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INDIA: A FOREIGN VIEW

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BY

ANDRÉ PHILIP

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

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INTRODUCTION

AMONG the problems of the world to-day there is assuredly none more inscrutable—I had almost said intractable—than that of India, and it is pleasant to find India dealt with in so lucid and definite a way as it is by M. André Philip. He stresses the fact that in India, as elsewhere, it is the economic conditions that count for most, for, although you cannot underrate the influence of social and religious forces, it is the economic state of the sub-continent that accounts for the greater part of the troubles which beset the governments of India to-day.

Agriculture is the paramount industry of India, and the peasant population lives in not less than 700,000 villages, so that the heavy fall in agricultural prices has had a very serious and disheartening effect upon the minds of the tillers of the soil. It is a good thing that all who read and think about Indian affairs should be reminded of the extent of the economic depression, for which the British Government is in no way responsible. M. Philip dwells on what he calls the tragedy of the cultivating class in never being able to obtain a return from their holdings sufficient for adequate nourishment, as compared with the agricultural production of other countries. He does justice to the colossal work of irrigation which the governments of India have carried out, although his information is by no means up to date ; but he does not point out that, over the whole of India, twelve million acres are now cultivated for varieties of the staple crops—rice, sugar, millets, and, above all, cotton and wheat—which have been improved out of all recognition by long and patient research and experiment at the hands of the Indian Agricultural Service.

The truth is that the irrigation schemes, even though they be much the most striking and splendid examples of British administration, are only one side of the continuous and increasing beneficence of the agricultural policy of the Indian governments, with their technical schools and demonstration farms in every province. If these were not started earlier it was only because the regular appliance of scientific methods to agriculture all over the world is of comparatively recent date. Considering the growth of the population of India in this century, since the administrative machinery for dealing with famines and the police system have been so vastly improved, it is very remarkable that there has not been a greater shortage of food crops in lean years. No doubt it is principally due to the better use of irrigation, which has, according to M. Philip, increased in area from 29 million acres in 1890 to 57 millions in 1921. To give only one outstanding example, the greatest irrigation system in the world, the Lloyd Barrage in Sind, which, although contiguous to Baluchistan, forms part of the Bombay Presidency, was declared open on January 13th, 1932, by the Viceroy, the Earl of Willingdon, and it now extends its fertilising waters to a cultivable area equal to the whole of cultivated Egypt. Sir Samuel Hoare expressed the conviction that "the barrage would prove to be one of Great Britain's greatest contributions to the welfare of India." No wonder that one of the Ruling Princes told Sir John Simon that it was a stream not of water, but of gold. According to the Indian Year Book (1931), the average area irrigated by Government works of all classes was in 1928–9 just under 31 million acres, so that it is not easy to explain M. André Philip's last figures. They must include a large amount of land under irrigation from wells and reservoirs. The Indian Statutory Commission, speaking with authority, says in the first volume of its Report :

The total area artificially irrigated in 1926–7 *was nearly* 48 *million acres, of which over* 21 *million was from Government works, and the total capital outlay on these works at the end of* 1927–8 *was over Rs.* 111 *crores* (83¼ *million). Many of the irrigation works in India were constructed as a protection against famine.*

It seems to be a pity that a book of real interest and value should be disfigured by inaccuracies, which could easily have been corrected.

What British irrigation has done for India can be appreciated from a comparison of the Punjab as it was when there was nothing left but the crumbling remains of the Mogul system and what it is to-day, since it has become one of the great wheatfields of the world. On April 16, 1847, Lord Hardinge, then Commander-in-Chief in India, wrote to Henry Lawrence as one of the five Commissioners : *Edwards, Nicholson, and your brother George* [*afterwards Lord Lawrence*], *each in the district he has visited, give a wretched account of the natural impediments which must, under any government, however ably administered, render the Punjab a poverty-stricken acquisition.* Lyallpur, " rescued," as M. Philip says, " from the desert and made into one of the most fertile regions in India," is the best example of the change that has been wrought.

M. André Philip is not inclined to give Great Britain credit for much more than a shrewd sense of self-interest in her Indian policy, and some of his statements have little to support them in the actual facts of the case. It is not true to say, as he does, that the Congress campaign of non-co-operation nullified in the various provinces the laws which fixed the inferior status of the " untouchables." There are no such laws ; it depends upon immemorial custom. The creation of separate electorates for Moslems was only conceded to communal clamour, which would accept nothing less, and was vehemently opposed, first by Lord Morley,

and later on by Lord Chelmsford and Mr. Montagu. The so-called " massacre " of Amritsar was by no means an act of brutal violence, but followed upon a series of criminal outrages against Europeans in the city, including a woman who was nearly beaten to death. For his assertion that British industry was founded on the " rack of India " there is not much justification ; and, again, the prophecy that India would have arrived at the stage of self-government and national unity if the British occupation had not brutally interrupted her natural evolution towards economic capitalism is pure surmise. None the less, the conclusion that the Indian revolution will follow much the same course as the Russian revolution is interesting, even if one cannot accept the arguments that lead up to it. To talk of want of good faith or goodwill in not introducing Home Rule into India is almost absurd, considering the extent to which provincial self-government has been carried, and the general agreement as to its being made into a complete system.

It cannot be too often repeated that India is not, and has never been, a nation, and that Indian problems in themselves are not national but international. In spoken languages, even omitting dialects, India is a veritable Tower of Babel. To bring India into unity with herself, and to eradicate the last remains of racial and religious strife, which flares up at every turn and on every provocation, would be a task beside which the troubles of the Hapsburg Emperors of Austria sink into insignificance. Only a miracle can do it, and the age of miracles is past, at any rate in regard to the nature of man. We are asked to trust to the power of academic education on an intellectual class, which protests against the learning that it has acquired without assimilating, to make all things possible.

BURNHAM.

March, 1932.

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PART I

AGRICULTURAL INDIA

INDIA: A FOREIGN VIEW

INTRODUCTORY

INDIA extends from the 8th to the 37th degree North latitude, and from the 61st to the 101st degree East longitude, covering a total area of 1,805,000 square miles; that is to say 0·9 per cent. of the world's surface. Her land frontier is approximately 3,400 miles long, while her coast-line extends for about 2,700 miles.

There are in India three very distinct geographical regions. To the North lies the Himalayan range, covering 1,500 miles from East to West, and 150 miles from North to South, with an area of 225,000 square miles, more than the combined area of France and Belgium. With a watershed whose average altitude is over 20,000 ft., this range forms an impassable barrier except at its western extremity, near Afghanistan, and in the course of history has largely contributed to India's isolation from the rest of the continent of Asia.

To the South, the peninsular table-land of the great plateau of the Deccan, with an area of 700,000 square miles, is bounded on both sides by the Western and Eastern Ghats, whose average altitudes are 3,000 and 1,500 feet respectively.

Finally, in the centre lies the Indo-Gangetic plain, which owes its extremely fertile soil to the alluvium from the three great Himalayan rivers—the Ganges, the Indus, and the Brahmaputra—and which stretches

from rich and well-watered Bengal to the deserts of Sind, now gradually yielding to irrigation.

The climate varies considerably according to the region. On the peninsula there is little difference between summer and winter ; the sky is always clear, and the light so dazzling that the eye can hardly endure it in the full glare of day ; at any season the heat is uniformly moist and relaxing, sapping all energy and conducing to indolence. In the South of the peninsula a luxuriant tropical vegetation is to be found ; elsewhere the plateau is barren, and there remain only rare traces of the original forests, which have given place to a jungle of short scrub and impenetrable brushwood, infested with snakes, and in many places still the haunt of wild beasts. In the North, however, in the Indo-Gangetic plain and on the first slopes of the Himalayas, the climate is continental. In the North-West excessively hot summers and severe winters have produced an exceptionally robust and energetic people ; while Bengal, on the other hand, in the extreme East, enjoys a milder winter, similar to that of the South of France, and a summer that is tolerable.

The rainfall is entirely governed by the monsoon. From April or May onwards the northern plains are hotter than the water of the ocean near the equator ; the hot air rises and is replaced by the relatively cool air from the equator. This gives rise to a wind from the South-West, which becomes laden with moisture in crossing the ocean and is accompanied by torrential rains which, during July, August and September, abundantly water the Bombay Presidency, the Punjab, the Indo-Gangetic plain, Bengal and Burma, but which reach only in very slight measure

the Deccan peninsula, protected by the Western Ghats. In October and November the situation is reversed; the temperature is lower in the northern plains than near the equator, and the wind now blows from the North-East. Coming from the continent it is a dry wind, but becomes laden with moisture in crossing the Bay of Bengal, and during the winter months waters the district round Madras to the East of the peninsula.

This recurring rainfall is of the utmost importance, for, as we shall see, the prosperity of the Indian farmer depends on the abundance or failure of the monsoon rains.

The population of India, according to the census of 1921, numbers 319 million inhabitants—a population nearly as great as that of China, almost one-third that of all Asia, and 17 per cent. of that of the whole world. Two hundred and forty-seven millions (77 per cent.) live in British India (1,094,000 square miles in area), which is governed directly by the Crown, and seventy-one millions in the more recently conquered States, where the native princes have remained nominally autonomous: Mysore, Hyderabad, Cochin, Travancore, Baroda, Ajmere, etc., comprising a total area of 711,000 square miles.

These 319 millions belong to various races and speak 220 different languages, which can be classified into two groups. The Dravidian languages (Telugu, Tamil, Canarese, Malayalam) owe their origin to a comparatively primitive, very dark race which predominates still in the peninsula, and which had built up there its own peculiar civilisation from a very early period. The Indo-Aryan languages current in the northern plains, however, have grown out of the speech of the Aryan conquerors, a white people coming

probably from Thibet, who subdued the original tribes and gradually superseded the Dravidians. These languages are related to the sacred language of Sanskrit, but have undergone Persian and Mohammedan influences, and according to the extent to which they were so influenced they form to-day different dialects in different districts—for instance, Hindi, Urdu, Bengali, Sindhi, Gujarati, etc.

Finally, as to religion, the Indian population for the most part adheres to one or other of the two great faiths: Hinduism with 216 million followers, and Mohammedanism with 68 million. Next in order, but far behind, come Buddhism with 11 million (centred chiefly in Burma and Ceylon), the Animism of the primitive tribes with 9 million, the Sikh religion, which is Hinduism strongly influenced by Mohammedan monotheism and which numbers 3 million adherents, Christianity with 4 million, Parseeism with 101,000, and Jainism with 1 million.*

We shall consider successively:

Chapter I.—The social conditions of the Indian peasant.
Chapter II.—Rural distress and over-population.
Chapter III.—The exploitation of the peasant.
Chapter IV.—The co-operative credit system.
Chapter V.—The backward condition of agricultural methods.
Chapter VI.—The need for industrialisation.

CHAPTER I

THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE

THE first element of Indian social life, the nucleus of the whole social organisation, is the caste system. Any who would understand the Indian peasant's conditions of life and labour will find it essential to study it. Sir Herbert Risley has defined it as follows : " The caste is a collection of families or groups of families bearing the same name, generally drawn from one particular profession, claiming descent from a common ancestor, human or divine, following the same way of life and regarding themselves as forming one single homogeneous community." *

The caste system is of ancient origin, for Alexander noted its existence even in his day, and the most diverse theories have been put forward as to the causes which gave it birth. According to the one most generally accepted, which is to be found in the sacred books, and is supported by the Brahmans as well as by the majority of European orientalists (who have been led by their purely philological training to accept the hypothesis that the evolution of the literary documents corresponds to the evolution of history), the earliest documents we possess of the Indo-Aryan civilisation show the castes as already fully established. According to the Vedas and the laws of Manu, four castes proceeded from the bosom of

* Quoted by Chailley, *L'Inde.*

Brahma—the Brahman, priest and scholar; the Kshatriya, administrator and warrior; the Vaisya, farmer and merchant; and, finally, the Sudra, the servant of the other castes. The earliest tradition, therefore, would appear to show us four castes, and only four, graded in a hierarchy at the head of which stands the priestly caste, each keeping to its own strictly defined limits, avoiding all contact with the others, forbidding its members to marry or even eat with those of an inferior caste, elaborating, in fine, a collection of rules and collective customs destined to ensure their integrity.

This interpretation calls for a two-fold criticism. First, castes appear to have been far more numerous at all times than one would suppose from the Vedas; to-day they number several thousand, but early texts speak already of " mixed castes," formed, nominally, of fallen members of other castes. This method, however, of explaining the existence of such castes as the result of a lapse involving loss of status, thinly disguises the endeavour of the theorist to depreciate the facts which do not fit into his system, and it seems probable that from the beginning castes were very numerous, and were later classified and graded under the influence of the priestly class.

Secondly, the four castes are not exactly comparable, and could easily be resolved into two large groups. The first three castes, the Brahmans, Kshatriyas and Vaisyas, constitute the " twice-born " and are allowed to participate in the religious rites which have been characteristic of the Aryan civilisation from all time; the Sudras, on the contrary, are not admitted to these ceremonies. They form a subject people, drawn from the primitive tribes in the North and the Dravidians

in the South, and are infinitely below all the other classes. An ancient text puts the murder of a Sudra and that of a frog on the same footing.

The reality is thus far more complex than the earliest texts allow us to imagine, and we have before us at once distinctions of *race* (twice-born), *class* (priest, prince and people) and *caste* properly speaking. The following theory, therefore, suggested by M. Sénart's book,* is, in our opinion, by far the most correct.

I. The caste system is the survival of the old primitive constitution of the family organisation, such as we find at the beginning of Greek and Roman history. The Aryans invaded an India organised in tribes, subdivided into related clans, these again in their turn being split up into families analogous to the *gentes*. In the course of their slow conquest villages were established little by little, some founded by one single clan, others by several. At the same time, while the mass of the Aryan hordes turned towards agriculture, certain families or clans devoted themselves to industrial labour, which was rapidly to become hereditary. Hence the birth of the typical Indian village, with one or two agricultural and several artisan castes whose professional character was to become more and more pronounced till in their main lines they corresponded to the organisation of our mediaeval corporations.

II. As these Aryan villages constituted a minority in the midst of a hostile indigenous population it was necessary to maintain the closest cohesion amongst the conquerors, and to prevent them from being absorbed by the subject race. Hence the distinction between the twice-born, pure Aryans who

* Sénart, *Les Castes*, Paris, 1856.

preserved their traditions and customs, and the coloured natives (it is often said that the social position of an Indian is in inverse ratio to the colour of his skin and the width of his nose) with whom marriage, the sharing of a meal, or any social relationship whatever was forbidden, and to whom were reserved the coarsest forms of toil which offended the Aryan conception of purity. A like distinction is to be found in Rome, but the gulf between patrician and plebeian was narrower because unaccompanied by a difference of colour, and the plebeians succeeded finally in attaining the *jus connubii*, while in India the distinction between the two races has lasted for many centuries.

