to add: "Reason has been shown to suspect that the later Hinduism, in spite of its Aryan garb, did in fact retain a little of the non-Aryan Harappan mentality and relationships, perhaps to a far greater extent than can now be proved. Paradoxically, it would appear that the Indus civilisation transmitted to its successors a metaphysics that endured, while it failed utterly to transmit the physical civilisation which is its present monument."

IV

INDRA, VRITRA, AND VARUNA

Race and Environment are the visible parents of cultures and civilisations, apart from 'the Divinity that shapes our ends'. The Indus valley is a good illustration of how a difference of race brought about a radical change in culture and civilisation,—environments remaining identical. The overthrow of Harrapa and Mohenjo-daro appears to have been the accomplishment of a new race of men who came from the north-west about 2000 B. C. These invaders have now come to be identified with the Indo-Aryans, both from literary and archaeological evidences. All these point to a sharp but unequal struggle between the native inhabitants and the aggressive Aryan immigrants who ultimately overwhelmed their weaker adversaries by virtue, not of superior numbers, but of superior weapons and vigour. The static and stagnant civilisation of the Harappans could not effectively resist the persistent pressure of the votaries of the *soma*-inebriated Indra, the war-god of the invading-Aryans.

The contrast between the new-comers and the older Indus people is much in evidence. The Aryans were destroyers of cities, not their builders. They were the creators of a magnificent literature, though 'illiterate',—un-

like the *dasas* or *dasyus* they overthrew. For over a thousand years after their entry into India, they do not seem to have cared to commit their marvellous compositions to writing. The palaeographic link between the undeciphered Mohenjo-daro script and the Brahmi and Kharoshti inscriptions of Asoka is yet to be discovered. Even the archaeological blank between the two is striking and eloquent of the essentially non-material basis of the Indo-Aryan civilisation. We are all but totally ignorant of the religion and spiritual aspirations of the pre-Aryan people of the Punjab, despite the rich "brick and bronze" legacy they left behind them, and their intriguing seal-amulets. On the other hand, notwithstanding the archaeological sterility of the Indo-Aryan Vedic age, we possess in its literary heritage a palpable picture, not only of its authors, but also of their gods and psychic lineaments. If the secular preoccupations of the Indus people left their gods in the lurch, the Vedic Aryans spiritualised every detail of even their secular life. The Vedic literature gives the lie to the modern superstition that religion is a drag on progress of every kind. On the contrary, the Harappans who had a flair for a largely material civilisation lagged behind, after they attained the maximum comforts their intelligence could conceive of. They lacked the wisdom and capacity to transcend their intellects. The Vedic Aryans on the other hand, possessed and revealed potentialities for a higher and more dynamic civilisation or culture which is still alive and inspires us even today. This is the outcome of a far more comprehensive genius than that displayed by the creators of the Indus civilisation.

There are no bricks or metal objects to tell us of the material culture of the Indo-Aryans of three to four thousand years ago. But we have their immortal literature: it comprises the four *Vedas* (*Rig*, *Yajus*, *Sama* and *Atharva*) which between them contain 20,500 *mantras* (verses). Of these a little over 10,500 *mantras* are in the *Rig Veda* alone; the remaining are shared between the other three

This earth is his, to him belong these vast and
 boundless skies;
 Both seas within him rest, and yet in that
 small pool he lies.
 Whoever far beyond the sky should think
 his way to wing,
 He could not there elude the grasp of Varuna the King,
 His spies, descending from the skies, glide all this
 world around;
 Their thousand eyes all-scanning sweep to earth's
 remotest bound.
 Whate'er exists in heaven and earth, whate'er
 beyond the skies,
 Before the eyes of Varuna the King unfolded lies.
 The ceaseless winkings all he counts of every
 mortal's eyes;
 He wields this universal frame as gamester
 throws his dice.

V

THE DASYUS OF DAKSHINAPATHA

Until recently the story of India was largely looked at from the northern latitudes, and as a corollary from the Aryan angle. South India (*Dakshinapatha*) and the Dravidians (*Dasyus* or non-Aryans) consequently suffered neglect as well as disparagement. But thanks to recent researches—archaeological, linguistic, and ethnological—the “contemptible *dasas*” of the *Vedas*, and “*rakshasas* and apes”, etc. of the Aryan epics and *Puranas*, are now coming into their own. The Indus excavations have, indeed, opened a new era in Indology and made it less partial to the northern conquerors. A closer study of Hinduism—particularly on its popular side—has revealed its indebtedness as much to Dravidian (non-Aryan) origins as to the Vedic.

The provenance of the Indus civilisation and culture is being steadily enlarged every year by fresh archaeological finds in surprisingly remote places. Characteristic Indus seals have been discovered, not only on a score of sites in Kathiawar, but also farther afield in the Ahmedabad district. A cylindrical seal found in Central India (now in the Nagpur Museum) points to wider contacts and affiliations abroad. In the opinion of competent experts, the specimens of gold; jade, and carnelion, used by the Indus workers, came from remote sources, including Mysore and South India. Intercourse with the South from very early times is, therefore, more than conjectural. The absence of the horse in the southern peninsula, until we come to historical times, is also a striking parallel with that of the pre-Aryan Punjab. The excavations of Arikamedu near Pondicherry (Puducherry, New Town), recently carried out, have disclosed brick warehouses strongly reminiscent of the Great Granaries of Harappa and Mohenjo-daro—though their antiquity may not be older than the first century A. D. But relics found there, as well as in other widely scattered places in the Deccan and South India, point to a very rich trade with the Roman Empire—which presupposes a long period of evolution. Its beginnings go back to neolithic and post-neolithic ages, leading down through the Indus period and the Vedic and post-Vedic centuries to the commencement of the Christian era and long after.

Dakshinapatha was ahead of Uttarapatha (North India) in one important respect, namely, the discovery and use of iron. Vedic Aryans used a "red metal" which they called *ayas*. It was only in later times that that came to signify iron in Sanskrit. But at Brahmagiri, in the Chitaldurg district (Mysore) neolithic tombs have yielded implements of the "black metal", black-and-red wheel-turned deramics, and other interesting relics. Megalithic sepulchres like those of Adichanallur show that urn-burials were also a mark of this culture. Huge stones surrounding these graveyards of antiquity have since received names derived from Aryan

Behold the men who follow the righteous way of him who burned away the desires of the five senses: Their days will be many upon this earth.

* * * *

Even the *Vedas*, if forgotten, can be learnt again: but, once fallen from virtuous conduct, the Brahman is fallen from his place for ever.

Obviously, these excerpts indicate a later inspiration than that of the *Rig Veda* whose *joie de vivre* has already yielded place to a Vedantic outlook, and the Buddhistic insistence on the purity of conduct. As the contacts between the two became more intimate, Aryan ideas and influences seeped into the south and made for a common Indian outlook. The universalism, as well as the idealism thus evolved, is reflected in the following lines of Namalvar—one of the greatest of Tamil saints:

The indwelling God is in all created things
 And in all the religions professed by man;
 It is vain to try to reach Him through the senses;
 And He defies mere intellectual understanding:
 Seek Him in the soul's sanctuary, the source of all life;
 In firm meditation, free from disturbing mundane thoughts;

And the Lord can be secured for ever.

Another saint proclaims:

From the knowledge of the *Vedas* you know
 that their essence is in the singing of Purushotama's praise;
 Is the *Vedas* are beyond you, poor people, know
 that the *Vedas'* cream is in the recitation
 of Madhava's name.

This transition to *Bhakti* is consummated in the last of the great Alvars. We find Tirumangai Alvar singing:

When you (Sri Ramachandra) met Guha, the boatman,
 you did not deem him ignorant, or strange, or of low birth, but

pitied him and showered upon him your godly grace. You said: "This my companion (Sita), with the shy deer's downcast eyes, is your companion as well: My brother (Lakshmana) is your brother too." When Guha wished not to be left behind, you added: "You are my friend,—bide here."

These words have come down the ages, and led my heart to your feet, O ocean-coloured one, Lord of Sri-rangam (so rich in its luxuriant shade).

This is a far cry from the secular civilisation of Mohenjodaro. The *Dasyus* of *Dakshinapatha* may have been distant cousins of the "brick and bronze builders" of the Indus valley; but they were not slow to imbibe the richer spiritual culture of the Vedic seers.

VI

THE SEEKERS OF SALVATION

From the sublime to the ridiculous is the range of the comments that are available on the religious philosophy of India. This is largely due to most scholars missing the wood in their preoccupation with counting the trees and assiduously noting the particulars about each one of them. Their lumbering lucubrations, consequently, fail to enlighten those who earnestly seek to know the mind and heart of India without being bothered with bewildering details. In the preceding pages we have taken a bird's-eye-view of India as she was evolving in the course of about thirty-five centuries (3000 B. C. to 500 A. D.). In surveying this long period, we first witnessed the very material foundations laid by the "brick and bronze builders" of Mohenjodaro and Harappa. But foundations, however solidly laid, give no idea of the architecture that is to arise out of the trenches filled with concrete materials. The next thousand years of Aryan occupation and expansion (2000-1000 B.C.) were full of potentialities whose nature

VII

THE SOLAR SAMRATS

Unity and continuity are the most outstanding features of Indian civilisation. Like the sun and the moon they are the twin lights which shine through the ages, from Mohenjodaro to our own time. Of these characteristics, Unity is the more obvious like the sun, and continuity appears superficially fitful like the phases of the moon, subject to waxing and waning. But, to the discerning understanding, the breaks are more apparent than real. The gaps are in our political history, not in our cultural evolution. The outer garment is rent at places, but the body that wears it is intact. In other words, the integrity of India, in matters relating to her inner life, has never been shattered,—though in her outer life she appears at times politically scattered. Even in this latter sense, her history is a record of continuous striving to achieve in the political sphere what she realised spiritually—in the realms of religion and philosophy. Just as in the *Vedas* she brought all her several earlier gods under the sway of one Prajapati or Brahman, so in her Epics and later we find her persistently pursuing the political ideal of a *Samrat* or Emperor to whom all minor princes and princelings should be formally subordinated. Evidently, the gods proved easier to subdue (in the interests of Unity) than men and princes! So, nothing short of an *Avtar* (incarnation of God) was called for to achieve the objective of unifying India from the Himalayas to Ceylon. He appeared in the person of Sri Ramachandra of the solar dynasty of Ikshvaku.

Ikshvaku is a name we meet with in the *Vedas*, as also a few others like Manu, Sudas, and Janaka of the *Upanishads*. Manu was the first of kings; Sudas was the victor in the 'Battle of the Ten Kings' (*Dasarajna Yuddha*); and Janaka

was the royal sage of Mithila (capital of Videha). They traced their descent from the Sun, who is not merely the deity invoked in the *Rig Veda* (under several names like *Aditya*, *Surya*, *Mitra*, etc.), but also universally acknowledged as the source of all life and activity. As *Mitra* (Roman Mithra), his blessings are sought (along with those of Indra, Varuna, etc.) in a peace-treaty between two Hittite tribes in Anatolia (c. 1400 B. C.). Akhnaton, Pharaoh of Egypt (c. 1375-58 B. C.), in a magnificent hymn, addresses the sun as "Aton, Creator of the World, King of Kings..... beginning of life", and goes on to say: "Thou art in my heart; thou hast made me wise, etc." This is analogous to the Vedic *Gayatri*, the best and noblest of Hindu prayers: "I invoke the effulgence of *Savitara* the God of Light: let Him stimulate our intelligence!" The earliest Indian example of the sun, as a worshipful symbol, is met with on some Mohenjo-daro seals. In more elaborate forms, medieval India built the Sun temples of Martand in Kashmir, and Konarak in Orissa. Today the Sun is daily worshipped in the open with obeisance (*surya namaskar*) and meditated upon with the Vedic *Gayatri* text for guidance.

Kalidas, in his delightful epic entitled *Raghuvamsa*, traces the descent of Shri Rama from Dilip. "His son Raghu, the performer of the great sacrifice called *Visvajit* (lit. world conquering)," he writes, "now reigns"; then he goes on to describe the conquests of Raghu, which covered the whole of India (with Ayodhya as his capital); and concludes with a reference to Raghu's retirement "eager to lead a peaceful life: for when there is one able to bear the yoke of the family, the scions of the solar race do no longer cling to the home." His successor was Aja (father of Dasaratha, Sri Rama's father) who bore "the yoke of the world equally with his father, like a young mettlesome bull linked to another broken to the yoke."

The *Ramayana* of Valmiki is *the Epic* of India *par excellence*: it is the *Adi kavyam* (even as *Om* is the first

is through *manolaya* (mind-liquidation), which can be achieved with the help of the *sastras* (scriptures) and a *guru* (spiritual teacher) and constant practice. "The Absolute Experience can be had," declares Vasishtha, "if one attains *samadhi* through thought-suspension." It implies *para-prajna* or transcendental intuition and a state of Ecstasy as Plotinus understood it: "It is a sinking into the Divine Essence with an entire loss of self-awareness. It is a possession of the Deity, a unity of life with him which defies all description and all that abstract thought can formulate."

The *digvijaya* of the Solar *Samrats* verily led them to a further quest which culminated in the conquest of self by the ineffable Absolute of the *Upanishads*.

VIII

DHARMA VERSUS DURYODHANA

The problem of good and evil is as old as the discriminating mind of man. This crucial question is tackled in a thousand different ways, and from a thousand different angles, by Vyasa in the 100,000 verses of the *Mahabharata* which is the larger of India's two magnificent epics. In it we meet with a number of names whose concatenation should prove a helpful preliminary to the unravelling of the rest of the story. Here we shall deal with the fortunes and vicissitudes of the Lunar dynasty which was complementary to the Solar *Samrats*. Its founder was Pururavas, whose marriage with Urvashi provided Sanskrit literature with one of its most romantic themes, on which, too, Kalidas exercised his matchless poetical genius. The Kauravas and Pandavas, who were collaterals (descended through Yayati), fought the Bharata war between them for the possession of the ancestral dominions. The immediate progenitor of the Kauravas was Dhritarashtra (who was born blind) and of the Pandavas, his younger brother

Pandu. The latter reigned, for obvious reasons, immediately; but not long after his premature death, the Kauravas acquired the throne by a ruse, and denied to the Pandavas even a moiety of their common patrimony. Patient and persistent endeavours for an amicable settlement having failed, war became inevitable. That struggle is the nucleus of the *Mahabharata* epic; but around it is woven a network of legends and moral and philosophical dissertations which have imparted to the work its enormous encyclopædic character. The immortal *Bhagavad Gita* was excogitated in this context, as a dialogue between Sri Krishna and Arjuna (the most distinguished of the younger sons of Pandu).

It is noteworthy that the social background and atmosphere of the *Mahabharata* are different from those of the *Ramayana*. Its author, Vyasa himself, is the son of *Satyavati*, a fisherwoman, by Parasara; and he becomes the father of Dhritarashtra and Pandu, by *niyoga* (levirate) with his step-brother Vichitravirya's widow. The Pandavas themselves are polyandrous, having Draupadi as the common wife of the five brothers. This last was certainly not an Aryan custom, though Vyasa's father, Parasara is described as a grandson of Vasishtha (the preceptor of Sri Ramachandra). A certain vein of heterodoxy ran through the lunar family. Pururavas (their eponymous progenitor) himself got killed for disturbing the sacrifices of some sages, though he himself had performed "a hundred *asvamedhas*." But despite this apparent heterogeneity and conflict, the inherent national tendency towards reconciliation and synthesis eventually triumphed. Vyasa's descent from Vasishtha (the high-priest of the Solar *Samrats*) is a pointer. The lunar suffix (*chandra*) to Sri Rama's name is also significant. Soma (moon) was the name of Pururavas' mother too. Sri Krishna, the lunar Yadava prince, was (like Sri Ramachandra) an incarnation of the same god Vishnu. Finally, Bharata (after whom *Mahabharata*) was the son of Sakuntala (daughter of Visvamitra) and Dushyanta (lunar prince). In the *Rig Veda*, Vasishtha is

absolutely alike! Often they seem to differ from one another as night from day; nevertheless they all agree on the practical utility of the *Gita*, which accounts for its universal popularity in and outside India. "When doubts haunt me, when disappointments stare me in the face, and I see not one ray of hope on the horizon," wrote Gandhiji in 1925, "I turn to the *Bhagavad Gita*, and I find a verse to comfort me; and I immediately begin to smile in the midst of overwhelming sorrow." The first to react in this identical way was, of course, Arjuna in the *Mahabharata*. After provoking Krishna by his confounded neurosis (in the 'zero hour' before battle) to propound the most stimulating and inspiring of gospels, in the end, the hero gratefully acknowledges:

"By your grace, O Lord, my delusions have been dispelled. My mind stands firm. Its doubts are ended. I will do your bidding."

Krishna did not work a miracle like a magician or a modern psychiatrist. He merely argued Arjuna into sense and action. That it meant war, involving slaughter of kinsmen, was due only to the accidental context. "Self-reliance and fulfilment of *svadharma*, surrendering all consequences to God," is the core of the teaching. This was also the message of St. Francois de Sales who (according to Camus) inculcated: "He who refers every action to God, and has no aims save His Glory, will find rest everywhere, even amidst the most violent commotions."