III. Finally, these distinctions were complicated later by class differences. From the time of the invasion, doubtless, the germ of the idea of social differentiation must have been known to the Aryan tribes; certain clans had furnished chiefs renowned for their bravery, others were hereditarily consecrated to religious offices; thus the distinction between prince, priest, and the common people was already apparent. It was to increase as time went on, and to all appearances a desperate struggle lasted from the eighth to the second century B.C. between the Brahman caste and the Kshatriya, a struggle in every respect like that which set the Pope against the Emperor in mediaeval Europe. In India the Brahman won the day, and from that time onwards all social life was dominated by the sacerdotal class. Meanwhile the people were slowly but surely mingling with the indigenous races, and the castes were multiplying continuously, forming into a hierarchy according to the degree of Aryan descent they could boast and their relations with the Brahman caste. The Brahman, re-

garded thenceforth as a superior being of divine essence, filled with wisdom and monopolising all intellectual knowledge, severed after a brief space all relations with the other classes and laid down the same prohibitions against them with regard to marriage and food as had for so long cut off the Aryans from the native population. The other castes followed his example, imitated him, and strove to rise to his level and to cut themselves off, meanwhile, by a series of rules as numerous as they were complicated, from their inferiors. The outcome was a multitude of castes, superimposed one above another, all united in the respect and adoration they owed the Brahman. It must be admitted that for centuries this organisation has been the strength of India, and has ensured the stability of her social structure. Buddhism, which repudiated the caste system, has been rooted out; the Moslem invasion left it intact; and Mohammedanism itself was drawn into the scheme of this intricate hierarchy in which each endeavoured to rise through copying the Brahman.

To-day the number of these castes is very high, two to three thousand at least, and each is subdivided into sections and subsections, each possessing its own peculiar customs. Some of these castes are merely of a local character; others—and these are the oldest—are to be found throughout the country. Always at the head are the Brahmans, who number nearly fifteen million and represent about 6 per cent. of the whole population. In the second rank come the descendants of the Kshatriyas—princes, great land-owners, and administrators—distributed among innumerable castes; next come those from whom a Brahman may accept water but not food, such as

certain classes of artisans—confectioners, for instance, or perfumers ; below these is the class from whom a man of a higher caste may accept nothing, composed of men such as the barber, who may shave a Brahman but may neither cut his nails nor be present at his marriage. On the lowest rung are the untouchables, whose food, such as fish or meat, is unclean, and whose mere presence is a source of defilement ; so much so that until recently they were forbidden to use the public thoroughfares in certain districts. They consist chiefly of fishermen, certain agricultural labourers, roadmenders, leather workers, and members of the criminal tribes whose hereditary vocation is one of theft, crime, and prostitution. In practice the intermediary distinctions are tending more and more to disappear, and the numerous castes fall into three great divisions : Brahmans, non-Brahmans, and Untouchables.

Each caste has a particular code of life, a ritual that determines in fullest detail how a man should be born, dress, eat, marry, work and die. The rules regarding food were for a long time particularly strict. In principle no man may accept food which has been touched by a member of a lower caste, and in periods of famine men have been known to die of hunger rather than avail themselves of the food prepared by another caste. In the same way a Brahman will throw away his whole meal and refuse to touch his cooking utensils if the shadow of an untouchable passing by has fallen on them. Nevertheless, to-day these rules are tending to be more and more relaxed, and the number of castes from whom even a Brahman may accept food is increasing.

The same regulations apply to marriage, which is

authorised, in principle, only among members of the same caste, although it is possible for a man to marry a woman of a lower caste, whose social standing he raises by the very act of uniting their lives. To ensure that their children shall not infringe the traditional rules by their choice the Brahmans marry them before puberty. In 1921 * 1·8 per cent. of the Indian women married were less than five years old, 4 per cent. less than ten, 13·2 per cent. less than fifteen, 80 per cent. less than twenty. On the other hand, 6 per cent. of the husbands were less than fifteen years of age, 32 per cent. less than twenty, 60 per cent. less than twenty-four. Probably this custom is limited to the higher castes, and in practice these marriages are generally no more than betrothals, the consummation being delayed until puberty ; nevertheless, there are in India hundreds of thousands of mothers aged from twelve to thirteen, and the consequences from the point of view of infantile mortality are terrible. Moreover, the high status of a caste is too often marked by the subjection in which woman lives. In the higher castes she may not travel and no instruction is supplied her, and in the North, where the Moslem influence has made itself felt, a woman keeps purdah and may only go out veiled. Throughout India, in fact, the widow is to this day in a subordinate position. According to popular belief, her husband's decease is attributable to the sins the woman has committed in her previous incarnation and therefore a curse lies upon her. She has not the right to remarry, may not walk in the streets—for a widow brings bad luck—nor share in family festivities, and is reduced to remaining all her life the slave of her

* Census returns.

mother-in-law. For a long while the same customs ruled professional life, and the members of each caste were supposed to follow a hereditary occupation. This is one of the respects in which these rules have weakened most considerably to-day, and in each profession now members of the most varied castes are to be found. Even the criminal tribes are becoming civilised, and are beginning to enter upon industrial occupations.

To sum up ; the caste system has long constituted a self-contained society whose customs had the force of law, with a disciplinary power and a tribunal competent to expel and boycott any member guilty of having violated the rules of the community. This powerful social structure had its advantages ; a collective discipline was imposed upon all its members, a close solidarity enabled weaklings, children, the aged and infirm to be succoured, and spared them the hardships of the struggle for life. Finally, so long as the caste remained bound up with a hereditary profession, competition was reduced, and an equilibrium between supply and demand was achieved which ensured security for all producers. On the other hand the system was, and is still in the country, where its influence, though shaken, yet subsists, an obstacle to initiative and especially to the free expansion of the individual moral conscience. The duty of a Hindu was for long to be faithful above all to the rules of his caste and to follow his hereditary calling, even if it were one of theft or prostitution, while to accomplish acts of virtue which were reserved to a higher caste counted as one of the gravest sins. The notion of an individual moral conscience, independent of all collective discipline, and identical in its essentials in

every man, is entirely absent from Hindu thought, and has only recently appeared, largely through the influence of Christianity and at a moment when the structure of the caste system was beginning to totter.

The caste system formed the fundamental basis of the *village community*. The latter is also of great antiquity, and it is difficult to tell whether it formed an integral part of the Dravidian civilisation, or if, like the castes, it was imported into India by the Aryan conquerors. Most probably both theories are correct, for the peninsular villages long maintained a markedly individual character, differing in many respects from the villages of the North and West; and besides this, the earliest sacred texts, written before the Aryans had come into contact with the Dravidians, already mention village communities governed by princes with the aid of councils of the Elders or *Sabhas*. At the time of the English occupation such communities were general throughout the country, and in 1830 Sir Charles Metcalfe was able to write: "These communities are little republics, supplying all their needs themselves, and practically independent of anything outside. They seem able to endure where nothing else can. Dynasty after dynasty has succumbed, the structure of the village communities remains immutable."

Let us see what the Indian village community is from the social and administrative point of view. A typical village holds from fifty to two hundred families, according to the district, which represents a population of from two to eight hundred inhabitants. The houses are of wood or dried mud and consist of one or two rooms with a verandah, built round a small courtyard open to the sun, like the Roman atrium.

At the back is an uncovered space where refuse is thrown and which constitutes the sanitary provision. One or two houses stand out, with several rooms, sometimes with two storeys and with painted pillars which make them immediately recognisable as the home of some influential family—that of the village chief, the accountant, or the money-lender. There are two or three parallel roads, each occupied by a particular caste or profession ; at the centre is the bazaar, where all the communal life is centred, and near which stands the temple consecrated to Siva, Vishnu, or some other avatar of Brahma. A hundred yards from this agglomeration stand the huts of branches and dried leaves where live the untouchables, constituting from 10 to 20 per cent. of the village population. Their huts contain only one room, often with no other opening than the narrow entry, and men live there mingled pell-mell with the domestic animals in a state of revolting filth.

The majority of the village inhabitants are farmers, and most often belong to one single caste. But they require a few artisans whose business it is to make and keep in repair the necessary implements for agricultural work. These belong, each one, to a hereditary professional caste, and are the servants of the community, attached to the village, and bound to perform only those tasks which are considered indispensable to the collective life of the village. They are paid by the grant of an *inam*, or right to levy, in place of the government, the rent of a particular piece of ground, and by a proportion of the *baluta*, a fixed quantity of produce from each harvest which every peasant is bound to supply to the body of artisans. Payment is thus made in kind, and is made

over, not on the occasion of each service rendered but in a lump sum every year at harvest-time. The artisan has thus a permanent assured income, which binds him to the village and allows the latter to be an autonomous and self-sufficient economic unit. Only those who render services which are considered indispensable to the whole community have a right to the baluta, viz. the carpenter, blacksmith, cobbler, potter, laundryman, currier, the watchman, who is also the roadmender, the ropemaker, messenger, accountant, the village chief, the sorcerer and the priest. The merchant, on the other hand, whose products vary in price according to market conditions, the mason, the thatcher and the teacher, who only satisfy the needs of a small minority, have no right to the baluta and are paid separately for each service rendered.

From the administrative point of view, these village communities could be divided, before the English occupation, into three regional groups according to the importance attached to the village council.

In the West the village chief or *patel* possessed great authority. His office was hereditary, and his remuneration consisted of a portion of the baluta and the grant of a plot of *inam* land, while his duties were to levy the tax, ensure the protection of the village and arbitrate in disputes.

The tax was for a long time levied in kind, in the form of a portion of the annual produce of the fields. At first the crops of the whole village were collected after the harvest into a public granary, and the patel's assessor, the accountant, whose office was also hereditary, who was generally the only man in the village able to read and write and very frequently also a

Brahman, was responsible for its distribution. At a later date we find the tax being raised individually from each farmer, the accountant distributing the produce between the prince, the baluta and the general funds of the village. The tariff varied according to the district and the period from 16 per cent. (the figure ordained by the law of Manu) to 50 per cent. of the net produce (the value of the harvest less the cost of cultivation, without counting labour).

Again, the safety of the village was entrusted to the patel, who had a voluntary militia at his disposal in case of need, and a permanent watchman (likewise hereditary) under his orders. If strangers came to the village it was the latter's duty to note their arrival, to conduct them to the guest-house and see to their comfort, and at the same time to keep a watchful eye on suspicious characters, and ensure that each man should receive the product of his labour. Finally, he performed the task of roadmender, which consisted chiefly in removing carcases of dead animals from the public roads. Like the other village officials, his remuneration was an inam and a portion of the baluta. In case of theft, if the culprit was not discovered, the watchman had to refund the value of the lost goods to the victim ; if he was unable to do so his share of the baluta was not handed over to him, while his land and office were confiscated and transferred to his next-of-kin, the burden of the remainder of the loss being shared out equally through the whole village. This collective responsibility subsists to this day in certain regions, and produces excellent results.

Another function of the patel's office was arbitration in disputes. If the interested parties could not be reconciled, all questions, except crimes of violence

which were heard before the prince, were judged straight away by a *panchayat* or council of six members, consisting of the patel, the accountant, and four other leading men of the village. Its decisions were in most cases final; in any case, when an appeal was possible, it could only be made before another village panchayat. The prince declined to express any opinion of his own, and merely caused the decisions of the council to be carried into effect.

Finally, the patel was responsible for the general welfare of the village community, for the upkeep of the temple, roads and wells, the execution of public works, the holding of religious ceremonies, and for the organisation of the festivities of the community. These public activities were most frequently carried on by means of voluntary co-operation, in which each individual held it an honour to take part.

This organisation of the western villages, typical of the Aryan communities, possessed two features. On the one hand, these communities escaped caste restrictions in large measure, and the village chief was not necessarily a Brahman; on the other, the patel's authority was real, and he bore all the responsibility. There was indeed a village council, but it had no regular powers nor clearly defined functions; it was a body of elders, a collection of influential persons meeting on their own initiative when some important decision was to be taken, or when the patel was guilty of an error which urgently required correction. Its powers were, however, genuine, and the council could pronounce the downfall of an incompetent or dishonest patel and transfer his office to another member of his family.

In the peninsula, on the contrary, the village

assembly, with a series of regularly constituted committees, each having clearly defined functions and definite responsibilities, and meeting periodically, would seem to be a primitive Dravidian institution. But at the same time, side by side with this democratic municipal organisation, we find far greater social narrowness. The Aryans being only a small minority in the peninsula, the hierarchy there is more rigid, and only Brahmans can be village chiefs, or even members of the committees. These communities, moreover, have been more short-lived in the South than in the West. Ever since the end of the seventeenth century the rajahs have been breaking down the autonomy of the villages, and while allowing the non-voting consultative councils to remain purely as advisory bodies, they have themselves nominated the patels, reducing them in this way to the level of representatives of the central power.

The North possessed for a time the same organisation as the West, but during the Middle Ages it was for six centuries under Moslem domination, and this, as we shall see, overthrew the existing system and gave rise to a class of *Zamindars* (landed proprietors), owners of vast estates who very soon became influential members of the village communities and ended by entirely eclipsing the patel. At the same time, the growing weakness of the central power reduced the judicial value of the panchayats to nil, for their decisions no longer received executive force from a higher authority.

British rule, however, has dealt a terrible blow to the village communities. In several regions, it is true, the village chief has been allowed to remain, but English troops have been responsible for the security

of the district, and judgments are pronounced by European judges far from the village and ignorant of all its customs, while taxation is levied by a collector directly from the individual peasant, the patel thus becoming no more than an unnecessary burden on the community with no effective functions.

Finally, the modern evolution of industry has sensibly weakened the position of the village crafts, and it is becoming increasingly difficult for the village communities to remain economically self-contained and independent of the outside world.

CHAPTER II

RURAL DISTRESS

WE have been reviewing the framework of the peasant's social life : the caste system and the village community. Let us now consider his economic situation. What strikes the visitor first of all—and if he prolongs his stay the impression can only deepen—is the terrible poverty of the Indian peasant. We have seen what are his housing conditions ; his clothing, in that climate, is of the most primitive ; hygiene and education are non-existent. As for food, it is utterly insufficient. The Indian peasant family takes only two, sometimes only one meal per day, consisting of a few handfuls of sunflower seeds, oats, barley or millet, more rarely rice. Two-thirds of the peasant population are undernourished, and Sir Charles Elliott, former Governor of Bengal, could declare that 40 million persons do not have one full meal per day.

The extent of this distress is clearly shown in the two principal sources of information which we have at our disposal, statistics regarding the average income of India per head of the population, and the monographs on village life which have been prepared during recent years.

The first valuation of the average income in India, that of Naoroji in 1867, fixed it at 20 rupees per head ; the Famine Commission in 1881 estimated the agricultural income at 18 rupees per head, the non-agricultural at 12 rupees (viz. 30 rupees for the two

together), and the same total was obtained by Sir Robert Giffen in 1903. In 1914, Wadia and Joshi, in their *Wealth of India*, arrived at a figure of 44 rupees for the average income. Professor M. Shah (*Wealth and Taxable Capacity of India*) estimated the average income to be 36 rupees for the period 1900–1914, 58 rupees for the period 1914–1922, and 74 rupees for 1923. In 1917, Professor Slater, estimating the total agricultural production of the province of Madras, found the income to be 75 rupees per head. In 1921, an inquiry conducted in the Bombay region into the budgets of six thousand families, showed that the commonest income was about 75 rupees per head in peasant families, about 100 in workmen's families. In 1924, Professor Brij Narain, calculating the value of the agricultural production of all India, and dividing the total among 173 million peasant farmers, also obtained a figure of 70 rupees per head. The average income in India seems therefore to have grown between 1900 and 1924 from 30 to 75 rupees. As the rupee has during the same period lost about two-fifths of its value the real income has remained practically unchanged. One need only remember, in order to realise fully its negligible value, that 75 rupees equal 750 francs, or £6 sterling, while in 1914 the average income in the United States was £72, in England £50, in France £32, and in Germany £30.