"Yoga", the *Gita* declares, "is skill in action." But it is not the merely physical adroitness of the acrobat. It is rooted in the tranquillised and harmonised mind. The *Gita* gives very detailed instructions for the attainment of this mental poise.

"Yoga is *equipoise*: Not attainable by him who eats too much, nor by one who starves himself: not by him who sleeps too little, nor by one who sleeps too long." For further enlightenment one should go to the *Song Celestial* itself.

“While the aspirant is ascending the altitudes of *Yoga*, he attends to action; when he has attained the summit, serenity is his means”.... To what? Certainly to the realisation of the Highest—the ineffable *Nirvana*. “The *Yogi*, ever united with the *Atman*, with the mind controlled, attaineth peace,—the supreme bliss that abideth in Me.”

This is also the Truth spoken of by St. Thomas Aquinas as “the last end for the entire universe; and the contemplation of Truth is the chief occupation of wisdom.”

IX

NIRVANA THROUGH NON-VIOLENCE

Buddha is the best known Indian abroad. He was a beacon of hope in a world full of conflict and conservatism. His followers in Asia today number millions, and there are Buddha Societies all over the world. 2500 years after his advent, a World Buddhist Fellowship has been formed to bring together Buddhists of all countries (Eastern and Western) in one Buddhist Brotherhood. It is well known that the source of all this far-reaching inspiration is India. Yet, paradoxically, it is equally well known that Buddhists in India—the land of Buddha’s birth—are a microscopic minority. What are we to infer from this “paradox”. That Buddha has been disowned by India? No. For India has absorbed him more truly and thoroughly than most other countries that count his followers in more impressive numbers. Buddhism is not “professed” by the millions in India today, but Buddha is accepted as the latest *avatar* (incarnation) of Vishnu, and his teaching has become an essential basis of India’s outlook and conduct—even more so than anywhere else, if this last criterion were to be applied. Since Mahatma Gandhi, she is the only country

ALEXANDER AND ASOKA

Two great conquerors: one of a type not uncommon in history, the other rare and unique in his character and idealism: Alexander had his imitators in Cæsar and Napoleon, but Asoka none to emulate him. Like the Jaina *Kevalin* and the "One without a Second" of the Vedantins, but on our terrestrial plane, Asoka stands all alone. Like Buddha he held that the chiefest conquest is not of lands by arms, but of men's hearts by love. Hence, he has been hailed as the greatest monarch known to history, especially because of his attitude towards war. As Professor H. G. Rawlinson remarked: "Two-hundred and fifty years before Christ, Asoka had the courage to express his horror and remorse at the results of a successful campaign and deliberately to renounce war as a means of policy, in spite of the fact that his dominions included the unsubdued tribes of the northwest frontier; and was able, in practice, to put an end to cruelty to man and beast, and establish complete religious toleration throughout India. Asoka fulfilled Plato's ideal of the State in which 'kings are philosophers and philosophers are kings'."

It is interesting to recall that Alexander who invaded India (325 B.C.), on the eve of the foundation of the Maurya Empire by Asoka's grandfather Chandragupta, had Plato's greatest pupil Aristotle for his teacher. That suggests a train of thoughts which may not be considered irrelevant in our present context. Alexander's Indian campaign proved abortive, and he died at Babylon in 323 B.C. An inquest on his failure, or abrupt retreat, is beyond the purview of our survey. We only seek to point our finger to the moon, and do not wish to dwell on it. It is more profitable to bathe in the moonlight than to undertake an exploration of the

moon's configuration. Alexander came and disappeared like a comet, leaving no trace of his flight over the Indian sky; yet he blazed a trail long enough to attract our attention to the western horizon which revealed planets of a brighter hue. He also reiterated the lesson that

The glories of our blood and state
Are shadows, not substantial things!

Buddha taught this truth in all his sermons, and more people cherish his blessed memory than even know the name of Alexander the Great. Not so of his tutor Aristotle, nor of the entire galaxy of the great masters who preceded Aristotle, the 'Father of Science'. Plato, Socrates, Pythagoras, Anaxagoras, Xenophanes, Zeno, Heraclitus and a host of other *Yavana* philosophers suggest how far the 'little candle shed its beams.' But whence came the light? The planets shine from the sun. India may truthfully claim: "*Before Abraham was, I AM!*"

The wisdom of the *Vedas*, the *Upanishads*, and the sermons of Buddha, is reflected by most of the early philosophers of Greece named above. The parallels are too close, numerous and significant to postulate accidental coincidences. The 'Know Thyself' of Socrates and his insistence on criterions of conduct, the doctrine of *Nous* which Plato paraphrased in dualistic terms (analogous to the Indian *jivatman* and *paramatman*), the Pythagorean belief in rebirth and practice of vegetarianism,— are only a few well known pointers to the sources of their inspiration. These do not appear fortuitous in the light of our knowledge of India's ascertained contacts with the 'Near Western World.'

These philosophical ideas flowed west, east and north, and fertilised the world. In the language of Buddha and the *Upanishads*, they are still current and proclaim their perennial popularity. If Buddhist missionaries acted as pioneers in their dissemination, the credit largely goes to Asoka, the greatest of Indian monarchs.

The empire over which Asoka ruled (273-236 B.C.) ex-

claim to be called *Priya-darshin* (of an endearing appearance) and *Devanam-priya* (beloved of the gods) was, therefore, well earned and adequately authenticated.

It is difficult to assess in concrete terms any ancient civilisation which has not left behind it palpable archaeological evidence. In the pre-Buddhist periods of our history we found at Mohenjo-daro and Harappa archaeology without literature, and in the Vedic and Epic times abundant literature without archaeology. It is only in the Mauryan age that, for the first time, we have a happy combination of the literary and monumental evidence,—and that mostly relating to Asoka. The numerous rock and pillar edicts of Asoka are scattered all over India, and help to determine the extent and boundaries of his vast empire. Their use of the *Kharoshti* script (written like the Mohenjo-daro pictographs from right to left) in the extreme N. W. and the Brahmi (*Proto-Nagari*) script everywhere else, is noteworthy. It is equally significant that the same Pali language was used without provincial variations in all parts of the country, at least for the purpose of official proclamations.

Of the architectural monuments very little has survived. But Fa-hien, at the commencement of the fifth century A.D., wondered whether “spirits had...executed the elegant carvings and sculptures” in what he saw of the ruins of the royal palace at Pataliputra,—“in a way no human hand could accomplish.” The Great Stupa of Sanchi, too, is supposed to have been at least commenced by Asoka. But of unequivocal Asokan workmanship are the marvellous monolithic pillars with their exquisitely polished surfaces and their varied symbolic capitals. One of these historic capitals—the Lion capital from Sarnath (near Banaras, where Buddha preached his first sermon)—has given India her national crest: the four lions facing the four directions, seated on an inverted lotus-bell, with a lion, a horse, an elephant and a bull, alternating with panels of the “Wheel of law” carved on the abacus. This “Wheel of Law” is also

the centre-piece of our national standard today. It represents the "Law of Love" first preached by Buddha in the Deer Park at Sarnath. Asoka earnestly strove all his life to propagate the *Dhamma* through his edicts and actions. He also expressed the hope that the "Law of Love" would "endure for a long time," and that his "sons, grandsons, and great-grandsons may similarly follow it for the welfare of the whole world!" India, reawakened and free, honours his memory, cherishes his dreams, and pursues his ideals in a world which needs amity and *ahimsa*, not less than did the world of Asoka.

XI

THE MAKERS OF MAHAYANA

Brihadratha Maurya was the last ruler of the house of Chandragupta. He was assassinated by his own Commander-in-chief, Pushyamitra, who founded a new dynasty called Sunga. That, in its turn, was succeeded by the Kanvas at Pataliputra, and the Andhras in the Deccan. The unity of India achieved under Asoka was rapidly lost; the Law of Love gave way to bloodshed. Fresh foreign invaders like the Bactrians (Greek), Sakas (Scythian), Pahlavas (Persian,) and Kushans (Turki), precipitated the disruption. But, as we have remarked before, they tore the outer garments of government, and to some extent even injured the social epidermis, yet left the deeper currents of life intact. That chaotic political interlude may be followed by interested readers in more orthodox histories; here we shall concentrate on the cultural trends, as we have done hitherto.

Pushyamitra inaugurated his regime with an *asvamedha* (horse-sacrifice) in the traditional way. That indicated which way the wind was blowing. The Kanvas and the Andhras (who came after the Sungas), too, were of the

He findeth not who seeks his own;
The soul is lost that's saved alone.