Recent monographs permit us to set forth with even greater precision the wretched condition of the peasant. Professor Mann * states that in a typical village of the Deccan eight families only had an income sufficient to enable them to live solely on the produce of their own land; twenty-eight could only balance their

* H. Mann, *Life and Labour in a Deccan village*, 1917.

budget by means of an income from outside sources, and drew in all 1,749 rupees from the land and 6,710 from industrial and commercial employment; while sixty-seven families, forming the majority, were in a hopeless situation, and each year were obliged to have recourse to the money-lender to cover their current expenses. In a second village, more fortunate in the nature of its soil, but subject to an irregular rainfall which out of every seven gave two excellent years, three medium and two bad, Mann found that during a normal year ten families only could live on the produce of their land; twelve had recourse to other sources of income; while a hundred and twenty-five were unable to make ends meet and had to resort to the money-lender. At the moment of the inquiry, their debts were such that 35 per cent. of the income of these families had to be set aside for the payment of interest. In the Punjab, the administrator Lucas found the average income of a family of from four to five members to be 86 rupees plus 22 measures of grain. From that the State deducted 20 rupees, the purchase of necessaries apart from cereals called for 63 rupees, and 26 measures of grain were required for food. In the accounts of a typical family there was, therefore, a credit of 3 rupees, and a deficit of 4 measures of grain, *i.e.* a total deficit of 2 rupees per head, assuming that the family was not in debt. Once more, Professor Mukerjee has attempted to estimate for India as a whole the proportion of expenses to be ascribed to each section of the family budget, and has found that in a peasant family 50 per cent. of the expenses are for cereals, 94 per cent. for food in general, 3 per cent. only for clothing, 2 per cent. for family ceremonies, and 1 per cent. for medical attendance.

The high proportion of his income devoted to food is the best testimony to the shocking poverty of the peasant.

Its consequences are threefold.

There are first of all the famines, which have occurred from time immemorial in India, but which seem to have multiplied and increased in severity during the nineteenth century — witness the famine of 1770, when one-third of the inhabitants of Bengal perished; the famines of 1784, 1792, 1802 and 1833, when half the inhabitants of Madras, Mysore, and Hyderabad died of hunger; those of 1854, 1860 and 1867, which caused more than a million deaths in the province of Orissa alone; and those of 1873, 1878, 1896 and 1899, which numbered 26 million sufferers and caused over 2 million deaths. Since the beginning of the twentieth century famines have decreased, thanks to the measures at length taken to combat them. Each province has its famine laws, and organises distributions of cereals to the poor classes in times of scarcity. One can count, on an average, two bad seasons out of every seven, and each time one-twelfth of the Indian population is affected. Worst of all, these so-called famines are not the result of a complete lack of food. In the leanest years, India still produces sufficient to prevent her population from dying of hunger, and often the exportation of cereals has been known to continue even in times of want. The famines, therefore, are due solely to the inability of the peasant to buy back the product of his toil and to use for his own advantage the harvest he has gathered. If there is want, it is most probably not the harvest that is insufficient but that part of it which remains for the peasant's use after the State, the landlord and the money-lender have deducted their share.

Poverty and famine, which is only its worst expression, naturally bring in their train a high death-rate —the highest in the world, for it reached 31 per 1,000 according to the census of 1925. The Indian peasant family, insufficiently nourished and decimated by malaria, affords an easy prey to all epidemics. Smallpox and cholera are endemic, plague made its appearance in Bombay in 1896, influenza, which attacked the whole world at the end of the war, was accompanied in India by a bad harvest and numbered nearly 12 million victims—as many as were claimed by the war in all the belligerent countries combined.

The average mortality in India, which was 27·44 per 1,000 for the period 1881–1890, reached 31·31 in 1891–1900, 33 in 1901–1910, 30·31 in 1911–1917, 62 in 1918, 35·8 in 1921, and 31 per 1,000 in 1925. Far from decreasing, Indian mortality is slowly tending to rise. This decline in the vitality of the people appears even more clearly in the figures relating to the probable duration of life. At birth, the probable duration of a man's life in India was 25 years in 1891, 24 years in 1901, 22 in 1921 * ; at the last-mentioned date the figures for Germany were 47 years, for France 45, and 51 for England. The length of an Indian's life is therefore barely the half of a European's. This is due especially to the extremely high rate of infantile mortality, but the difference nevertheless continues in later life ; at the age of 10 the probable length of a person's life is 33 years in India, 50 in France ; at 20 it is 27 years for the one, 42 for the other.

A final consequence arises from the Indian peasant's wretched condition ; he is incapable of being self-supporting, and has to find a supplementary income

* 1925 Census.

either through small industries carried on in the home, or through salaried situations in the larger industrial world.

What are the causes of this distress among the peasants ? At first sight a natural explanation suggests itself : Is not India over-populated ? Has she really the wherewithal to maintain a population of 319 million inhabitants within her borders ? Just as in the nineteenth century Malthus's theory, elaborated, as even its author admitted, as a weapon against the socialism of Godwin, came to reassure the conscience of the great English capitalists by declaring that the workers, with their exaggerated birth-rate, were the authors of their own misery, so to-day the British Government seeks to shelve its responsibility by attributing Indian distress simply to over-population.

The vital statistics of India point to four chief phenomena : *a very high marriage-rate, a moderately high birth-rate, a very slow increase of population, and a normal density.*

I. The marriage-rate is extremely high. For an Indian, marriage is a sacrament which must be accomplished independently of any economic situation. Every man must at the earliest possible date have a son to perform the funeral rites at his death, and we have seen how, in the higher classes, a girl still unwed at a marriageable age is a source of shame to her family. There are, therefore, in India very few unmarried persons ; out of the entire population of all ages only 49 per cent. of the men and 34 per cent. of the women are unmarried, and of these three-quarters of the men are less than fifteen years of age, and three-quarters of the women less than ten years.

II. The Indian birth-rate is high. If one compares the number of births to the total population the figure is in fact 35·59 per 1,000 for 1921, as against 24 per 1,000 in England, and this rate appears practically stationary; the figures, in fact, were 35·83 for the period 1881–1890, 33·28 for 1901–1910, 38·68 for 1911–1917, 35·35 for 1918, and 35·39 for 1921. India, therefore, seems quite untouched by the almost universal phenomenon of a decline in the birth-rate. But if the birth-rate is high, the number of child-bearing women, on the other hand, is relatively low, and the total number of births in comparison with the number of married women of an age to bear children is only 160 per 1,000, as against 196 in England. The high birth-rate arises, therefore, not from their being a specially prolific race, but from the practice of premature marriages.*

III. The increase of population is extremely slow and irregular on account of the high rate of mortality, as the figures below indicate.†

	Population	*Apparent increase*	*Increase of population due to extension of territory*	*Improvement in methods of obtaining statistics*	*Real increase*	*Per cent.*
	millions	*millions*	*millions*		*millions*	
1872	196					
1881	254	23	33	12	3	1·5
1891	287	13	5·7	3·5	24·3	9·6
1901	294	2·5	2·7	0·2	4·8	1·4
1911	315	7·1	1·8		18·7	6·4
1921	319	1·2	0·1		3·7	1·2

* See Wattal, *The Population Problem in India.*

† See Brij Narain. In order to know the real increase of population it is necessary to deduct from the figures provided by each successive census the apparent decrease due to the annexation of new territory, or to more perfect statistical methods.

The increase is quite irregular, this being due to considerable variations in the rate of mortality, which is closely dependent on epidemics and famines.

From 1872 to 1881 the increase was only 1·5 per cent. on account of the famine of 1876, which reduced the population of certain districts of Madras by 25 per cent.; from 1881 to 1891 we find the period of recovery which normally follows each catastrophe. The survivors being the most robust, the death-rate falls below the normal, and the population increased in this instance by 9·6 per cent. In the period from 1891 to 1901 we find two fresh famines, that of 1891, and especially that of 1896, which, added to the epidemic of plague, caused an excess of deaths over births of over 5 million. 1901–1911 is again a period of recovery, aided by the beginning of organised industry. From 1911 to 1921 even the war only cost India 50,000 killed, whereas the epidemic of influenza swept away 12 million, and reduced the increase to 1·2 per cent.

Generally speaking, the average rate of increase in India, 20 per cent. in fifty years—that is to say, 4 per 1,000 per year—is much lower than that of Europe, which during the same period was 7·9 per 1,000, nearly double.

IV. The density of population is not particularly great. India has no doubt thickly populated regions, particularly the rich valleys of the Ganges, where there are 678 inhabitants to the square mile, or Bengal with 414, but in the Punjab the density is only 183 to the square mile, in Madras 197, 143 in Bombay, amounting for the whole of India to 177 inhabitants to the square mile, which equals 68 to the square kilometre, as against 72 in France, 130 in Italy, 134 in

Germany, 154 in Japan, and 189 in England. More important than the density, which may lose all significance if the population inhabits an arid country, is the proportion of arable land per inhabitant. The amount of arable land in the British Provinces was 321 million acres in 1890, and 388 millions in 1920, which shows an increase of 20 per cent. in thirty years, while the population had increased only by 18 per cent. In 1921 the area of arable land for all India (British Provinces and the autonomous states) was 480 million acres, an average of 1·5 acres per inhabitant; and while it was 6 acres in Canada and 3·3 in the United States, it was 1·4 in France, 0·9 in Italy, 0·8 in Germany, 0·4 in Belgium, and 0·3 in England and Japan.*

Moreover, India is one of the most favoured countries of the world from the point of view of agriculture. While her population numbers 17 per cent. of the whole world's, she contributes 64 per cent. of the world's production of rice (26 million tons). Eleven per cent. of the cultivated area of Indian soil is occupied by corn and supplies 5 million tons (12 per cent. of the world's production, as against 27 per cent. from the United States, 13 per cent. from Canada, 7·7 per cent. from France). India has the monopoly of jute, with an annual harvest of 7·6 million cwt.; her cotton harvest of over 10 million cwt. represents 26·6 per cent. of the world's; flax yields 413,793 tons (45 per cent. of the world's production); her tea provides labour for 887,000 inhabitants and yields 44 million cwt. (40 per cent. of the world's production, as against 16 per cent. from Ceylon, 10 per cent. from Java, and 12 per cent. from Japan).

Finally, India is the leading country of the world for

* See R. K. Das, *Production in India*.

cattle (178 million head, representing 142 million oxen and 35 million buffaloes, as against 68 millions in the United States, 31 in Russia, 16 in Germany, 25 in England, and 12 in France), and holds second place for sheep (65 million, against 87 in Australia, 43 in the Argentine, 48 in the United States, 13 in France, and 12 in England). In considering the development of the principal agricultural products, one finds that from 1890 to 1921, when the population was increasing by 18 per cent., the production of rice rose 11 per cent., that of corn 163 per cent., that of jute 30 per cent., of cotton 158 per cent., of tea 120 per cent., making an average of 110 per cent.*

It can be said, then, that there is no absolute over-population in India in the sense of the land being unable to maintain a population of 320 million ; the soil of India is rich, and, were it better cultivated, could furnish far more abundant supplies. The density of population is normal and the rate of increase considerably lower than that of Europe, which, nevertheless, has managed during the nineteenth century to combine a considerable rise in her population with a real improvement in the lot of the masses, and a diminution in the relative proportion of the peasant population.

But here we touch on another problem. If there is no absolute over-population in India, there is relative over-population ; triply relative, to the present system of the distribution of wealth, to the backward condition of agricultural technique, and, lastly, to the retarded industrial evolution of the country.

* R. K. Das, *op. cit.*

CHAPTER III

THE EXPLOITATION OF THE PEASANT

THE land system in India is of a peculiar type, very different from our Western conceptions of land-tenure. It offers two forms of proprietorship: the *ryotwari* type, in which the peasants cultivate their own land individually, sharing in common the services of the village artisans and paying the land revenue to the State through the intermediary of the village; and the *Zamindari* type, where the peasants are merely tillers of the soil, their land being in the hands of a family or group of families descended from a common ancestor, who pay the land revenue directly to the State.

The *ryotwari* type is indisputably the older, and appears to correspond to the primitive traditions of the Aryan race (although some have been anxious to regard it as a Dravidian institution copied later by the Aryans). Although to-day it is the commonest form of proprietorship, existing in about 60 per cent. of the country, authors are unable to agree either on its origin or its judicial character. To some, such as Sir Henry Maine, the ryotwari system appears no more than a decadent and lax form of the original communal proprietorship, a theory which does not seem correct, for in the Vedas and the laws of Manu the ryotwari system is already to be found fully established. The village community, it is true, forms a compact unit, but this does not appear ever to have entailed collective

proprietorship of the land. It seems more likely that when India was invaded by the Aryan tribes the land was allotted to a certain number of families, or groups of families forming clans. In exceptional cases one family constituted a village, holding the surrounding lands as common property ; more often the villages were founded by several families, each possessing its own lands and cultivating them separately, but the whole group remaining unitedly responsible towards the prince for the payment of the tax.

But here another question arises. What exactly is the legal nature of the peasant family's right to the land ? Is it a right of ownership, and is the " land revenue " a tax, or is it not rather a mere right of occupation, the prince (represented to-day by the State) remaining sole proprietor and receiving the rent of his own land ? The latter theory has always been favoured by the central power, and is strongly supported to-day by the British Government, which regards the land revenue not as a tax but as rent, and expects to appropriate in consequence the larger part of the ground-rent.

The other land system, the Zamindari, is of far more recent origin. We have seen that in each village there existed a certain number of inam plots of land, cultivated, like the others, by peasant families, but whose yearly returns, instead of being collected directly by the government, were assigned to the upkeep of the temple or the remuneration of the patel or the village artisans. In the North, under the Moslem domination, the princes formed the habit of allotting certain inam lands to families which had served them faithfully. Moreover, in a large number of villages, and before long in the great majority, the task of collecting the whole revenue was leased out to

farmers-general, who received as payment 10 per cent. of the sums levied. In this way was formed the class of Zamindars, those who had a right to the income from the inam lands, and who were entitled to collect the land revenue for the whole of the village. These Zamindars were not landlords, since they had the right neither to occupy nor to convey the land, but only that of collecting the ground-rent. This right, however, was hereditary and transferable, and as the total of the rent depended closely on the product of the soil, the Zamindars soon began to take an interest in the progress of methods of cultivation and to consider themselves the true landlords, having the cultivators as farmers.

After the British occupation, British land policy passed through four successive stages.

The first period is characterised by systematic robbery. From the outset the East India Company affirmed its right to the entire produce of the soil, and, being anxious to lose none of it, eliminated the hereditary Zamindars and leased out their right to the revenue to the highest bidder for periods of three years. The result was deplorable. The old aristocratic families which took an interest in the progress of agriculture were ruined, their properties passed into the hands of unscrupulous money-lenders, and the new farmers of taxes, who were naturally encouraged by competition to make the highest offers of revenue, found themselves afterwards unable to fulfil them except by grinding the peasants and depriving them of all the product of their labour. In ten years, Bengal, the richest region of India, was ruined, and one-third of the cultivated lands returned to jungle.*

* R. C. Dutt, *Economic History of India.*

The British Government then intervened, and Pitt's Act of 1784 established Crown control over the actions of the East India Company. While the company's sole aim was to grow rich as quickly as possible, and that by a policy of brutal and short-sighted robbery, England's real concern was two-fold: to destroy Indian industry and incapacitate the growing commercial capital which, if directed towards manufacture, might have constituted a dangerous competitor for the rising British industry, and at the same time to develop Indian agriculture, and thereby enrich the country sufficiently for her to become a buyer of British goods and supply in exchange her own food products and raw material. This was the double aim which Lord Cornwallis pursued when, with the Permanent Settlement of Bengal in 1793, he tried to transform the Zamindar tax-gatherers into a class of great landowners who would offer an economic and social foundation for foreign domination. The settlement recognised the Zamindars as landlords, the long-established cultivators of the soil from whom they raised the tax becoming simply their farmers. The State's share in the produce of the land was thenceforward established at a fixed sum which represented at that period 90 per cent. of the rent. The Zamindar's share was therefore 10 per cent. at the beginning, but was to grow larger later with the rise in the value of land and the improvements in methods of cultivation which allowed him to increase the rent. This settlement was of great importance socially. The old feudal Zamindars having been ruined by the exactions of the East India Company, the new great landowners were for the most part money-lenders and merchants whom the company had used as farmers of taxes.

Thus Indian commercial capitalism was turned towards the land, and fixed there, leaving the field free for English industry and retarding India's evolution towards industrialisation by more than a century. But the economic consequences were far from favourable. The Zamindars were not agriculturists, and the majority continued to reside in towns, having intendants to represent them whose one object was to drain the farmers and increase the rent total to the uttermost. The country remained as poor as under the company's rule, and the result of the settlement was only to reduce the tax raised by the government and increase that levied by the Zamindar, without the farmer reaping the slightest benefit.

When, therefore, a series of conquests had considerably enlarged the British possessions, and the land problem arose once more, England abandoned the system of permanent settlements, refused to leave any longer the greater portion of the rent to a new class of landlords who grew rich at the expense of everybody, and confined itself to purely temporary contracts for periods of five, ten, or at most fifteen years. These contracts were made with the Zamindars, the village communities or individual peasants. The "Temporary Zamindari Settlements" predominated in the Punjab, and in the north-west and north of the province of Madras. The temporary agreements with the village communities were tried in the Bombay Presidency by Elphinstone. They would have offered the best solution, as the patel was responsible for levying the land revenue, and this allowed a certain sum to be set aside for the village community for the maintenance of its corporate life, but the experiment was too contrary to Western ideas and was rapidly abandoned. In

the end it was the contract concluded directly with the individual peasant which became general throughout the whole ryotwari region, particularly in the South and West. Thenceforth the village community ceased to appear as intermediary, and all peasants were recognised as owners of their own land so long as they paid regularly the land tax imposed on them.

At the present day the land system is therefore the following :

The landlords, who number about 8 million, hold about 48 per cent. of the land, and employ about 60 per cent. of the peasant population. They are for the most part former princes or Zamindars of the Moslem period, or descendants of money-lenders set up on the land by the East India Company ; or, but more rarely, cultivators of the ryotwari region who have by degrees concentrated in their own hands a large portion of the land. These landlords form an important element of the Indian middle class, and are one of the pillars of the Nationalist movement. The great majority do not even supervise the cultivation of their own land, but live in the towns, taking no interest in their property beyond drawing an income from it. They have about 100 million farmers under their orders, who can be classified into the three following sections : *absolute occupancy tenants* (a very small minority) who have almost the same rights as landlords, for their right of occupation can be handed down by inheritance, and they can possess their land in perpetuity, provided they cultivate it and pay a rent fixed by custom; *occupancy tenants* (also a small minority) who can be dismissed on six months' notice, and whose rent can be increased at the will of the landlord ; thirdly, *ordinary tenants* (80 to 85 per cent.) who are

protected by a series of laws promulgated in the various provinces during the nineteenth century, which for the most part regard as a tenant-farmer any farmer who has occupied his land for a continuous period of over twelve years. He cannot be turned out without a valid reason recognised by the tribunals, and his rent cannot be increased except at a rate and at periods determined by law (6 per cent. every seven years at Oudh, 5 per cent. every seven years at Agra, 33 per cent. every seven years in the Central Provinces, 12·5 per cent. every seven years in Bengal). These laws have been necessitated by the considerable rise in rents which took place during the nineteenth century. Before the English occupation, rents were low on account of the anarchical state of the country and the difficulty of finding farmers. A century of peace and regular increase in the population, added to the mass return to the land of artisans deprived of work, has placed the farmers at the mercy of their landlords. In spite of protective legislation, rents to-day remain very high. H. Mann has found that in two typical Deccan villages the sum exacted by the proprietor was, in the one case, 7 rupees on a nett income (the expenses of cultivation but not the cost of labour being deducted) of 14 rupees, and 2 rupees 12 annas on a nett income of 5 rupees 12 annas in the other. In Bengal the Zamindar deducts on an average 60 per cent. of the nett returns. In the South-West four varieties of agreements are to found.* Under the first type, the farmer bears all the expenses of cultivation and pays a rent of about 100 rupees per kota (1·68 of an acre), the owner retaining only the land revenue, which amounts to about 10 rupees. Under

* Slater, *Some South Indian Villages.*

the second, the farmer still bears all the expenses, but instead of paying a fixed rent he hands over to the landlord one-half or two-thirds of the gross harvest, according to the district. Again, the landlord may provide manure and tools, the farmer contributing his labour and the seed ; in that case the proprietor takes three-quarters of the returns. Finally, the landlord may supply all the capital, the farmer only giving his labour, in which case the former takes seven-eighths.

In addition to rent, there are generally incidental contributions traceable to the quasi-feudal relationships which still exist in the country. Payments are exacted on the occasion of a marriage, or of a festive ceremony in the landlord's family, and fines are imposed on those who for some reason have displeased their master. If they refuse to pay, the landlord, who is often also a money-lender and in this capacity has advanced large sums to the farmers, can ruin them at will. This explains how the rent, which according to most of the legislation is about 40 per cent. of the gross product, usually amounts with these accessories to 50 or 60 per cent. On that the State levies from 10 per cent. in the Permanent Settlement regions to 30 per cent. in those where the agreement is renewed every ten or fifteen years.

In the ryotwari districts, the land is tenanted by roughly 60 million smallholders, who lease their ground direct from the State. Here there is no landlord to deduct his portion, but the State has at all times endeavoured to raise the land revenue to the extreme limit so as to obtain, besides its normal share, the greater part of the rental usually absorbed by the landlord. In the early days of English dominion, the State subtracted roughly half the harvest, about the same

proportion as the Zamindar in other regions. The first ryotwari settlement, that of Sir Thomas Munro in Madras in 1827, fixed the State's share at one-third of the harvest, which was supposed to correspond to half the nett product (gross product minus the expenses of cultivation), but often amounted to two-thirds. Since the end of the nineteenth century, however, with the general rise in prices, the State's share has gradually diminished and to-day is barely 10 to 15 per cent. of the harvest, corresponding to 20 to 25 per cent. of the nett product. H. Mann, in his studies of the Deccan, found that in one village the land revenue was 9 annas per acre in 1844, 11 annas in 1874, 10 in 1904, and 12 to-day, on a gross income of 5 rupees 12 annas and a rent of 2 rupees 12 annas. In this way the State took 13 per cent. of the harvest, corresponding to one-third of the rent. In the second village the land revenue was 1 rupee 12 annas, while the average income amounted to 14 or 15 rupees and the rent to 7, that is to say, 12·5 per cent. of the gross product and 25 per cent. of the rent. Slater, in his examination of *Some South Indian Villages*, has found an even lower figure, varying from 6 to 8 per cent. of the gross product and from 15 to 25 per cent. of the nett product. On the other hand, in the Punjab, where the government has undertaken important measures of irrigation which have considerably increased the soil's annual yield, the total sum deducted by the State reaches an average of 2·8 rupees per acre, corresponding to 35 per cent. of the nett product.* To sum up, it seems very fairly possible to determine the State levy, for India taken as a whole, as 10 per cent. of the harvest, at most 15 per cent. in certain districts.

* Darling, *The Punjab Peasant in Prosperity and Debt.*

In addition to the State levy and the landlord's dues, there are the exactions of the money-lender, which are perhaps the most oppressive of the three, for they represent a particularly heavy burden, which usually brings in its train the seizure of the whole harvest, leaving the cultivator completely spoiled of the product of his land. The Indian peasant's indebtedness arises from three different causes.

I. In most cases the Treasury and the landlord, anxious not to let their share escape them, require the money owing them to be paid at harvest-time, and before the crops are sold. The peasant is therefore obliged to have recourse to short-dated credit, and to ask the money-lender for a temporary loan which he is to repay after the sale of his produce.

II. In a time of scarcity a medium-term credit (three to five years) is necessary. In lean years, in fact, after the State's and the landlord's tolls have been taken, the harvest does not supply enough for the peasant to feed his family through the year. He has, therefore, to approach the money-lender, and borrow either in kind or in cereals what is necessary for the family's subsistence, and sometimes even the seed for next year's crops. These loans should in the normal course of events be repaid during the next favourable year—that is to say, within the next three to five years.

III. The very heavy expenses which the peasant is expected to incur on the occasion of family ceremonies, such as births, funerals, and, above all, marriages, necessitate a very long-term credit.

Marriages, as we have seen, are celebrated very early in India ; in the higher castes they are expected even to take place before the children have attained the age

of puberty. The custom is for the husband to buy his wife, paying to the latter's father a dowry that varies, according to region and caste, from a few hundred to several thousand rupees. Moreover, he must offer his wife jewels of gold, silver or diamonds, which will constitute the family's capital and determine in large measure its social rank. India is on this account a great consumer of precious metals, and every year nearly half the world's production of gold is imported by her and treasured up in family jewels. Further, every marriage entails several days' public rejoicing, to which the whole village and the most distant relations must be invited, and of which musicians and dancers form an essential element. It has been calculated that for one marriage every head of a family spends easily the income from five or six months' labour. As a normal family has occasion to marry at least three children in the space of twenty years, there is roughly one marriage every seven years, and most certainly 5 per cent. at least of the family's yearly income ought to be set aside to meet these social obligations. As this is hardly ever done, obviously the money-lender has to be approached, on the understanding that he is to be repaid if during the next five or six years an exceptional harvest is obtained, before the expenses of another family festivity are incurred. In practice, the money-lender is never repaid and the debt accumulates, while the interest weighs more and more heavily on the family budget.

This domination of the money-lender is no new thing. India has never felt the repugnance towards a loan at interest which the West of the Middle Ages inherited from its Christian traditions ; and, from the Buddhist period onwards, we find men and women

who, being unable to free themselves from debt, became the slaves of their creditors.* In spite of this, up to the time of the British occupation, the money-lender's power was limited by the strong organisation of the village communities. Litigation on the score of debt came within the jurisdiction of the panchayat, and the latter did not hesitate when it considered the money-lender's claims exaggerated to limit the rate of interest or to reduce, in virtue of its office, the principal of the sum due. The English tribunals, on the contrary, utterly ignorant of peasant life, and with their profound respect for the letter of a contract, rigorously applied the articles agreed upon between the parties, and thus placed the peasant completely in the hands of the money-lender. The rate of interest, being no longer limited by custom, has risen to 18 and 20 per cent. on an average, to 30 per cent. for loans in grain, and from 50 to 60 per cent. when the debtor does not offer sufficient guarantee. Further, at the moment of advancing the loan the money-lender deducts 1 anna per rupee, viz. 6 per cent. of the capital, as commission. Finally, being the only man able to read and write, he has complete control over the accounts, increasing the capital of the debt as he pleases and calculating monthly interest on years of thirteen or fourteen months.

The money-lender is entitled to yet another, and that

* This custom subsists to-day in numerous regions, and certain agricultural labourers, such as the *padials* of the province of Madras, are pure serfs, fallen through debt into hereditary dependance upon an owner. Almost always the origin of this system lies in a loan raised by an agricultural labourer on the occasion of his marriage. Being unable to offer any guarantee, he undertakes to work for his creditor until repayment is made, in exchange for a limited quantity of food. Payment is never made, and the padial remains hereditary debtor, attached to his creditor's land, and transferred with it.

not the least, advantage—the opportunity of purchasing the peasant's crops at a low rate. The latter is rarely capable of supervising personally the sale of his produce. He is too ignorant, too far from the centres at which the sales are transacted; above all, when once the necessary cereals to ensure a mere pittance for his family have been subtracted, his entire crop is swallowed up by the Treasury, the landlord, and the money-lender. The last-named buys all the available crops at a price which he fixes on his own authority, pays over the necessary sums for the rent and the land revenue, and keeps the remainder as interest on the money owing to him. He thus inevitably becomes the big grain merchant of India, and it might be said that in reality he, far more than the State, the landlord, or the cultivator, is the true owner of the produce of Indian soil.

It is difficult to determine precisely the total of the sums thus raised by the money-lender. Sir Frederick Nicholson in 1895 estimated the average debt for the province of Madras to be 15 rupees per head, which, with an interest of 18 to 20 per cent., represented a yearly burden equal to 15 per cent. of the gross product. For the period in which we stand, H. Mann found in his first Deccan village a total debt of 13,314 rupees, of which 7,415 had been advanced on personal security, 5,819 on real. The latter appears in three forms: the *nazar gahan*, or ordinary mortgage, allowing the debtor possession of his land; the *tabe gahon*, by which the land passes straight away into the hands of the creditor, who must return it on payment of the debt; the *muddat kharedi*, a deferred sale allowing the creditor to take possession of the land without further formality if the debt is not paid within a

stated time. Interest is 18 per cent. for loans on real estate, 22 per cent. for loans on personal security. The burden naturally weighs more on some families than on others. For the first group, who can supply their needs entirely by the product of the land, the interest only constitutes 4·3 per cent. of the total expenditure. In the other two, where the debtors are obliged to have recourse to a supplementary income, it amounts to 9·5 per cent. and even 11 per cent. in the case of families who, in spite of a supplementary income, cannot manage to balance their budget. If we consider the relation of the interest not to the normal expenditure but to the receipts from the land, which constitute only 37 per cent. of the village revenue, we find that the payment of interest absorbs on the average 25 per cent. of the harvest, double the amount levied by the Treasury. In the second village the situation is practically the same ; the total debt is 29,384 rupees and the average rate of interest 20 per cent. In the first group the payment of interest accounts for 8·9 per cent. of the expenditure, in the second for 5·3 per cent., in the third for 18 per cent. of the expenditure and 35·5 per cent. of the returns from the land. For the village as a whole, therefore, the average burden is three times as heavy as that imposed by the State.