The *Pratyeka Buddhas* (of the old school), the reformists declared, sought individual *Nirvana*, whereas the Mahayanist view was as Mr. E. A. Burtt puts it paradoxically: "to renounce *Nirvana*, for oneself, in love for others, is to find oneself in *Nirvana*, in its real meaning." The Bodhi-sattva vows:

"I take upon myself... the deeds of all beings, even of those in the hells, in other worlds, in the realms of punishment... I resolve to bear every torment of every purgatory of the universe. For it is better that I alone suffer than the multitude of living beings. I give myself in exchange.. Truly I will not abandon them. For I have resolved to gain supreme wisdom for the sake of all that lives, so save the world."

In the ears of those who have not forgotten Yudhish-thira's refusal to enter Heaven alone—not even the dog being excluded!—this has an ancient ring. Indeed, as Professor A. A. G. Bennett has observed, "Buddhism in India did not put in a surprise appearance, so to speak, but represented the maturing of centuries of devoted thought, idealistic and logical. The 'time-worn' concepts underlying Buddhist teaching were entirely of Indian development." Beginning as a particularly ethical reaction to the theological obscurantism of the *Brahmanas*, and the metaphysical mysticism of the *Upanishads*, under Mahayana auspices, we witness both theological and metaphysical developments, not unlike the rejected Brahmanical inheritance. In the *Vajrayana* and *Zen* forms, Tantric occultism, and Japanese obfuscations, too, entered the ancient House of Buddha. But these were also deeply tinged with an esoteric wisdom bordering on the advaitic mysticism of the *Upanishads*. "The self is silence!" (*upasantoyam atma*) puts this aspect in a nutshell. The *sunyavada* of

Nagarjuna, rightly understood, is identical in essential import with the Vedantic Ineffable:

*aparapratyayam santam
prapanaciraprapancitam
nirvikalpamanarthametata tadvasya
laksanam.*

'*Sunyata* is to be realised within oneself, and cannot be communicated. Its character is calmness or quiescence. It cannot be expressed in words, nor conceived by the intellect,' etc. 'From where speech retires baffled along with the mind' is the parallel Upanishadic dictum.

Finally, Mahayana was prophetic of the Bodhisattvas, Buddhas and Tathagatas to come. Maitreya is the most attractive and amiable of these anticipations. But even this prognostication is to be found in the pre-Mahayana *Digha Nikaya* of the Pali Cannon. In it Buddha is said to declare:

Metteyya Bodhisatta, a fully Enlightened One, a World Knower, a Teacher of the *devas* and mankind... shall proclaim the Norm, lovely in its beginning, lovely in its middle, and lovely in the end thereof. He shall make known the wholly perfect life of righteousness in all its purity, both in the spirit and in the letter of it, even as I do now.

XII

THE GLORY OF THE GUPTAS

The age of the Guptas, like that of Pericles in Greece, was an age of fulfilment. Under Vikramaditya (375-415 A.D.), the third ruler of the Gupta dynasty, India reached the zenith of her ancient glory. Political power, cultural creativity, and the amplitude of India's peaceful expansion abroad, combined to produce a consummation that

ments were light; and no capital sentences were awarded, amputation being the drastic penalty for the most serious offences. Buddhist ceremonial processions were popular and Brahmanas too participated in them. One of Fa Hien's Chinese companions, Tao-Ching, was so enamoured of India that he decided to permanently remain in this country and attain *nirvana* here! The monks in Madhyadesha, he observed, kept the rules "even in the midst of worldly influences." The extent to which the teachings of Buddhism permeated the masses and society in general is indicated by Fa Hien in these words:

The people of this country kill no living creatures, nor do they drink intoxicating liquors; and, with the exception of the *chandalas*, they eat neither garlics nor onions. . . In this country they do not keep swine or fowls; they do not deal in living animals, nor are there shambles or wine-shops round their markets. . . The *chandalas* alone go hunting and dealing in flesh.

XIII

THE HERITAGE OF THE HINDUS

The heritage of the Hindus is as hoary as Harappa and Mohenjo-daro, as rich and exalted as the Himalayas, and as variegated as the vernaculars, or the sartorial styles in India. Nevertheless, it has the integral unity of the Indus civilisation, the persistence and stability of the 'Abode of Snows', and the basic kinship and coherence of the speech and dress patterns of the sub-continent. It is neither wholly Aryan, nor wholly Dravidian; neither wholly religious, nor wholly secular. It is a sober synthesis of all these elements; and its attitude is one of assimilative acceptance, not of indiscriminate rejection. It is neither so idealistic as to be

unpractical, nor so sordidly, "matter of fact" as to make it unspiritual. The selective overtones placed by some writers on partial components of this complex heritage has led to 'the seven blind men reporting on the elephant': the reality is neither like a rope, nor a pillar, nor a fan! We shall look at the living *ensemble* as a whole.

Having acquainted ourselves with the esoteric heights of the Hindu heritage, as revealed by the *srutis* (*Vedas* and *Upanishads*), we shall now descend to the plains of the popular literature which mirrors the minds of the masses. In so doing, we may not forget that the Ganga, Jamuna and Brahmaputra, which fertilise the plains of Hindustan, derive their rich liquid resources from the perennial snows of the Himalayas. Even so, the *Puranas*, the *Panchatantra*, *Hitopadesa*, etc., draw their inspirations from the wisdom of the *Vedas*, the *Upanishads*, the *Smritis* (law books), etc. The Hindu *Puranas* (lit. 'ancient lore') have their analogues in the Buddhist *Jataka* stories, and there is also a parallel Jaina literature of myths and legends,—even as there are the closely related excavations of the three creeds at Ellora alluded to earlier.

Myths are the alphabet of the dialect of mass instruction. There are myths in the *Vedas* as there are myths in Plato's dialogues. They are not mere fabrications of the fancy intended for the entertainment of credulous and wistful children, like Grimm's *Fairy Tales*. As Sri Aurobindo has pointed out, they have a symbolic significance: "Symbolic of what?" he asks and answers: "Of something which man feels to be present behind himself and his life and his activities—the Divine, the gods, the vast and deep unnameable, a hidden, living and mysterious nature of things. All his religious and social institutions, all the moments and phases of life are to him symbols in which he seeks to express what he knows or guesses of the mystic influences that are behind his life, and shape and govern, or at least intervene, in its movements". There is nothing that they omit, ignore, or overlook.

definitive grammar at Taxila. Professor Clark (quoted above) writes: "Panini's grammar is the earliest scientific grammar in the world, the earliest extant grammar of any language, and one of the greatest ever written. The study of language in India was much more objective and scientific than in Greece or Rome. The interest was in empirical investigation of language, rather than in philological theories about it. Greek grammar tended to be logical, philosophical and syntactical. Indian study of language was as objective as the dissection of a body by an anatomist."

Sanskrit is as old as the *Vedas*, and still continues to be the language of culture, which has few rivals to equal it in richness of philosophical expression, for the harmony of sound and sense, and its poetical and musical values, in addition to its matchless elasticity for conveying thoughts of all categories whatsoever. It is the cement of Indian unity and the conduit of our cultural history. In the weighty words of Max Muller: "Such is the marvellous continuity between the past and the present in India, that in spite of repeated social convulsions, religious reforms, and foreign invasions, Sanskrit may be said to be still the only language spoken over the whole extent of that vast country. Even at the present moment, after a century of English rule and English teaching, I believe that Sanskrit is more widely understood in India than Latin was in Europe at the time of Dante."

The heritage of the Hindus was not hoarded by its creators and inheritors, but shared with India's neighbours—East, West, North, and South, as we shall notice a little later.

XIV

PRINCES, PEOPLES, AND PANCHAYATS

Approximately 500 years elapsed between the close of the Gupta regime (c. 500 A.D.) and the commencement of the regular conquest of India by the Islamic invaders from Ghazni (1000 A.D.). It is neither possible nor necessary in our brief survey to go into that politically chaotic period in any detail. There were over a dozen ruling houses (in North and South India together) which divided between them the responsibilities of governing the various parts of the country. Obviously there was little love lost between them, but each prince vaingloriously aspired to be a Samudragupta or a Vikramaditya. Some of them even bore the latter title (e.g. Chalukya *Vikramaditya*) and performed the *asvamedha*, recalling the tradition of the ancient *samrats*. They won and lost and won again battles, thrones, and kingdoms; but few attained anything like the national supremacy which most aspired and strove to achieve. We shall here allude only to some of the outstanding among them, more for the services they rendered to art, literature, and religion, than on account of their political power or prestige. Quite a good number of those rulers distinguished themselves as efficient administrators and defenders of their respective realms, but India as a whole appears to have vanished from their dreams. Our selection will inevitably be invidious, from the point of view of local and provincial histories, but the over-riding criterion of cultural importance will justify the choice, however unsatisfactory that may be on other counts. Consideration of space is another rigidly limiting factor which may not be ignored.