A more general inquiry than that of Mann has been made by Darling * for the whole province of the Punjab. Calculating the total debt from the figures given by the co-operative credit societies, which are very numerous in this region, he finds that 80 per cent. of the families are in debt. The average debt amounts to 463 rupees in capital, representing a figure of 130

* Darling, *The Punjab Peasant in Prosperity and Debt.*

rupees for the tenants-at-will, 290 for the hereditary farmers, 310 for the owners of less than eight acres, and 570 for the proprietors of more than eight. The debt increases with the revenue, the wealthiest landowners being the heaviest in debt, and the money-lender multiplying his loans as soon as weightier guarantees can be furnished. The total debt of the Punjab amounted in 1923 to 900 million rupees, viz. 76 rupees per inhabitant. We have seen that the average income of the Indian peasant is 75 rupees, but the Punjab is, with Bengal, the richest province of the whole country, and for the average of the years 1920–1923 the total annual value of its agricultural produce reached a figure of 1,200 million rupees, a little over 100 rupees per head. The rate of interest being here also 18 to 20 per cent., the toll taken by the money-lender amounted each year to 150 million rupees—13 per cent. of the value of the agricultural product, and here also more than double the sum levied by the State, which never exceeded 6 per cent.

To sum up, the levies on income can be reduced to the following figures :

I. Where the cultivator deals directly with the State he pays 10 per cent. of his harvest returns to the Treasury, and hands over 15 per cent. to the money-lender. He has, therefore, to forego nearly 25 per cent. of his takings, which corresponds to more than one-third of his nett annual income.

II. Where the cultivator is in the hands of a great landowner he pays the latter 40 per cent. at the very least of the product of his harvest, and from 8 to 10 per cent. to the money-lender (the farmer being less heavily in debt than the landlord), viz. a total equal to half his gross harvest and two-thirds of his nett income.

CHAPTER IV

THE CO-OPERATIVE CREDIT SYSTEM

THE co-operative movement in India is of recent origin. It was in 1882 that Sir William Wedderburn, then a judge at Poona, suggested the establishment of an agricultural bank for the district. It was to receive on deposit the savings of the middle-class townspeople, and advance loans for short and moderate periods to the peasants ; besides this, it was to help them to settle their debts to the money-lenders. To make this possible Sir William suggested the issue of long-term bonds, the interest on which was to be guaranteed by the provincial government, who would further be asked to grant subsidies for the first years of the bank's functioning. But the financial strain thus demanded of the State was too great, and Wedderburn's proposal was set aside. In 1892, Sir Frederick Nicholson was appointed to enquire into the possibilities of founding agricultural banks. He ascertained that the " nidhi "—a sort of native mutual credit society—existed already in the South of the peninsula. A certain number of peasants combined to subscribe a small sum annually, which was repaid at a rate of 102 rupees for every 82 paid in, in a lump sum drawn by lot at the end of seven years. In the meantime advances at short and moderate credit were granted to every member to the amount of half his payments, at an interest of 6·25 per cent. Having

studied the working of these " nidhis," and extended his investigation to the whole European co-operative movement, Sir Frederick Nicholson accorded the warmest praise to the organisation of the co-operative credit societies of the Raiffeisen type in India. The idea made its way slowly, and in 1904 the Indian Government passed an Act with a view to the formation of co-operative societies in town and country; the former with unlimited, the latter with limited liability. The provincial governments were to nominate Registrars to be responsible for the organisation of the movement, the establishment of local societies and the supervision of their activities, and who were further expected to advise on matters requiring consideration, and to verify the accounts. Co-operative societies were established rapidly throughout the whole country, and such was their progress that in 1912 an Act was passed authorising the foundation of co-operative societies for other purposes than credit, and establishing central banks which were intended to co-ordinate and finance the activities of the local societies in a given district.

The present-day organisation of the co-operative system of credit consists of a three-storied structure: *primary societies*, *central banks*, and *provincial banks*.

I. The village primary societies have unlimited liability. A minimum of ten members is necessary for their constitution, and these ten unite in order to obtain credit, and pledge themselves as a body on the strength of their collective liability. Because of this collective liability it is essential that all the members should have the chance of being acquainted and have complete confidence in each other. The society therefore does not extend beyond the village, and

should at the outset consist of only a small number of absolutely reliable members. It is governed by a *panchayat* of four or five members, elected at a general meeting of the society.

Funds are obtained from entrance fees, from deposits made by members or the savings of other villagers, from advances made by the central banks, and from the issue of shares. There are, in fact, two kinds of primary societies. The majority keep to the original Raiffeisen type of unlimited liability, but a growing number require their members to subscribe for a certain number of shares by annual payments spread over ten or twenty years. These shares constitute a realisation in advance of one part of the unlimited liability, they afford greater financial stability to the society, they supply it with liquid funds, serve to encourage economy, and above all to give their holders a sense of their responsibility as members of the society.

The funds obtained in this way are used to advance loans of three different types to members : *short-term* (one year) for current expenses, such as payment of taxes or rent before the sale of the harvest ; *medium-term* (three to five years) for the purchase of cattle and farm-stock ; and *long-term* (over five years) for improvements to the land, family ceremonies, or the payment of long-standing debts. The sums are advanced on personal security (some relative or member of the same caste standing surety), or real security (mortgage on land). The rate of interest remains fairly high at first, for the society's object in granting privileges is to gain plentiful reserve funds for itself. The rate varies, according to the district and the security offered, from 8 to 15 per cent. No

member may borrow beyond a given maximum figure (ten times what he has paid into the society), and, theoretically at least, no loan should be granted before a careful investigation has been made of the need for it and the borrower's capacity to repay.

Profits are at first paid without deduction into the reserve fund. A small number of societies keep this fund in their own hands and put it to immediate use, but the majority prefer to deposit it at the central bank of the district and allow their borrowing capacity to increase. Some co-operatives pay a small dividend to their shareholders after a period of ten years—a rather serious mistake, which tends to develop a mercenary spirit and cause hostility between the borrowers and the other shareholders. The greater number therefore decline to work on these lines, and continue to let their entire profits accumulate in the reserve fund, unless they devote them to social work in the village, in particular the foundation of schools. Very few adopt the practice of making any return of money to the lenders.

The co-operative movement has made genuine and rapid progress since the law of 1904, as the following figures show.*

	Societies	*Members*	*Capital*
			Rupees
1906–1907	200	80,000	1,400,000
1911–1912	8,000	397,000	53,500,000
1916–1917	20,000	1,000,000	122,300,000
1922–1923	56,000	2,102,000	356,000,000

These figures relate to the body of societies taken as a whole, including the primary societies and the central

* Report of the Committee on Co-operation, held in Madras.

and provincial banks. As to the primary societies themselves, in 1924 there were 9,435 in the Punjab (1 per 2,195 inhabitants), 4,000 in Burma (1 per 2,778), 80,000 in Madras (1 per 3,113), 8,368 in Bengal (1 per 3,561), and 2,860 in the Bombay Presidency (1 per 6,153). As each society contains, according to the province, from 30 to 80 members, and these, together with their families, represent from 150 to 500 persons, it has been calculated that the co-operative movement touches roughly 10 per cent. of the agricultural population of the Punjab, 9 per cent. in Madras, 6 per cent. in Burma and as many in Bengal, 4 per cent. in the Bombay Presidency, 2 or 3 per cent. in the rest of India.

The Punjab is therefore incontestably the leading province for the co-operative movement. In 1928 * it numbered 14,427 primary societies, with 414,000 members—an average of 30 per society. Their working capital was 63,400,000 rupees, of which 37 per cent. represented the capital and reserve funds of the societies, 3 million accrued from members' deposits, and 2·7 from other savings, the remainder representing loans from the central and provincial banks. Out of the loans granted during the year, which amounted on an average to 100 rupees, 26 per cent. were for payment to money-lenders, 10 per cent. for the sale of the harvest, 9·8 per cent. for family ceremonies, 9·3 per cent. for payment of the tax, 6·3 per cent. for the purchase of land, 4·2 per cent. for improvements in methods of cultivation. At the end of the year a total of 25½ million rupees had been sunk in advances; 15 million, representing the loans of an average duration

* Annual Report of the Working of the Co-operative Societies Act in the Punjab, 1928 and preceding years.

of three years, had been repaid in the course of the year; 3½ millions (14 per cent.) which had matured had not been repaid.

In Madras,* on December 31, 1927, there were found to be 11,000 societies and 700,000 members, an average of 65 members per society. Their working capital was 49 million rupees, of which 5,837,000 represented the share capital, and 1,982,000 individual deposits—members' deposits amounting to 700,000 rupees, those of non-members to 1,280,000. The government advances totalled 811,000 rupees, and those of the central banks 37 million. In the course of the year these 11,000 societies had granted 198,000 loans amounting to a total of 23½ million rupees, an average of 160 rupees per loan. Of these 37 per cent. served to pay long-standing debts, 16 per cent. were to meet farm expenses, 7 per cent. were devoted to the purchase of cattle, 6 per cent. to payment of the tax, 8 per cent. to the sale of produce, 10 per cent. to family ceremonies, 5 per cent. to the purchase of land, 8 per cent. being for current expenses. 27 per cent. of the loans were granted for one year, 12 per cent. for two, 43 per cent. for a period of from two to five years, 17 per cent. for longer than five years. Finally, the sums repaid during the year amounted to 42 per cent. of the sums advanced at the beginning of the year, and to 27 per cent. of the total advances made by December 31.

In the Bombay Presidency † there were found to be 4,022 societies in 1927 with 260,000 members—an average of 65 members per society. The working capital was 34½ million rupees, of which 30 per cent.

* Annual Reports, etc., Province of Madras, 1920–1928.
† Annual Reports, etc., Province of Bombay, 1920–1928.

represented the society's capital (10 million plus 350,000 reserves), 6·8 million members' deposits, and 4·2 those of non-members, the remainder accruing from advances made by the central and provincial banks.

Over the primary societies are the central banks, 378 in number, including 88 in Bengal, 57 in Bihar, 64 in the United Provinces, 41 in the Punjab, 32 in Madras, and 20 in the province of Bombay and in Burma. They are of three kinds: those in which any one is entitled to be a shareholder, though these mostly consist of the capitalists in the towns; the banking unions, whose membership is confined exclusively to the local co-operative societies; and banks which are run on a combination of the two systems. The banking unions, which centre mainly in the Punjab, conform most closely to the co-operative ideal, but apart from a few exceptional cases they seem as yet premature. The peasant's education is too rudimentary for the primary societies to contain members capable of directing a central bank. It is inevitably forced to turn to the resources and capabilities of the town-dwelling middle class, and for the time being the most satisfactory and the most common type of bank is the mixed type, in which the shareholders can be either private individuals or co-operative societies.

The funds of the central banks are drawn from the following sources:

(1) The *issue of shares*, which may be held by urban capitalists or primary societies, as the case may be. The law of 1912, nevertheless, forbids any private shareholder to hold more than one-fifth of the capital or more than 1,000 rupees in shares, besides which most of the banks have taken measures to ensure a

majority in the administrative council to the representatives of the co-operative societies, either by reserving them special shares or by determining that each private shareholder shall only have a smaller number of votes at the general meeting than corresponds to the number of shares he holds, *e.g.* 1 vote for 5 shares, 2 votes for from 5 to 20, etc.

(2) *Sums placed on deposit*, either by incorporated primary societies, who use a large portion of their income in this way, or by private persons, shareholders or otherwise.

(3) *Loans* granted by another central bank, a provincial bank, or the government.

(4) *The bank's own reserves*. Banks are bound by law to pay a minimum of 25 per cent. of their profits into the reserve fund, and the proportion is often carried as high as 50 per cent., at least in the early stages. The bank utilises the reserve fund itself, or, more frequently, deposits it with a provincial bank. The remainder of the profits are paid out in dividends to the shareholders, whether these are private individuals or societies. A few banks only are beginning to limit the rights of private shareholders to a fixed rate of interest, and to reserve the rest of the profits exclusively to the societies, the dividends being in proportion to their loans. The capital thus amassed is used to advance money to members. As most of the banks have their offices in the chief town of the district, and were originally urban credit societies, they often supply loans to their private shareholders. But this practice is on the decline, and the banks are tending more and more to specialise in the transactions which form their chief concern—the granting of credit to village primary societies.

The Punjab numbers 46 mixed central banks and 72 banking unions. Their working capital is 60 million rupees, of which their own capital amounts to 5 million. Societies' deposits amount to 4,800,000, those of private individuals to 43 million. The latter have considerably increased during recent years (in 1927 they amounted to 36 million), and this in spite of the fact that the rate of interest has decreased from 7 per cent. to 5 per cent. They are derived almost exclusively from the middle class—6 million rupees from public bodies, 7 from officials, 5 from the liberal professions, 3·6 from the commercial class, 4·6 from women, and 2·6 from miners. In Madras there are 31 central banks with a working capital of 58 million rupees, of which $4\frac{1}{2}$ million represent share capital, $11\frac{1}{2}$ the reserve fund, 42 million the deposits. Bombay again numbers 19 central banks with a working capital of $22\frac{1}{2}$ million, of which $4\frac{1}{2}$ constitute capital and 18 million the deposits.

The central banks therefore play an essential part in the Indian co-operative movement. So great, in fact, is their influence, that one wonders if it has not exceeded its limits, for the banks tend to eclipse the primary societies completely, and to become themselves the real unit of the co-operative organisation. For while in Europe the function of the central banks is merely to supply capital to the affiliated societies, and to ensure uniform distribution of financial resources, in India they do all the work of organisation, government, supervision, and inspection of the primary societies, which are thus reduced to the level of mere village branches. We have seen that nearly 80 per cent. of the resources of these primary societies are derived from loans advanced by the central banks.

The societies themselves receive few deposits and place their entire reserve fund at the disposal of the central establishment. Not having the necessary resources available, they find it difficult to advance loans themselves, and can merely pass on the requests to the central bank of their district. The latter then investigates the case, estimates the applicant's ability to pay the debt, and, after several weeks' consideration, gives the required credit—too late, often, if the request has been made at the beginning of harvest in order to pay the tax or facilitate the sale of crops. Moreover, the central banks are not purely co-operative organisations ; a large number of their shareholders are still private persons, and technical details of banking organisation oblige them to entrust responsible positions to members of the urban middle class, who have little understanding of rural problems. In this way the banks too often end by considering themselves in the nature of savings banks, rather than as existing for purposes of credit, and to solicit profitable investments rather than loans that would benefit agriculture. It was necessary for the central banks to have the predominating influence in the beginning, when the majority of the primary societies were incapable of managing any money whatsoever, and too incompetent to take any initiative themselves ; but with the progress of the co-operative movement the village societies have endeavoured to emancipate themselves, and have striven to improve their methods by associating together in supervising and guaranteeing unions.

These supervising unions made their appearance first of all in the province of Madras, where, in 1927, there were 366, grouping together 10,709 societies out of 11,000, an average of 30 societies

per union. The movement rapidly became general, and similar unions have recently been founded in Bengal and at Bombay. They are limited liability companies with a very small capital (for they have no expenses beyond those of administration) subscribed exclusively by the co-operative societies belonging to them. They employ inspectors, who visit these societies, examine their financial position, audit their accounts, and supply all the necessary information for their working. As they are acquainted with the exact financial situation of each society, they are able to collect the requests for loans, estimate their importance, judge of the security offered, and transmit them to the central bank accompanied by an authoritative opinion, thus allowing the latter to make its decision on the documents furnished without conducting a special enquiry into each request.

The unions are, moreover, adopting the habit of drawing up at the beginning of the year provisional estimates of loans to be required at short or longer credit for each affiliated society. These estimates are submitted for approval in the mass to the central bank, which can then meet without delay all requests for loans that are within the estimated limits, and need only conduct a special enquiry in the case of requests for long-term loans.

In certain districts, the Central Provinces, Bihar, Bombay, and especially Burma, the unions go further, and offer security themselves for all or part of the loans raised on their recommendation. This liability is not unlimited, as in the case of the primary societies, but each constituent organisation stands surety up to a given sum for the loans effected by the other societies, usually to the amount of half their working capital.

This guarantee increases the credit of the primary societies and widens their autonomous powers. The union, in fact, examines the financial position of each society itself, and determines the total of its borrowing capacity. The bank itself has no further dealings with the individual societies, relying entirely on the security given by the guaranteeing union. The system works admirably in Burma, where at present no primary society is registered unless it belongs to a guaranteeing union, to which it may not be admitted except by consent of four-fifths of the societies already affiliated. But in the other provinces the guaranteeing unions seem, on the contrary, to have ended in failure. They have not held regular meetings, have furnished imaginary guarantees, and have accepted the proposals of constituent societies without conducting a serious enquiry into their borrowing capacity. The central banks have consequently taken no account of the security they offer, and have been forced to retain all their powers of control over the primary societies in order to safeguard their own interests. As a result the guarantee societies have in most districts been replaced by control unions. In Bombay, for instance, only 34 guarantee societies are to be found to-day as against 59 control unions. Well-organised unions for control procuring precise information on the financial position of each society for the real co-operative central banks (those from which private shareholders would be definitely excluded) would certainly seem to offer the greatest security and ensure the best possible organisation of the co-operative credit system in India.

The control unions make it possible to organise the primary societies, and to ensure the minimum of

delay in the granting of short-term loans and of loans for slightly longer periods. But we have seen that from 20 to 40 per cent. of the grants, according to the district, were devoted to the repayment of sums previously furnished by money-lenders. The cultivators are, in fact, heavily in debt, and if they join a co-operative credit society the money-lender exacts immediate repayment of his entire loan, threatening to seize the land of those who are unable to meet his demands. A long-term grant for the payment of previous debts is, therefore, the first step to be taken if a man does not wish to incur certain ruin. And yet that is by no means the business of the co-operative credit societies, even of those associated in unions of control. As nearly all their resources are derived from deposits or short-term loans they could not immobilise them without risk, as they do only too often, and their business is exclusively to supply the peasants with short- and medium-term loans which enable them to improve their methods of cultivation.

As a result the notion of founding special banks for long-term loans has made its appearance during recent years, and land mortgage banks, having come into existence in Madras, have spread rapidly through Bengal, and especially the Punjab.

The share capital is contributed by the central and provincial banks, the primary societies, and by individual peasants, borrowers subscribing to a 10 rupee share for every 500 rupees advanced. The banks may issue bonds at 7 per cent. for a sum equal to fifteen times the amount of their capital, and in several provinces the governments themselves subscribe to a number of bonds equal or proportionate to that sold directly to the public.

The mortgage banks usually limit their activities to a very small area, a radius of perhaps six miles, on account of the difficulty of estimating the income from the land. They grant loans for a period which, theoretically, should be twenty years, but at the present moment is never more than ten, the peasants being still too lacking in foresight for loans extending over too long a period to be granted them without risk. The sum advanced is guaranteed by two sureties and a mortgage on the borrower's land, and must be used exclusively for payment of money-lenders' debts or for important improvements on the land. Applications for the sake of purchasing ground are for the time being everywhere refused, and no loan may exceed 2,000 rupees in Madras or 5,000 in the Punjab, nor fifteen times the income of the land mortgaged.

It is still too early to express an opinion on the success of these institutions for financing agriculture. They meet a certain need, but up to the present the smallholders appear to have made little use of them. In 1928, 44 per cent. of the borrowers in the Punjab possessed over 25 acres, 37 per cent. from 10 to 25, only 19 per cent. were smallholders owning less than 10 acres. An immense amount of educative work is necessary to teach the peasant to meet long-term obligations and to pay his debts punctually. In 1928, 16 per cent. of the Punjab borrowers were behindhand.

Finally, over the central banks there is in each province a provincial bank, whose business is to centralise operations. A large number are former central urban credit banks which have enlarged their field of operations. In this way the Urban Bank at Bombay, founded in 1906, issued in 1911 14,000 new

shares at 50 rupees, and three times that number of debentures on which the government guaranteed a minimum interest of 4 per cent. At the present moment the bank advances loans to the central and provincial banks, as well as to the primary societies, which loans may extend over a period of from nine months to ten years at a rate of 6 to 8 per cent. A dividend of 9 per cent. is given to shareholders and half the supplementary profit is refunded to the borrowers. At first the shareholders were exclusively capitalists belonging to the cities, but as they were unacquainted with the needs of the agricultural societies, they are being gradually supplanted by the primary societies. In 1927 there were still, however, 977 private shareholders owning 718,000 rupees' worth of shares, and 680 societies holding shares to the value of 283,000 rupees.

The Central Urban Bank at Madras, founded in 1904 as the city bank, its shares then being solely held by private individuals, very shortly began to advance loans to the primary agricultural societies. In 1920 it became the provincial bank, with a capital of 600,000 rupees, representing 2,000 preference shares sold to private individuals, and 4,000 to primary societies and central banks, each central bank which had subscribed to a number of shares equal to 10 per cent. of its own capital being entitled to a representative on the governing board. While the private shareholders were entitled to a minimum of thirteen representatives, these were not to exceed half the number of the representatives of the central banks. Of the profits realised 25 per cent. is carried to reserve, the remainder provides a dividend which must not exceed 9 per cent., and also a bonus for the bank

employees. Since 1920 a large number of the shares belonging to private persons or to the primary societies have been bought by the central banks, who are tending to become the only shareholders; in 1927 private persons owning only 184 shares and the central banks 5,689. Deposits of private individuals amounted to 5 million rupees, those of municipalities to 3, those of the societies and central banks to 4. The provincial bank has continued its practice, dating from the time when it was an urban bank, of advancing loans to private individuals, but the number of these is constantly decreasing, and in 1927 amounted to only 1 million out of 7.

In the Punjab the provincial bank has 1,200 shareholders, all co-operative societies. Its working capital exceeds 7 million rupees, of which 1 million represents its own capital and 6 million the deposits made by the central banks. As the latter are no longer authorised since 1928 to advance each other loans, they place their entire reserve funds in the provincial bank. Out of this capital the latter has granted 2 million loans during the year, investing the remainder in State bonds.

Since 1920 Bengal also has had its Federation of Central Banks, with a capital of 1 million rupees, in which the central banks of the province are the sole shareholders. Similar banks are to be found in the United Provinces, in the Central Provinces, Burma, and, in fact, all the districts where the co-operative movement has made any serious progress. In the majority of these banks the deposits are so high as to exceed considerably the sum paid out in loans, and the banks do not know how to use their surplus. On the other hand, those of Bihar and Burma have insufficient

resources to meet the requirements of the affiliated societies. The question of founding an inter-provincial bank, to centralise credit transactions for all India, and ensure a better distribution of available resources, is accordingly coming increasingly to the fore.

If the co-operative movement has gained ground considerably in India as a whole, particularly since the war, its progress nevertheless remains negligible by comparison with the aim pursued. In the majority of the villages the money-lenders reign supreme as in the past, and the peasant's complete lack of culture and education make it extremely difficult to recruit competent members for the panchayats of the primary societies. A long process of education will be necessary to train him to meet his obligations and make his payments within the time agreed.

To conclude, the weak point of the co-operative movement is that it was brought into being by official enterprise. The British Government has left no stone unturned to ensure its success, and the activity of the Registrars in the various provinces, who have devoted themselves whole-heartedly to their task, and have accomplished admirable feats of organisation, is beyond praise. It would seem, indeed, that the rise and progress of the co-operative movement will be regarded historically as the greatest benefit conferred by British rule in India. Unfortunately, up to the present, official endeavour has received little effectual aid from Indian sources. The peasants are still too uneducated to act for themselves, the great landowners and the money-lenders, whose interests are generally closely allied, have reason to regard the movement as a menace to their privileges, and the intellectuals, who should be at its head, are entirely absorbed by

Nationalist political activities and do not furnish the support it would be legitimate to expect from them in an undertaking infinitely more far-reaching in its influence on the suffering peasant masses than the attainment of autonomy or even of complete political independence. It is on account of the indifference shown by the mass of the population that the co-operative system makes such slow progress ; nevertheless, it offers to-day the only effective means of emancipation for the peasant.

CHAPTER V

ANTIQUATED AGRICULTURAL METHODS

ONE of the main causes of the distress among the peasants is the present distribution of wealth in India, and the toll levied by the leisured classes on the produce of the land. But this does not suffice to explain the tragic situation of the farmer. Even if the higher classes were to go, and if the tax were abolished, the land could not, under the conditions in which it is cultivated at the moment, yield sufficient food for its population. Das * has calculated that the principal harvests of India supplied in one year a total of 0·83 million calories per inhabitant, while the indispensable minimum to maintain life in the human body is 1·27 million, and agricultural production in Italy yields 1 million calories per inhabitant, in France 1·80, in Germany 2, and 4·63 in the United States.

There is, therefore, a further reason for the poverty of the peasants, and that is the very low productiveness of the soil, which becomes obvious on comparing the area cultivated with the return obtained. In corn, as we have seen, India furnishes 11·7 per cent. of the world's production ; but then she cultivates 13 per cent. of the area given up to the cereal throughout the whole world ; in cotton she supplies 26 per cent. and cultivates 36 per cent. of the world's area, in maize

* Das, *Production in India*, 1924.

she supplies 2 per cent. and cultivates 4 per cent., in flax 20 per cent. and cultivates 30 per cent., in mustard 84 per cent. and cultivates 90 per cent., in rice 64 per cent. and cultivates 67 per cent. For jute alone the situation is reversed, and India produces 99 per cent. of the world's production on 83 per cent. of the area cultivated. Taking these products all together, we find that India occupies 50 per cent. of the area given up to their cultivation and only furnishes 40 per cent. of the total production.*

If we examine the product per acre we come to the same conclusion, that for nearly every kind of crop the average return is far lower in India than in the other countries.†

CWT. PER ACRE

	Average in all countries	*India*	*Proportion per cent.*
Corn	3·8	3·5	92
Barley	4·4	4·4	99
Maize	6·4	3·9	59
Rice	6·5	6·3	96
Cotton	0·6	0·4	73
Jute	5·1	5·2	105
Flax	2·0	1·4	73
Average	3·8	3·4	89

This inferiority stands out all the more clearly after a comparison with the principal countries producing each of these commodities. India produces 15·7 cwt. of rice, the United States 20, Japan 35, Italy 39. The yield of corn is 8 cwt. in India, 8 in the United States, 14 in Germany, and 15 in Japan ;

* R. K. Das, *Production in India.*
† R. K. Das, *op. cit.*

that of cotton 1·1 in India, 1·6 in the United States, 2·9 in Egypt. India has therefore an average agricultural return lower by 12 per cent. than the average return of the other great countries of the world ; and this although she is naturally one of the most fertile countries that exist.

Let us see what are the causes of this low productiveness. Three particularly important ones may be mentioned : waste of natural resources, inadequate farming equipment, and the peasant's own physical, intellectual and moral incapacity.

Only a limited area of arable land is utilised for productive ends. A considerable portion is still uncultivated, while great stretches are allowed to lie fallow. In the British Provinces the proportion of efficiently cultivated land fell from 55·7 per cent. in 1884 to 54·6 per cent. in 1921 ; in the same period the proportion of waste land rose from 8·5 to 15·4 per cent., and fallow-land decreased from 36 per cent. to 29·3 per cent. Taking the country as a whole, including British India and the autonomous states, out of 480 million acres of arable land 266 million (*i.e.* 57 per cent.) were being utilised, while 27 per cent. remained waste, and 16 per cent. lay fallow. Further, with the tropical climate and abundant rainfall, two harvests per year could be obtained in numerous regions : a possibility which has been achieved, so far, over an area of only 30 million acres, no more than 6 per cent. of the arable area.

The high proportion of waste ground is due in large measure to naturally fertile land receiving an inadequate water-supply, or receiving it at too irregular intervals during the year.

The prosperity of Indian agriculture depends above

all on irrigation, which, by watering dry soil and regulating the distribution of moisture, can increase the returns of a district by from 50 to 60 per cent. Irrigation is effected by means of wells, reservoirs, and canals. The wells and reservoirs are usually private property, but cultivators, particularly in Bengal and the Punjab, are tending more and more to form associations in this matter and to establish co-operative irrigation societies. As to the canals, the State is in most cases responsible for their upkeep. In 1921, 29·6 per cent. of the irrigation was provided by wells, 14·8 per cent. by reservoirs, 5·2 per cent. by private or co-operative canals, and 43 per cent. by government canals. After a serious decline at the beginning of the British occupation, irrigation has made great strides since the end of the nineteenth century and is the cause of whatever progress has been achieved in Indian agriculture. During the last years the area of irrigated land has risen from 29 million acres in 1890 to 57 million in 1921, representing a canal length of 67,000 miles, and an increase in the harvests worth over 1,400 million rupees. The irrigated area is at its highest in the Punjab, where it amounts to 10 million acres (60 per cent. of the cultivated area). Next comes Madras with 7 million acres (30 per cent. of the cultivated area), Sind with $3\frac{1}{2}$ million (73 per cent.), the United Provinces with 3 million. In the Punjab a whole district, that of Lyallpur, has been won from the desert and has become one of the most fertile regions of India. At the moment three great schemes are in progress. The Sukkur dam will be a mile long and will pour water from the Indus into seven canals, allowing 5 million acres to be irrigated.

The Sutlej dam in the Punjab will complete work already executed, will ensure a regular distribution of water to 5 million acres which depend at the moment on the irregular supplies of the monsoon, and will irrigate 4 million acres now lying waste. The great reservoir of the Cauvery river in Madras will make it possible to regulate the water-supply over a million acres, and to cultivate 30,000 acres of fresh ground. To this end a lock is being planned, capable of storing over 90 million cubic feet of water, and of distributing it by means of canals over 62 miles in length.

It will be seen that the British Government has exerted itself very considerably in the matter of irrigation, and its achievements during recent years should certainly be recorded to the credit of British rule in India. Further progress in this line will enable the area of waste land to be greatly reduced, but a long process of education will be needed to teach the peasant the use of fertilizers, and the practice of the rotation of crops which alone can make the diminution of fallow-land possible.

Here we come to the second point, the inadequacy of the farming equipment and of the methods of cultivation. The peasant possesses only rudimentary and quite unsatisfactory implements to till his land : a plough, a cart, a spade, and a pick are more often than not his only tools. Moreover, these are few and far between, and of poor quality. There were only 7 million carts to be found in India in 1921 and 27 million ploughs, and the latter being too light only scrape the surface of the ground instead of harrowing it deeply. The seed used is of bad quality, furnished by the money-lender, who sells it very dear and takes no interest whatsoever in ensuring that it shall be well

chosen. It is kept in jars or placed in a corner of the room, where it grows moist and is often nibbled by insects and rats. Too often, at sowing-time one part of the seed has germinated, and the remainder only yields a feeble return. This would be avoided if the peasant were to collect the seeds from the best plants in his fields a few days before harvest, and keep them for the following year in tightly sealed earthenware pots, but the entire crops are usually pledged to the money-lender, who refuses the cultivator the right to collect anything before they are gathered.