In the first round, we shall acquaint ourselves with Harsha Vardhana of Kanauj (606-47), Pulakesin II Chalukya of Badami (610-42), and Mahendravarma I

stands fifty-seven feet tall above the summit of a rock which is several times higher than the image installed on it. The nonsectarian spirit of the age is well reflected in the following beautiful prayer:

May Hari, the Lord of the Universe, the extinguisher of evil,—whom the Saivas adore as Siva, the Vedantins as Brahman, the Buddhists as Buddha, the Naiyayikas as Karta, the Jainas as Arhat, and the Mimamsakas as Karma—grant us the fruits of all our desires!

XV

AFFINITIES AND AFFILIATIONS IN ASIA

India and Asia are members one of another, not only geographically and racially, but also culturally. The geographical links are too obvious to need comments: neither the Himalayas nor the surrounding seas proved effective barriers at any time in history. Ethnology is too technical a subject for amateur handling: but the broad facts of racial mingling in India (as in most other countries) are well known. The Aryo-Dravidian synthesis was solidly worked out before other streams—largely from the North-West—poured into the Punjab in the first instance, and thence percolated into the neighbouring provinces. There was, too, a seeping of Mongolian blood, through Tibet and Assam, which moulded the physiognomies and linguistic characteristics of the peoples living in those regions. But by far the most powerful elements came from Central Asia: the Sakas, Kushanas, Hunas, Turks, etc. There were counter-movements also, of merchants and missionaries (Brahmanical as well as Buddhist) which left their indelible “foot-prints on the sands of time” and of the Gobi desert.

The contrast between the Indian and the trans-Indian movements is instructive. While the former were entirely peaceful, the latter were mostly warlike. The number of pious trans-Indian pilgrims who came to India was smaller than that of the Indians who went to China and the Far Eastern countries. In South-East Asia, as is well known, a Greater India grew up as a consequence of these contacts (or rather connexions) through several centuries—at least from the time of Asoka to the eve of the Turkish invasions. We shall here recount a few landmarks in the cultural history of Asia revealing Indian affinities and affiliations, through archaeological, artistic, literary and religious channels. The Græco-Roman names: *Serindia* for the Central Asian region, and *India extra Gangem* for India's Eastern neighbours, and *Indonesia* for the island countries of South-East Asia, are significant pointers. *Indo-China* (in its wider connotation) is more comprehensively suggestive of the meeting of the two biggest countries of Asia whose names are compounded in that meaningful term.

India's northern contacts were as widespread as they were ancient. Starting from Afghanistan in the 'Near West' they reached up to Japan in the Far East. Bamiyan at the foot of the Hindukush (lit. Hindu mountains) and Khotan and Kuchi in Central Asia were very great centres of Buddhist learning and Indian culture. The caves and colossal sculptures of Buddha, found in Bamiyan even today, bear testimony to these ancient connexions. Hiuen Tsang in the 7th cent. A.D. saw a 90 ft. colossus of Buddha in Kuchi; and a 50 ft. (seated) bronze image of Buddha still exists at Nara in Japan. Sanskrit mss. of texts not found in India have been discovered in Central Asia, in Tibet, and in China. At Tun-Huang are 500 Buddhist caves with murals in some, dated from the 4th-11th cent. A.D. Hundreds of monasteries and convents, with thousands of monks and nuns, are reported from several scattered places. The names of many of these with some biographical particulars are still available to us; inscriptions, frescoes and shrines in

darsanas, and the *Dharmasastras* are his head!" The last ruler of this dynasty, Jayavarman VII, built 102 hospitals or nursing homes well stocked with drugs and other requisites for the use of the patients, and declared (like Asoka) in his inscription: "The physical pain of the patients became in me an anguish of the soul, and it was more acutely felt by me than by the invalids themselves—for the sufferings of the State constitute the real anguish of rulers, and not their own personal sufferings." Like this ruler and his subjects, verily, *India and Asia are members one of another!*

XVI

THE TUSSLE WITH THE TURKS

The territorial conquests of the Turks in India during the thirteenth century were swift and spectacular, but not stable enough to survive for long. Qutb-ud-din Aibak, a slave of Shihab-ud-din Muhammad Ghori, captured Delhi about 1206 and made himself its first Sultan. Three centuries later, another Turkish adventurer—Zahir-ud-din Muhammad Babur—commenced a career of conquest which culminated in his overthrow of Sultan Ibrahim Lodi at Panipat (near Delhi) in 1526. Babur's descendants continued to be masters of Delhi for another three centuries and a quarter, until Shah Alam (the last of them) was taken captive by the British and exiled to Burma in 1858. But that apparent continuity of the Turki hold over Delhi hides from our view the several kaleidoscopic changes which the Delhi dominions underwent during the specious six centuries and a half from 1206-1858. During the first division (1206-1526) of this prolonged period of Turkish domination there were five dynasties of Sultans of whom three ('Slaves', Khaljis, and Tughlaqs) were Turks, and

the remaining two non-Turki: the Saiyids (1414-51) claimed to be Arabs, and the Lodis (1451-1526) were Afghans. The Mughals who came after the Lodis were Turki in so far as Babur was a scion of Timur on his father's side, though his mother was descended from Chinghiz Khan, the Mongol. We shall deal with the Mughals in a later chapter.

The empire of the Delhi Sultans reached down into South India only for a very short time—from Ala-ud-din Khalji to Muhammad bin Tughlaq (c. 1310-1336). Even in that quarter century, their achievements were more military than political, so far as the southern peninsula was concerned. In the north, too, the Sultans' governors frequently rebelled and set up independent provincial governments in Bengal and Jaunpur (in the east), and in Sind, Gujarat and Malwa (in the west and south). Rajasthan was never fully subdued; the Bahmani Kingdom was established (in the Deccan) in 1347, and Vijayanagar (farther south) eleven years earlier (in 1336). The challenge to the Sultans' authority was constant throughout, and the tussle with the Turks was a protracted phenomenon of the entire epoch.

The above summary of the expansion of Turkish dominion in India must be read against the background of its historical antecedents, if we are to correctly understand its true character and significance. The founders of the Delhi Sultanate were not the first Turks to invade India. A more spectacular beginning was made full two centuries earlier by Mahmud of Ghazni, who, as is notorious, led no fewer than seventeen temple-looting expeditions in the course of twenty-five years, culminating in the spoliation of Somnath (in Kathiawar) in 1025. That iconoclast was himself preceded by about three hundred years of Arab rule over Sind and Multan—c. 712-1001. Before these Islamic encroachments into India, Indians ruled even in Afghanistan—up to the Hindukush—from the time of Chandragupta Maurya to the rise of Mahmud of Ghazni—c. 300 B.C. to 1000 A.D. These perspectives of 1300 years of Indian rule

ud-din. He kept the Mongols out of India and extended his dominions over the major part of the peninsula. He anticipated the modern world in the matter of prices-and-commodities-control to meet military exigencies. He was also the first among the Sultans to shake himself free from sacerdotal dictation. He boldly declared to the *Ulemas*: "I do not know if this is lawful or unlawful (in the orthodox view); whatever I think to be for the good of the State, or suitable for the emergency, that I decree; and what may happen to me on the Day of Judgment, that I know not." His totalitarian tyranny ended in a revolution that installed the Tughlaqs on the throne of Delhi. They were to be the last of the Turki Sultans. Their successors were the Saiyids, the Lodis, and the Mughals. Muhammad and Firuz were the two outstanding rulers of the Tughlaq dynasty. The former was a man of great learning and an erratic genius. His experiment with a token currency is well known, but not so his famine-relief measures. The Moorish Ibn Battuta writes: "This king of all men is the one who most loves to dispense gifts and to shed blood." His successor, Firuz Shah, was by all civilised standards the greatest of the Turki Sultans of Delhi. The 'master passion' of Firuz was to build. That passion, Sir Wolseley Haig observes, "equalled, if it did not surpass, that of the Roman Emperor Augustus." His transportation of two Asoka pillars from Topra and Meerut to Delhi was typical of his herculean labours. Ghiyas-ud-din, the founder of the family, had wisely declared: "When kingdoms are ruined, it is obviously due to the oppressiveness of the revenue system, and the excessive royal demand; and ruin proceeds from destructive governors and officials." Firuz fostered the farmers, but unfortunately also farmed out the revenues to parasitical governors. On the whole, if the *Tarikh-i-Firuzshahi* is to be trusted, "the whole realm of Delhi was blessed with the bounties of the Almighty." However, there was 'a fly in the ointment': that was the religious policy of the Sultans. The *Tarikh-i-Firuzshahi* states: "The Sultan made the laws of the Prophet

his guide, acting zealously upon the principles they laid down, and prohibiting all that was inconsistent therewith." In actual practice, "the laws of the Prophet" were perverted to the ends of power exercised tyrannically in the interests of the governing class and the utter misery of the subjugated Hindus. Ala-ud-din Khalji would permit to the latter only "mouse holes" for shelters! They were to be helots in their own country; and only that little was to be left to them whereby they could eke out a bare animal existence. They were not to ride a horse, or dress decently, or even chew *pan* (betel-leaves): "At my command," boasted Ala-ud-din, "they are ready to creep into holes like mice!"