The only fertilizer used is manure, and even then a large quantity of it is lost to the farmer, for after being dried in the sun it is commonly used for heating. And if India possesses an abundance of live-stock (178 million head of horned cattle), the farmers draw no profit from rearing them, for their religious belief forbids them to kill animals. The cattle multiply, therefore, in complete freedom, without any measures whatsoever being taken to ensure rational selection, and so great is the number of animals that the pasture is insufficient to maintain them. The majority are starved and too weak to make any strenuous physical effort, or to give a plentiful supply of milk. A large number, past both reproduction and work, continue to exist in inactivity, and die of old age after having caused their owner heavy expense without bringing him any return. Indian cattle, far from being an instrument of labour, are a heavy burden on the country, and experts estimate that 33 per cent. of the animals are superfluous.

Since the war, strenuous efforts have been made to improve agricultural methods, and here also they have taken the form of co-operation, the cultivators

associating together for purposes of buying, selling, and rearing.

The purchase in common of the necessary farm stock, particularly seed, fodder and manure, offers the farmer undeniable advantages, for it allows him to escape the money-lender, and by obtaining his supplies direct from the open market to procure better quality goods at a lower cost. Unhappily, co-operative societies for this purpose are very difficult to organise on account of the small requirements of the peasants, who use very little manure or fodder, and cannot be made to understand the necessity of buying good quality seed. The few purchases made are insufficient to warrant the creation of special societies, and in most villages it is the co-operative credit society which assumes this new function. In Madras the unions co-ordinate the orders given by their affiliated societies, and effect the purchases for several villages. Occasionally one finds special associations, founded at the instigation of the credit co-operatives, but having since become autonomous, such as the Hoshiapur seed-purchasing society in the Bombay Presidency, or the Manipur seed society, which distributed in 1927 209 maunds (6½ tons) of corn seed, keeping 479 maunds (nearly 15 tons) in reserve for the following year. In the Punjab there are a few purchasing societies for American cotton seed. Generally speaking, the co-operative system of purchase, which underwent considerable expansion immediately after the war, is atrophied to-day, and a large number of societies have ceased to exist. The village bodies appear unsuited to this kind of activity, and it seems as if the purchasing unit should be the " taluka " (district) union, collecting the orders of about twenty villages and effecting their

purchases for them. In the Central Provinces this concentration of activities is carried even further, and it is the central banks which undertake all purchasing transactions.

As regards sales, the movement has met with far more definite success. The sale of agricultural produce is, in fact, particularly badly organised in India. The money-lender deducts a considerable share of the produce on the score of the debts owing to him, and even in cases where the peasant is not heavily indebted he is unable to transport his crops to market, and must sell them on the spot immediately after harvest at whatever figure the merchant is willing to offer. The latter stores them, reselling them a few months later at a high price, after first copiously adulterating the grain. The co-operative association has therefore an important part to play. It can collect the harvest of the entire village, classify the crops according to quality, store them for a certain time, and finally transport them to market and ensure their disposal wholesale at a good price.

It is in the province of Bombay that the co-operative sales societies have hitherto developed most fully. In 1928 there were fifty-three societies there, selling produce of a total value of 7,300,000 rupees and realising a profit of 66,000 rupees. The most important are the thirty-two cotton-selling co-operatives, which have sold 4 million rupees' worth of cotton in a year and realised a profit of 41,000 rupees. These bodies are of two types. In the Carnatic they are established in the big markets with the support of the local authorities, landed proprietors, and merchants. Their aim is to organise all the members of the primary societies of the district and effect all

the sales of cotton within a radius of from thirty to forty miles, consenting even to sell the produce of cultivators who are not members. Associations of this kind soon meet with serious difficulties. Their membership is too high; the presence of landed proprietors and merchants, whose interests are varied and often opposed to those of the cultivators, causes friction; and, lastly, by consenting to sell the produce of non-members, they become less co-operative associations than wholesale traders, centralising all the cotton exchanges of the district.

In Gujarat, on the other hand, the societies are genuinely co-operative, uniting the cultivators of three or four neighbouring villages who produce the same quality cotton. The whole harvest is gathered together and sold by the director, who distributes the sum obtained among the members in proportion to the amount each has supplied. This second type has, so far, been the most successful, and is making the most rapid progress. Besides cotton, there are also co-operatives for the sale of tobacco, paddy, and potatoes; and the provincial bank, while financing the existing sale unions, undertakes on its own account the purchase and sale of the most varied products, either directly or through the intermediary of shops attached to its branches.

A particularly interesting enterprise is that of the milk and dairy-farming co-operative societies, which are spread all over the country. That of Lucknow, for instance, numbers forty members, with a managing committee of seven, of whom four are elected by the members and three nominated by the central bank, which finances operations. Each of the seven must hold at least one share worth 20 rupees. Members

bring their cows to the dairy to be milked on the spot, and the milk obtained is paid for at the rate of 1 rupee per 11 seers (about 22 quarts). It is then sold in the village at 8 seers per rupee, and the profit obtained is credited to each member in proportion to the quantity of milk supplied. Similarly, in Bengal, the Baraset Dairy Associations Union, founded in 1918, links together forty societies and 1,630 members, and supplies from 260 to 330 gallons per day. The cows are milked in the co-operative dairy, and the milk is then taken by road to Calcutta, where it is sterilised. In this way the union supplies hospitals, schools and other public services with milk of unimpeachable quality at a much lower rate than the current market price. To members who are anxious to increase their herds the society advances half the purchase price of each animal, and itself keeps a pedigree bull which is lent to members in order to improve the stock. As a result the quantity of milk furnished by the union's cows has increased 60 per cent. during the last ten years. Mutual assurance societies against loss of cattle have also been founded, but appear to have met with little success except in Burma, where, at a premium of 5 per cent. of the animal's cost, compensation to the value of two-thirds is granted, even in cases of epidemic.

The co-operative system can achieve a transformation of the farmer's working and living conditions, given an educated, energetic peasant class, anxious to make the necessary efforts to improve its lot. Here we are confronted by one of the greatest of the present difficulties. Only too often the peasant himself *cannot*, *does not know how to*, and *will not* put forward a sustained and really productive effort.

First of all he cannot. Except in the North, especially

in the Punjab, where the more rigorous climate and a better irrigated soil have formed a more robust and virile race (and where, precisely, the co-operative movement has been most extensively organised), the Indian farmers are, for the most part, sickly, puny and undeveloped. Weakened by insufficient nourishment, undermined by malaria, their numbers thinned by periodic epidemics of small-pox, cholera, and even plague, they live, moreover, in insanitary conditions which can only aggravate the situation and render their health still more precarious.*

Further, the peasant does not know how to work and produce efficiently. Ignorance is one of the great evils of India, and it is easy to form an idea of its extent if one realises that in 1928 2·57 per cent. of the men and 0·35 per cent. of the women—that is, barely 1·2 per cent. of the Indian population—could read and write their own dialect. This percentage naturally varies greatly according to the districts, from 30 per cent., the maximum, in the autonomous states of Travancore and Mysore to 1 per cent. in Bengal, and only 0·15 per cent. in the United Provinces and the Punjab. There has been definite progress during the

* The position of the women is particularly tragic. Married at an excessively early age and burdened with the cares of a household, they have to bear children in conditions which defy every rule of hygiene and cleanliness. A woman in confinement is, in fact, considered impure, and everything she touches must afterwards be burnt. She is therefore relegated to a small hut built for the purpose, in which all openings have been carefully sealed so that no light nor air may enter. She lies on the ground with no sheet, on the filthiest and most worn-out blankets and rags which can be found, and which people have consented to sacrifice for the purpose and burn afterwards. No one may enter the hut, except the *Dhai*, a member of the untouchable caste of barbers, a woman without the slightest medical knowledge who performs the accouchement in the most appallingly unhygienic conditions. Consequently there are numerous cases of infection, and a large number of women die in child-birth, while others remain ill and deformed for the remainder of their lives.

last fifty years, since the proportion of men able to read and write has risen from 9 per 1,000 in 1872 to 11 per 1,000 in 1891, 17 in 1911, 19·8 in 1921, and 25·7 in 1928. This figure is, nevertheless, lamentably low, and progress is very slow, since to-day barely 4 per cent. of the children go to the elementary school.

The English must undeniably accept a heavy share of the responsibility for this ignorance. In fact, all the texts encourage us to think that mediaeval India possessed an educational system at least as developed as that of Europe at the same epoch. Far-famed universities bestowed on sons of Brahmans and Kshatriyas a general culture and especially very profound philosophical learning; technical schools provided commercial training, and the caste system ensured within each trade the transmission of technical knowledge from one generation to another. Lastly, in each village the school attached to the temple might be called the embryo of our elementary school. There either the priest or some special master dispensed the rudiments of learning to the children. The Moslem domination had allowed this education to continue; it was the British occupation which shattered it, and it received its death-blow when in 1830 it was decided that English should be the only language used in educational institutions. As Mr. Leitner has said (*History of Indigenous Education in Punjab*): "In the most backward districts, such as Hirashpur, a report of 1832 shows that there was at that time one school for every 1,965 inhabitants, whereas now in all Punjab there is only one per 2,808 inhabitants. In 1854 there were 33,805 villages in the Punjab where a certain amount of instruction was given in the temple, and 3,372 lay schools with three or four hundred

thousand pupils, whereas at the present moment there are only 113,000 day pupils. It must be remarked that the effect of the educational administration of the Punjab has been merely to destroy the native schools while neglecting its own elementary schools." Moreover, such was, in fact, the intention of the English. By forcing the children to study in a foreign language they deliberately closed the door to education against the masses, reserving it for a picked *élite*, of whom they hoped to make auxiliaries in the task of consolidating the administration of the country and establishing their authority. Macaulay, the author of the reform, has said so himself in the plainest terms. "We should do our utmost at present to constitute a class which will be our interpreter to the millions of men we govern; a class of persons Indian in blood and colour but English in tastes, opinions, understanding, and ideals." Throughout the nineteenth century England sought in education simply a means of creating a class of British officials; a fact which explains both the manifest inadequacy of elementary teaching and the purely literary and administrative character of secondary and higher education. In 1926, out of 9 million persons receiving instruction, 7 million attended elementary schools, 1,200,000 attended state secondary schools, 620,000 private institutions, and 87,000 the universities. Of these 70,000 were students in Arts or pure Science, 8,000 in Law, 8,000 in Industrial Science, and 641 in Agriculture. The majority of these young men, after a purely academic education, can find no opening except in the public administrative services or the liberal professions, and as these are now overcrowded, unemployment in the intellectual class is assuming disturbing proportions

and constitutes one of the sources of the Nationalist movement. During recent years an effort has been made under the influence of the Nationalists to develop elementary education, but except in a very few towns the latter has not yet become compulsory. The public authorities shrink from the heavy financial burden it would entail, and it is extremely difficult to find men willing to spend their lives as teachers in remote villages, far from civilisation and all intellectual life. The progress of the co-operative movement, which would quite naturally fall to the management of the school-teacher in each village, will no doubt allow of further development in popular education in the near future.

The peasant, as we have seen, is physically and mentally incapable of carrying on productive labour ; it must be added that he has not the least desire to do so. He has no inclination for prolonged and sustained effort, and his passivity is not the least among the causes of his poverty. There are several reasons to explain this passivity. Poverty itself, continuing through hundreds of years, has taught the farmer to abandon all hope and submit to a lot which he considers inevitable. Climatic conditions, the enervating heat, and the distribution of rainfall, which demands a sudden effort immediately after harvest and leaves the peasant idle for four or five months in the year, all stand in the way of any sustained energy. But perhaps the fundamental cause of the Indian's inertia is the very conception of life with which the Hindu religion has impregnated his mind. Hinduism, in fact, the religion of over two-thirds of the population, is at once pessimistic, ascetic, and intellectual.

In the first place, it is pessimistic. Unlike

Christianity, it conceives of the world, not as a creation of God and consequently having a real though relative value, but as an illusion of the senses, the veil of Maya, which corresponds to no reality. The domain of error and suffering, this illusory world is ruled by the law of Karma, which condemns every soul to pass through millions of successive lives and bear, in each of these incarnations, the consequences, good or bad, of his actions during his last existence. This notion of Karma has numberless consequences. By asserting the fundamental kinship of all living creatures, the lowest animal being an incarnate soul like that of man, Hinduism has developed among the Indian people a sense of intimate communion with Nature such as in Europe only a St. Francis of Assisi was capable of experiencing. In Indian villages, and even towns, animals walk about freely; monkeys, peacocks and birds of every sort live on a footing of familiarity and confidence with man, and the picture they offer evokes a sense of the underlying unity of life which is certainly the great lesson Europe has to learn from India.

But at the same time the conception of Karma has brought about greater rigidity in social differences and strengthened the caste system by giving it a religious sanction. If the lot of each one in this world is merely the reward or punishment for his past actions, then the wretched pariah has only himself to thank for his sufferings and should accept them in a spirit of resignation, while every one should honour and respect the members of the higher castes, whose virtues alone have raised them to such dignity. Consequently, the duty of every man is to accept his position and remain in the environment allotted to

him, and perform the definite tasks laid on him by his caste—tasks which correspond exactly to his capacity at the existing stage of his evolution, and one of the gravest sins is to give proof of pride by endeavouring to practise the nobler virtues reserved for the higher castes.

Since the world is an illusion, it is useless to attempt to improve it. The Christian conception of the Kingdom of God, the idea of realising already here on earth a new society, regenerate and spiritual, is entirely absent from Hindu thought. According to the latter, he who strives for the betterment of the material conditions of others, or to achieve social justice, is spending his energy to no purpose, and is the dupe of the world of sense ; salvation is only found in escaping from this world, and in finding behind changeable needs and desires the unchangeable spiritual reality. Hinduism, since it rejects the possibility of action, has no real moral teaching, distinct from the mere mechanical observation of customs and social regulations, and preaches to each man only an egotistical effort—a refined, spiritualised egotism, but egotism none the less—to obtain his *own* salvation. The latter is not only defined as an escape *out* of the world (in contrast to the Christian salvation, which is regeneration *in* the world), but instead of proceeding from a personal God who loves mankind and forgives its failings, it must be won by human endeavour. True, Hinduism, and particularly a text such as the Bhagavid Gita, does offer traces of the conception of a personal God and a religion of grace, but in the orthodox version of the Vedas, drawn up and systematised by the great philosopher Samkara, God is only an impersonal reality, the unattainable,

the absolute, whom none may name or qualify, and man remains alone in his endeavour to rise spiritually—God, if he exists, is a far-off goal, not a present reality, accessible to all.

This Supreme, Indefinable Reality can be attained neither by action (good works), nor by love, which is faith, but exclusively by meditation, and here we reach the final trait of Hinduism—its *intellectual* character. The Hindu ideal is the man who withdraws from the world, who lives in the forest, isolated from his fellows, who reduces his material needs to a minimum, and who devotes his life to meditation and the contemplation of the absolute.