Under the Pathans, who followed the Turks in Delhi, conditions did not improve for the "infidels." Sultan Sikander Lodi prohibited the Hindus from bathing at the sacred *ghats* on the Jamuna, and even forbade barbers to shave them! A Brahman from Bengal offended the "true believers" by preaching that there was truth in both religions: Islam and Hinduism. He was ordered to recant, or to accept Islam to prove his asseveration. Having refused to do either, he was made to pay the extreme penalty of death.

XVII

THE RANAS' AND RAYAS' RESISTANCE

The disruption of the Delhi dominions was as rapid as it was inevitable. They were the unripe fruits of a predatory drive into an anciently civilised country, sought to be secured by the slaves of upstart sultans whose violent usurpations were a perpetual example for every adventurous Turk to emulate. The iron dictatorship of a Balban, the totalitarian regime of an Ala-ud-din, the fitful originality of a Muhammad, and the sectarian benevolence of a Firuz, were not calculated to endear the alien exploiters (of the

less famous for his religious zeal and catholicity. He respected all sects of the Hindu religion, though his personal leanings were in favour of Vaishnavism... Krishna Raya's kindness to the fallen enemy, his acts of mercy and charity towards the residents of captured cities, his great military prowess which endeared him alike to his feudatory chiefs and to his subjects, the royal reception and kindness that he invariably bestowed upon royal embassies, his imposing personal appearance, his genial look and polite conversation which distinguished a pure and dignified life, his love for literature and for religion, and his solicitude for the welfare of his people; and above all, the almost fabulous wealth that he conferred as endowments on temples and Brahmans, mark him out indeed as the greatest of the South Indian monarchs, who sheds a lustre on the pages of history."

Though the above is high enough praise, we shall conclude this causerie with two quotations from contemporary foreign observers, if only to convince the readers how well deserved is the eulogy. Domingo Paes, who visited Vijayanagar in the days of its supreme glory, observed: "The Raya is a great ruler and a man of much justice...the most feared and perfect king that could possibly be, cheerful of disposition and very merry; he is one that seeks to honour foreigners and receives them kindly, asking about all their affairs whatever their condition may be." Equally significant is the testimony of Barbosa who remarked: "The king allows such freedom that every man may come and go and live according to his own creed, without suffering any annoyance, and without inquiry, whether he is a Christian, Jew, Moor or Heathen."

XVIII

THE SEARCH FOR A SYNTHESIS

“Hatred does not cease by hatred, it ceases by love” is the teaching of our sages through the ages. Synthesis is another name for love, and conflict is but a sort of hatred. The latter is born of ignorance, while the former is the offspring of correct understanding. It is common experience that, after thunder and lightning, come the fertilising showers. However oppressive and dark the clouds, they are really precursors of the refreshing rains. The Turkish invasions and conquests, described earlier, were ‘meteorological disturbances’ that paved the way for the glad flowers of synthesis. The ploughshares were sharp and cruel; but without their deep and relentless penetration, the field might not have got ready for the seeds. . . . The harvest was ripening before the Turks entered the second phase of their operations with the advent of the Mughals in 1526.

Early rains are erratic as well as sporadic, for the wind bloweth where it listeth. So it was, too, in the cultural firmament of India. The heat of the foreign oppression drew from the waters of national life the vapours of idealism which returned to the soil from various parts of the sky in the form of harmonising efforts. A new era was dawning in India, and its vital manifestations were seen at all levels and in all quarters of the country. A few concrete illustrations will serve to show which way the wind was blowing.

The idealistic aspirations and endeavours of Akbar (the Mughal emperor) during the sixteenth century are well known. But the ground for them was prepared by a host of predecessors from among the Hindus as well as the Muslims. It is seldom remembered that the broad minded Al Biruni was in India at the same time as his predatory and

interest to the art and above all to the architectures which their united genius called into being."

XIX

THE MAGNIFICENCE OF THE MUGHALS

"If there is a paradise on earth, it is here, it is here, it is here!" So reads an inscription in Persian in the *Diwan-i-Khas* (Chamber of Private Audience) of Shah Jahan at Delhi. On the other hand, to the Portuguese and other Europeans in the heyday of Mughal prosperity, Bengal was "hell crammed with the good things of life!" What was Mughal India like, in reality,—heaven or hell? It was *neither*, but just a human world (even like the one we live in today). To know it as it was we must transport ourselves into a civilisation of from two to three centuries ago, whose cultural trends we tried to assess in the last chapter. There we focussed our attention mainly on the spiritual outlook, or the religious climate of India, as reflected in the thought currents of the time. Vital as those aspects are, we need to acquaint ourselves also with other facets of the national life, such as the character of the government, the economic conditions, and the social atmosphere generally. We must also not miss the material manifestations of culture such as art and architecture, nor ignore its secular literature in the official and popular languages. In short, we need to mix with the monarchs, the *mansabdars*, the merchants, and the masses, as well as the artists, writers and craftsmen of all sorts. The resultant picture of the times will answer more to the intimate portrait we seek, than any formal history can ever hope to do.

First in this pageant of princes, peoples, and palaces comes Zahir-ud-din Muhammad Babur, following his famous ancestors: Chinghiz Khan the Mongol and Timur

the Turk. We know him chiefly from his delightful *Wakai* or autobiography, which is one of the world's best classics in any language. As his cousin Mirza Haidar reports with great admiration: Babur was "adorned with various virtues and clad with numberless excellences above all which towered bravery and humanity... Indeed, no one of his family before him ever possessed such talents, nor any of his race perform such amazing exploits or experience such strange adventures." Elphinstone justly characterised Babur as "undoubtedly a man of outstanding genius, a lover of fine arts, a born naturalist, a keen and critical observer of men and things, and an accomplished writer who immortalised himself not merely as the founder of one of the most glorious dynasties that have ruled India, but also as a prince of autobiographers by bequeathing to posterity his delightful *Memoirs* which abound in descriptions of the countries he visited, their scenery, climate, production and works of art and industries, more full and accurate than will, perhaps, be found in equal space, in any modern traveller; and considering the circumstances in which they were compiled, truly surprising."

Babur's son, Humayun the humane, was "brave in battle, gay in feast, and very generous;" but, adds Mirza Haidar, he was addicted to opium, which became the common talk of the people, and all his failures "are attributable to this vice." So, in the 'rough and tumble' of life, he was knocked out by the more gifted and resourceful Pathan Sher Shah Sur, whose military and political genius set Akbar an inspiring model lesson which more than compensated for all what Humayun suffered at his hands. The whole personality of Sher Shah is well summed up in his own political dictum which is true in all times: "*The cultivators are the source of all prosperity,*" he declared; "*I have encouraged them, and shall always watch over their condition that no man may oppress and injure them; for, if a ruler cannot protect the humble peasantry from the lawless, it is tyranny to exact revenue from them.*" Akbar worked on the same

pilgrimage, then who is there to know what happens
without?

Hari is in the East, Allah is in the West: Look within
Your heart to find both Karim and Ram!
All men and women in the world are His living forms
Kabir is the child of Allah and Ram: He is my *guru*,
He is my *pir*.

* * *

No one knew the mystery of that Magic Weaver who
came into this world and spread the warp!
The earth and sky are the two beams; the sun and moon
are the two filled shuttles.
Taking a thousand threads, He spreads them lengthwise.
Today He still weaveth, but hard to reach is the farther
end!
Says Kabir: Joining *Karma* with *Karma*, woven with
unwoven thread, magnificently the Magic Weaver
weaves!

XX

THE PSALMS OF THE SAINTS

Kabir's Divine Weaver was, indeed, weaving in India cloth of a unique texture, using the princes for His warp and the saints for His woof. If the length of the warp were measured in regnal years, the width of the woof was reckoned by the range of the Vision that the latter induced in the national life. An ancient Sanskrit adage states: *svadese pujiyate raja: vidvan sarvatra pujiyate*. 'The king is honoured in his own country; but the learned are honoured everywhere.' If we may improve upon this, the appeal of the saints is even more universal; it transcends geographical and political boundaries as well as limitations

of time. Though the masses in India may not know who ruled over their forebears even in their home province, they are familiar with the hagiology of the whole country from end to end, as if the saints were their own next of kin. Thus Kabir, Tulsi Das and Sur Das of Uttar Pradesh, Nanak of the Punjab, Mira Bai of Rajasthan, Narsi Mehta and Dadu of Gujarat, Chaitanya and Chandi Das of Bengal, Jnaneshwar, Tukaram and others of Maharashtra, and the Appars and Alvares of South India, and saints of Karnatak and Andhra,—are all *national* saints respected by everyone, irrespective of class, creed, or place of birth. They are as popular today as they were ever before; and the desire to know more about them has grown with the centuries.

It is a remarkable historical fact that all the saints named above belonged to a period of political turmoil and racial conflict produced by the Turkish impact. While the monarchs and the martial elements in the country mobilised the military forces to fight the invaders, there was also a simultaneous spiritual awakening which was more deep-rooted in the cultural soil of India than the conquerors could comprehend. The search for a synthesis described earlier might have been more successful had it been universal, instead of being confined to exceptional explorers of spiritual affinities like Al Biruni, Abidin, Akbar and Dara Shukoh. But even the heart works by systolic and diastolic actions. The cultural hearts of the conquerors, too, contracted and expanded alternately and kept up the continuity of life in the countries of the Spirit,—through toleration as well as persecution. In the imperial history of the Mughals, Akbar and Aurangzeb represented that polarity between amity and enmity. We shall here survey the constructive and creative reactions of the two in the region of religion, particularly in Maharashtra. *Bhakti*, or ardent devotion to God, is an essential element in all the religions of the world. It has been more integrally so in India from times immemorial. We have referred, in an earlier chapter, to the *Bhagavata* movement in the Golden

pedigree, who could be poor? By the power of faith He has made me free. . . . I distribute His treasures, the grain gathered from God! Come one, come all, young and old of all castes, and partake of these bounties of the Boundless." With apostolic fervour he declares: "Through several lives have I been discharging this duty, to relieve that oppressed. . . . I shall evoke tears from the very rocks, and dance and clap my hands as I sing the glory of God! I shall plant my feet on the brow of Death! I have blazoned for you the path to Heaven. Come one, come all, both great and small! Have no anxiety. . . . I shall carry you all to the other shore. I have God's certitude to take you across in His name!" Yet, all this came from the meekest of men: the St. Francis of Maharashtra.

If *samadhana* (tranquillity) was the slogan of this saint, *savadhana* (beware!) was the watch-word of Samarth (lit. 'strong') Ramdas. This St. Dominic of Maharashtra dominates the will of the people, as Tukaram their hearts, and Jnaneshvar their intellects, even now. His *Manache Sloka* (Self-Admonitions to the Mind) and *Das-Bodha* (Teachings of Ramdas) are read daily by the young and old. "The *Mlecchhas* (Turks) are rampant in our country; it is necessary to be vigilant," he warned. "Places of pilgrimage have been desecrated, . . . *Dharma* is gone"; "mobilise the Marathas, and propagate *Maharashtra-Dharma*," he proclaimed. "I ask for only one boon from thee, Mother," he prayed to his goddess: "Promote the cause of my King and country. I have heard of Thy glory in the past; manifest it today also in our lifetime." His beautiful poem, entitled *Ananadavana-bhuvana*, concludes with a hopeful anticipation of the final triumph of *Dharma*: "Mother has blessed Shivaji and destroyed the wicked. She has brought us happiness as she did of old,—in the Kingdom of Bliss!"

These saints, from Jnaneshvar in the thirteenth century to Ramdas in the seventeenth century, brought about a religious awakening in Maharashtra which became the foundation of *Svarajya* under the inspired leadership of

Shivaji, in 1674. Outwardly, the saints appear to be too 'otherworldly' to care for anything in this world. But it is not to be overlooked that the total outcome of their teachings was that they filled the people with a zeal for something worth dying for. That something they called *Maharashtra Dharma*. Its spiritual focus was (and still is) Pandharpur:

*On Bhima's banks all gladness is
In Pandhari the Abode of bliss!*

That was to have its political counterpart at Raigad with the advent of Shivaji, and at Poona with the coming of the great Peshvas later. But the *raison d'être* was always *Maharashtra-Dharma* rooted in the 'Psalms of the Saints' briefly reviewed above.

XXI

THE MIGHT OF THE MARATHAS

From about the middle of the seventeenth century to the close of the eighteenth century India felt the increasing might of the Marathas, from Cambay to Calcutta, and from Tanjore to Delhi. Before the rise of Shivaji to power and prominence they were an obscure people, confined to their hereditary *watans* (farms), eking out a not very satisfactory subsistence from their penurious lands. But the Sultans of the Deccan discovered in them a toughness of fibre, and a native valour and vim, that readily lent themselves to warlike employment. Consequently, during the interval between the break up of the Bahmani kingdom and the absorption of its succession states into the expanding Mughal Empire, the Marathas manned the local armies contending for petty objectives, now on behalf of one chieftain, and then of another. The genius of Shivaji

Marathas to the nation is the spirit of tenacious popular resistance to foreign aggression, religious tolerance, and a spiritually democratic culture summed up in the meaningful term *Maharashtra Dharma*.*

XXII

THE ADVENT OF ALBION

Few happenings in the history of the modern world have proved so fruitful as the contacts between England and India since the seventeenth century. The first Englishmen to arrive in India, it is interesting to remember, were (1) the Jesuit Father, Thomas Stevens (or Stephens) from Oxford (1579), (2) John Newbury and Ralph Fitch (merchants), (3) William Leedes (jeweller) and (4) James Story (painter). The last four came from London, about four years after the Jesuit Father. The memory of Fr. Stevens is still kept green by his remarkable composition in Konkani called the *Christa Purana*; it comprises 11,000 strophes of great literary merit. Stevens also wrote a Konkani grammar,—the first ever written of that language.

James Story and his companions were imprisoned and persecuted (as Protestants) by the Portuguese in Goa. However, Story was released on bail (by the good offices of Fr. Stevens), and employed as a painter to decorate the Christian chapels, while the other three escaped from Goa 'with the skin of their teeth.' Eventually they reached Agra, *via*, Belgaum, Bijapur, Golkonda, Burhanpur and Mandu (Malwa)—“passing many rivers, which by reason of rain, were so swollen that we waded and swam often times for our lives.”

Fitch found Agra and Fatehpur “very great cities: either of them much greater than London and very populous...”

*See *The Founding of Maratha Freedom* by S. R. Sharma, Orient Longmans, 1963.

Hither is great resort of merchants from Persia and out of India, and very much merchandise of silk cloth, and of precious stones, both Rubies, Diamonds and Pearls."

The last Englishman to visit the Court of Akbar was John Mildenhall (or Midnall). Leaving London early in 1599, he reached Lahore in 1603 *via* Kandahar. He brought with him twenty-nine good horses, each worth £ 50-60, as a gift for the Mughal Emperor. He was well received by Akbar but denounced by the Portuguese who characterised all Englishmen as "thieves and spies!" Nonetheless, Akbar favoured Mildenhall with a *firman* in the last year of his life (1605), giving trade concessions.

The *Hector* was the first English vessel to anchor at Surat, in August 1608. She brought on board the "bluff sea-captain" William Hawkins who could speak Turki as well as Persian. But like Mildenhall before him, his footsteps were dogged by the Portuguese detractors of the English. "The Jesuits here", Hawkins complained, "do little regard their masses and their church matters for studying how to overthrow my affairs." "To avoid being poisoned," he married an Armenian Christian lady; but the Jesuits declined to assist at their wedding. When one of Hawkins's companions died, they would not allow his body to be interred in the Christian cemetery at Agra. Such was the Christian charity obtaining between the Protestant and Catholic Europeans in the age of Akbar and Jahangir in India. Thanks to the machinations of their rivals at the Mughal court and capital, Englishmen were "in deep disgrace with the King and people" when Sir Thomas Roe arrived here in 1615. He was "of a pregnant understanding, well spoken, learned, industrious and of comely personage,"—according to the Directors of the East India Company (founded in 1600). Dr. V. A. Smith speaks of him as "a gentleman of good education, a polished courtier, and trained diplomatist, well qualified for the task assigned to him, which was the negotiation of a treaty giving security to English trade." He was preceded by two other ambas-

pointed in the reverse direction. Sir Arthur Lyall remarked in 1894, "For the last hundred years every important annexation in India has been made under the sanction and the deliberate orders of the national government of England." It is obvious that the Sir Josiah Child "complex" dominated the national psychology of England, in the imperialistic centuries, rather than the cautious prudence of Sir Thomas Roe, in the time of Jahangir. Consequently, Byron's poetical warning to Britain remained an "airy nothing" to ears attuned to the invigorating strains of "Rule Britannia". However, we might still credit poets with a vision transcending the wisdom or vanity of politicians. "Most of all", wrote Byron:

*Albion! to thee in the fall
Of Venice think of thine, despite thy watery wall.*

XXIII

THE BENEVOLENCE OF THE BRITISH

"*The English won India by pursuing the methods of Akbar, let them not lose it by imitating those of Aurangzeb,*" was an aspiration *cum* warning sounded by Mr. Pringle Kennedy, during the post-Curzon period of Indo-British relations,—when such an invocation was very apposite. He intended comparisons to be understood in spirit rather than in concrete details; for he also added, "Intolerance in Aurangzeb's time meant intolerance in religious matters; but intolerance can, and at the present day often does, extend to matters not religious. Impatience at opposition, a belief that no one can be right save oneself, all these are a form of intolerance and one of that at times can be seen in the statesmen of the present days." The archweakness of both Aurangzeb and most of the British bureaucrats in

India was—despite their compensatory qualities—an utter lack of sympathy and imagination, or call it an absence of the “sense of humour,” born of an egotistical self-complacency or self-righteousness. Parodying the Earl of Chatham, they seemed to say, “*We alone can save India, and no one else can!*”

Aurangzeb imprisoned his aged father, and ordered his latitudinarian brother Dara Shukoh to be executed, out of the same self-assurance, that he and he alone could save Islam, and none else could or would do it. Barring that self-conceived mission, he was without doubt a great ruler who fostered agriculture and administered justice according to his best lights with admirable zeal. But he suffered from, what Lane-Poole calls, “a certain smallness of mind,” on account of which “*he could not win love. Such a one*”, Lane-Poole correctly remarks, “*may administer an empire, but he cannot rule the hearts of men.*”

Akbar, on the other hand, like Asoka, Shivaji, and Ranjit Singh, won the hearts of men. Hence the memory of these national rulers is cherished with reverence by millions in India to this day. English rule in India lacked their endearing human appeal; hence it was inherently not constituted to endure. Both Akbar and Rudyard Kipling were born in India; both were foreigners in blood, but Indians by nativity. Yet, how contrasted were the characters of the two! The outlook and spirit of the Mughal Emperor were so thoroughly Indianised that they evoked from Sri Jawaharlal Nehru the spontaneous epithet of “Father of Indian Nationalism” for Akbar. To Kipling belongs the opprobrium attaching to the doubtful dictum enunciated by him that—

Oh, East is East and West is West,
and never the twain shall meet,
Till Earth and sky stand presently
at God's great judgment seat!

Anglo-Indian administrators acted from that antinomian attitude, with its racial arrogance, and implications of in-

British officer." 'Brittanicus' in *The Englishman* (newspaper of Calcutta) more blatantly wrote: "The only people who have any right to India are the British; the so-called Indians have no right whatever"! Aurangzeb was more modest and conceded a more tolerable political status to the Hindus.

It was in such a noxious atmosphere that Ripon worked. His efforts to raise the status of Indians to a legitimate equality with Europeans—in the temples of justice—shipwrecked his Viceroyalty. The agitation against the Ilbert Bill (setting forth the just reform) was denounced by the British Barristers in their Bar Association in Culcutta. "Once set off, it acquired force by moving, and its climax was reached on 28th February at the Town Hall." The Bill was regarded as a preposterous attempt "to put the native on the *Gaddi*." Even so respectable a gentleman as Meredith Townshend (once editor of *The Friend of India*!) expostulated:

"Would you like to live in the country where, at any moment, your wife would be liable to be sentenced on a false charge of slapping an *Ayah* to three days' imprisonment, the Magistrate being a copper-coloured Pagan, who probably worships the *Linga*, and certainly exults in any opportunity of showing that he can insult White persons with impunity?"

Ripon apprehended a breach of the peace by the British residents of the metropolis. "To avoid the risk of a street row in Calcutta," he agreed to a "Concordat"; yet he could not altogether escape from the wrath of his critics. Uncanny developments were averted only by the Viceroy's resignation. This Irish Catholic peer had to "walk the plank" to save Mrs. Albion from the apprehended or anticipated affronts of "copper-coloured Pagan magistrates," even though the innocent author of that contingency might be Her Majesty Queen Victoria's accredited Vicegerent in India. Under Akbar a Man Singh could rise to the highest rank open to any subject, irrespective of his race or religion; but not so

a Mitter, under British rule, even in the wake of the Queen's pompous proclamation of 1858 assuring Indians that "as far as may be, *our subjects, of whatever race or creed, be freely admitted to office in our service*, the duties of which they may be qualified by their education, ability, and integrity duly to discharge." For a commentary: Mr. Mitter, it was proposed, should act as Chief justice of Bengal *vice* Sir P. Garth going on furlough. But Garth himself threatened to cancel his leave "if Mitter was to sit for him!"

In contrast to the graceless conduct of the Europeans, the Indians acquitted themselves with sincere gratitude as well as grace towards the outgoing Viceroy who had won their hearts through his genuine regard for their rights and dignity. They gave him a send off worthy of the nobility of his character and the traditions of the country he was leaving.

"Ripon's Viceroyalty," writes his biographer Lucian Wolf, "may be justly described as epoch-making in the history of India..... No other Governor-General, from Dalhausie to Curzon, accomplished so much ... and went so far... When, however, all is said, Ripon's Viceroyalty will always be memorable, not so much for any particular measure, as for the extraordinary hold which he acquired on the affections of the Indian population, and the loyal hopes with which he thus filled their political horizon."

XXIV

SWARAJ THROUGH SATYAGRAHA

The holocaust of 1857 was a homily in blood. It made England panicky but not penitent. India became pensive but not pessimistic. The real character of that sanguinary struggle was not understood immediately. Even now, after nearly a century, its significance is not truly grasped. The

sing concomitants. Yet, on 14th July 1942, the Working Committee of the Congress peremptorily declared that "British rule in India must end immediately." "There is no room left for negotiations," added Mahatma Gandhi, "either they recognise India's independence or they don't. . . . There is no question of one more chance. . . . After all this is an open rebellion."

It is to be remembered that this seeming desperation came at the end of over fifty five years of patient constitutional endeavours and appeals, and "promises made to the ears broken to the heart" repeatedly—despite India's generous war contributions in men, money and materials, which twice helped Britain in the greatest crises she had to face during the present century. "We shall get our freedom by fighting, it cannot fall from the skies. . . . This is the last struggle of my life. I can do or die."—It was India that was speaking through her Mahatma. He was the very image of the motherland: lean but unbending; half-naked but inwardly rich; attenuated by penance, but determined to fight for freedom; personally suffering, but desirous of saving others from suffering; above all, he was a man of faith—*faith in Truth and Ahimsa*, the twin lights of India's most ancient revelation. He called their synthesis *Satyagraha*, and demonstrated how he could "combine the greatest love with the greatest opposition to wrong." He said, "perfect *Satyagrahi* has to be almost, if not entirely, a perfect man. . . . The greater the spirit of *Satyagraha* in us, the better men will we become. Its use, therefore, is, I think, indisputable, and it is a force which, if it became universal, would revolutionise social ideals and do away with despotisms, and the ever growing militarism under which the nations of the West are groaning and are being almost crushed to death, and which fairly promise to overwhelm even the nations of the East. . . . Thus viewed, *Satyagraha* is the best education."

INDIA'S INDIVIDUALITY AND INTENTIONS

India and Bharat denote the same country in our constitution, but the two names do not evoke identical reactions in our minds. The one conjures up a picture slightly different from that of the other; yet both relate to a common entity whose antiquity we have traced (with well authenticated evidence) to times remoter than either name. India sounds Greek, foreign; but Bharat is directly Vedic. Nevertheless, the two are in reality one: India from *Indoi* or the inhabitants of the Indus region; and 'Indus' itself from the Vedic *Sindhu* (through the Persian 'Hindu', and Greek and Latin forms). The Persian epithet '*Hindustan*' came into vogue through the Muslims. Hence, paradoxically, 'Hindu'ism (so far as nomenclature is concerned) is derived from the Islamic lands!

Bharat is an abbreviation of *Bharatavarsha*, the traditional Sanskrit name for India. It is doubly derived from Bharat, son of Dushyanta and Shakuntala (Kalidas's charming heroine), and from the Vedic tribe which triumphed in the Dasarajna war (*R.V.*). These associations are enshrined in the *Mahabharata* and the verses from the *Vishnu Purana* cited earlier.

By whatever name *She* is invoked, the image which ultimately emerges in the minds of Indians is that of MOTHER INDIA. Our national anthem *Vande Mataram* ("Salutation to Thee, Mother") was sung generations before Rabindranath gave us *Bharata Bhagya Vidhata* ("Ordainer of Bharat's Well-being"). Yet the two are equally dear to Indian hearts, and they evoke identical filial emotions,—though the one is feminine, and the other masculine. With our great national poet Kalidas we salute both our parents with equal respect :



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