Hinduism, with its cult of the Brahman, and of the Sadhu, achieves the closest approximation to the ideal in which a small number of priests, cut off from the world and its misery, dedicate themselves to meditation on the absolute and the contemplation of ideas. Unhappily, such an intellectual and spiritual orgy entails the exploitation and suffering of the peasant masses, who, through force of long habit, have learnt unmurmuring submission, and accept their lot without making the slightest effort to improve it.

CHAPTER VI

THE NEED FOR INDUSTRIALISATION

THE poverty in India results, then, partly from exactions levied on the produce of the soil by the non-producing classes, and also in part from the backward character of the agricultural technique. But is that the whole story ?

If India were to succeed by the co-operation of credit in getting rid of the money-lender, and, by agrarian reform, of the landowner also ; and if an improved system of education enabled a better return to be made from the soil, the land would supply, no doubt, sufficient to maintain the inhabitants ; but would it procure them a standard of living comparable to that of modern Europe ? And are we not compelled to think that too large a proportion of the population of India is living to-day on agriculture, and that there is an insufficiency, not merely of agricultural technique, but also of industrial production in the country ? In order to decide this point, we shall have to go back a little way into the past and investigate what was the state of India at the time of the beginning of the British occupation.

For some centuries India had been not only an agricultural country, but one of the richest manufacturing centres of the globe ; her merchandise was sold in Europe, in Egypt, and in China ; in very early times she had traded with Babylon and Tyre, and

the courts of Imperial Rome treasured her spices, her Dacca muslins, her laces, carpets, embroideries of Delhi incrusted with gold and silver, as well as the metal workmanship of its goldsmiths.

During the Middle Ages the Indian artisan, confined to his hereditary professional caste, was continually perfecting his technique, and the quality of his products became absolutely unrivalled.

In the eighteenth century India began to emerge from the mediaeval period ; great towns had sprung up like Dacca with 40,000 inhabitants and Murshidabad, the capital of Bengal, the population of which at that time was greater than that of London.

The merchant castes, who were making great profits in the overseas trade, extended their domination over the artisans, whom they reduced little by little to the rank of wage-earners working in their own homes. These ceased to be members of the autonomous village community and began to move about from one province to another, no longer producing solely in view of supplying the needs of the community, but for the world market ; at length genuine manufactories began to appear, where the artisans found themselves united under the direction of the merchant. India was then in a situation at all points analogous to that of Europe at the same period, at a stage of transition between the local mediaeval economy and the manufacturing capitalism which was coming to life.

This evolution was abruptly interrupted by the English occupation ; the British merchants arrived in the country, attracted by the abundance and cheapness of the manufactured products which, after having crossed the seas, were sold with great profit in the London market at prices lower by 50 to 60 per cent.

than similar goods made in the country. But the East India Company was not contented with this normal commercial profit and pursued a policy of depredation and pillage which, if it enriched some individuals in a fabulous manner, ended in a short space of time in the ruin of the industry and commerce of India. As soon as the company had been recognised by the Emperor of Delhi, as Dewan of Bengal, it began to arrogate to itself the monopoly of the commerce in all the important commodities ; and those native merchants who were allowed as a favour to continue their business were obliged to submit to it and pay a heavy tribute.

Having obtained control of the market, the company treated directly with the artisans ; it furnished them with the raw materials at exorbitant prices, had their names inscribed on its registers, made them sign an engagement to work solely for it, and compelled them, lastly, to sell to it their products at a price fixed by order, which was generally some 30 to 40 per cent. lower than the prices which could be obtained where the market had remained free ; if the artisans did not deliver up their work at the fixed date, they were arrested, beaten and imprisoned by the agents of the company which dominated all political life.

The exactions of the East India Company soon became so great that the English Government was obliged to intervene ; but while the Act of Parliament passed by Pitt, which established the control of the Crown over the operations of the company, was followed by a real effort to improve the situation of the cultivator and ended in the " Permanent Settlement " of Bengal, no relief was brought to the lot of the artisans. On the contrary, the British Government pursued

as energetically as the company, but with yet more determined harshness, the systematic destruction of every Indian industry.

The reason for this was that the enormous fortunes realised by the shareholders of the East India Company had hastened in England the progress of commercial capitalism, which already more than a century before had begun to be established in the sphere of the merchant drapers. This capitalism also turned towards industry, and the abundance of the resources coming from India allowed it to make practical industrial use of the inventions of Watt.

English industry, then, was born of the pillage of India, and very soon the British Government made an effort to encourage its growth in reserving for it the national market and in striking dead its only serious rival, the Indian artisan's craft.

In 1815 there was established in England quite a system of prohibitive duties, exceeding, according to the products, 60 to 70 per cent.; these duties existed until 1824, and then were reduced slightly and remained at a level of 30 to 40 per cent., until England, having become mistress of the world market, ran no longer any risk in sanctioning free trade.

At the same time, until about 1835, duties were levied in the interior of India on the products manufactured in the country; we find in 1835 a customs duty of $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. on foreign products, but in the interior a duty of 5 per cent. on rough cotton, $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. on cotton thread, and 5 per cent. on cotton cloth, making a total of $17\frac{1}{2}$ per cent.

In the same way, a duty of 5 per cent. was levied on skins, as much on leather, and the same amount on sandals, making a total of 15 per cent.; in fact, most

of the articles manufactured in India continued to be submitted to excise duties of 10 to 15 per cent. during all the first half of the nineteenth century. As late as 1870, after a reduction at first, a customs duty of $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. was collected in India on all materials and half-worked products, whilst the manufactured products were subjected to a duty of only $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent.

The result was soon apparent. In 1813 the town of Calcutta exported into England cotton cloth to the value of £2,000,000; in 1830 it imported the same amount. Cotton cloth imports for all India rose in value from 8 million £ in 1859 to 16 in 1877 and 20 in 1901, that of silks from 1·4 million to 7 and 16, that of cotton thread from 1·7 to 2·8.

India was meanwhile becoming more and more an agricultural country, and during the same period, 1850–1877, the export figures for raw cotton rose from 4 million £ to 13, for jute from 0·9 to 3, for cereals from 28 to 80, tea from 0·15 to 2·6, oils from 2·5 to 5·4. At length, in the last return in 1921, the Indian imports were composed of 10 per cent. food products, 5 per cent. raw materials, and 82 per cent. manufactured products, while the exports were composed of 18 per cent. food products, 45 per cent. raw materials, and 26 per cent. manufactured products. All this has been clearly pointed out by H. H. Wilson in his *History of British Industries* (cited by Dutt, *Economic History of India*, p. 262):

"Indian silk and cotton goods up to 1813 were sold in the British market at prices 50 to 60 per cent. lower than those fabricated in England. It consequently became necessary to protect the latter by duties of 70 and 80 per cent. Had this not been done, . . . the Manchester mills would have been stopped at

the outset and could scarcely have been again set in motion, even by the power of steam. They were created by the sacrifice of Indian manufacture. Had India been independent, she would have retaliated . . . and would have preserved her own productive industry from annihilation. This act of self-defence was not permitted her; she was at the mercy of the stranger. British goods were forced on her without paying any duty, and the foreign manufacturer employed the arm of political injustice to keep down, and ultimately strangle, a rival with whom he could not have competed on equal terms."

The consequences of this policy were threefold. They were :

1. The ruin of the artisan class and its reversion to agriculture ;
2. A gradual diminution of the area owned and cultivated by each family ;
3. The creation of a rural proletariat.

At the beginning of the English occupation, the small native industry took three principal forms. In the towns, the highly specialised luxury handicrafts, in which the technical qualities were developed to the highest point of perfection, were carried on to supply the demands of the Indian aristocracy and the courts of the rajahs. In the villages, more modest work-shops furnished simpler products and endeavoured to satisfy the needs of the local consumers ; finally, the peasant family often possessed a spinning-wheel and a loom, and found in cotton work the means of utilising the days of enforced idleness and procuring a supplementary income.

In the course of the nineteenth century these three forms of artisan workmanship were successively ruined.

The luxury industry was the first and the most seriously injured; the downfall of the Mogul Empire, the impoverishment of the Indian princes, the disappearance of the native aristocracy, replaced by English administrators whose tastes being quite different required European products, made its normal *clientèle* disappear. Meanwhile the customs barriers with which England was surrounded closed its only important exterior outlet.

So the ancient luxury industry was rapidly destroyed and the recent efforts to try and revive it have had only very poor results.

The village industry and the home handicrafts were also seriously damaged; the enfeeblement of the village communities, the heavy charge of the excise duties, and lastly the rivalry of the products of modern industry have determined their downfall, which came rapidly at first, then gradually, but without interruption. The artisans, who constituted 25 per cent. of the population at the end of the eighteenth century, were reduced to 10 per cent. at the end of the nineteenth. Between 1901 and 1911, whilst the total population of India increased by 6·6 per cent., the population living by industry was reduced by 7 per cent., the reduction bearing chiefly on the textile, metal, leather and skin industries. From 1911 to 1921, while the population increased by 1·8 per cent., and when the big manufactories began to make real progress, the whole of the industrial population was reduced anew by 6 per cent.

Undoubtedly, the artisans remain numerous; they constitute still, to-day, the very great majority of industrial workers (nearly 90 per cent.) and, if the hand spinning-wheel seems really to be condemned in spite of the efforts of Mr. Gandhi to revive it, there

still exists a great number of communities of weavers which succeed in standing up against the mechanical production of the two extremes of textile work; on the one hand in the superior qualities demanding fingering and delicate handwork, and on the other in the coarser qualities where they utilise the cotton threads which will not stand the tension of the mechanical loom.

But the position of these artisans is extremely difficult, and they are, as much as the peasants, the victims of the money-lender; some, a minority, remain independent; they work with rudimentary tools, buying their materials in small quantities at retail prices, and retail their cloth themselves in the market.

The greater number receive from the money-lender advances in money or in kind and are obliged to sell him the finished product at a scale of prices which he has fixed himself; and, lastly, a growing number of them receive all the raw materials from him, deliver up to him the finished product and receive not a price, but fixed wages, on an undertaking to work for no one else.

In the Indian village the artisan can still participate in the community production, but in the towns he depends entirely on the capitalist class, without sharing in the profits—a situation which arises from a system of advances which is practised on a large scale. Thus, in the manufacture of carpets at Amritsar, each master artisan owes from 300 to 1,000 rupees to his merchant; this debt is called "baqui," and when the artisan leaves his employer to go to another one, this latter must, by the custom of the trade, repay the advance and become himself the creditor of the artisan.

In addition to this baqui, various advances are made called " kharch " and the money due for work is credited to the account of kharch ; all of it beyond the sums advanced goes to reduce the amount of baqui, but the merchants see to it themselves that, in the kharch account, the balance is always on the debit side, so that the baqui is being added to constantly. It is admitted that the baqui constitutes a debt which it is impossible to repay, and which obliges the artisan to remain all his life in the service of the merchant, so that he is reduced more and more to the level of a workman working at his home in the employ of the money-lender. The latter being the only one to benefit from his efforts, the worker has no interest in improving his methods, and that is one of the reasons for the fact that the artisan's work continues to lose ground regularly in the face of the foreign manufacturing industry.

Some attempts have been made in the last few years to come to the assistance of the artisans, and that by means of the organisation, here again, of co-operative societies of credit. It was in this way that in 1916 the society of weavers of Conjeveram was constituted, uniting 384 artisans. Each of them may purchase up to 40 shares of one rupee and each share gives the right to borrow 25 rupees—that is, up to a total of 1,000 rupees. The society has also 5,000 rupees' worth of deposits on which it pays interest at 8 per cent., and it furnishes to its members advances at 10 per cent., permitting them to buy improved looms without becoming dependent on the merchant. Lastly, it ensures the sale of the products, and has opened a shop for the purpose.

Societies like this are found all over India, at the

rate of a hundred at least in each province. Most of them, after having started as credit co-operatives, have become veritable co-operatives for production, buying the stock of tools and the raw materials for their members, effecting the sale and distributing the price proportionately to the production of each. It is evident that there, only, is salvation for the artisan class, which can arrive by co-operation at improving its technical methods and at undertaking at need under favourable conditions the struggle against the big manufacturing industries. But these co-operatives are still far too few in number to have any far-reaching influence.*

Europe at the end of the eighteenth century passed through the same phases; her artisans also found themselves ruined and submitted to the domination of the merchants; but they were ruined specifically by the big scale industries of their country, and those industries offered new employment to the dispossessed workers. India, on the other hand, throughout the nineteenth century, experienced the ruin of its artisan industry without the economic readjustment which in Europe has accompanied the development of capitalism, and the artisans have not had, nor have most of them to-day, any other recourse than to turn

* Side by side with these societies of weavers we find also frequently co-operatives of manual labourers; in Kashmir, some wood-cutters and sawyers have obtained contracts as a limited liability company, enabling them to organise the work themselves, and receive in payment a round sum which they divide among themselves as they agree.

At Karachi and in Madras, the salt porters, for a long time employed by the contractors, have eliminated these intermediaries and have established themselves in gangs which, financed by the Central Urban Bank, regulate as they wish the distribution of the work. We find, lastly, organisations of the same kind in a large number of other types of work, such as the keeping in repair of roads and railways.

back to the land and swell the ranks of the husbandmen, landowners, farmers, or labourers.

India is therefore characterised by the stability of her rural population (the proportion of the inhabitants living in the villages of less than 5,000 inhabitants was 90 per cent. in 1881, 90·5 per cent. in 1890, 90·1 per cent. in 1901, 90·5 per cent. in 1911, 89·8 per cent. in 1921) and the regular growth of the agricultural population. (This, which was 61 per cent. in 1891, grew to 66·5 per cent. in 1901, 69·8 per cent. in 1911, and 70·9 per cent. in 1921.)

The ruined artisans, then, instead of moving to the towns, have remained in the villages and have tried to earn their living in work on the land. It is only since the war that another evolution seems to be beginning. The proportion of the rural population diminished slightly between 1911 and 1921, and it seems as if for the first time a small number (very small, since in spite of the progress of the big industries the agricultural population has still increased) of the ruined artisans are trying to get employment directly in the great newly born industries.

This afflux of the artisans to the land has brought a gradual diminution of the area cultivated by each family. In 1921 the extent of the average ownership was 12 acres in the Bombay Presidency, 11 in the North-West, $8\frac{1}{2}$ in the Central Provinces, 9 in the Punjab, 5 in Madras, 3 in Bengal, 2·3 in the United Provinces; that is for all India an average of less than 5 acres. H. Mann observed in his typical Deccan villages that properties were being increasingly subdivided. In the first village he found that in 1771 there were 19 families with an average of 40 acres; in 1792, 35 families with 21 acres; in 1830, 52 families

with 17 acres ; lastly, in 1915, the date of the enquiry, the village numbered 156 families, of which 81 per cent. cultivated an area of less than 10 acres and 60 per cent. one of less than 5 acres. The situation is aggravated by the fact that this gradual diminution of the area of soil cultivated by each family is accompanied by a fragmentation of the holdings which exceeds anything that we are familiar with in France in this respect. Indian villages are surrounded by lands of various sorts, each suitable to a particular type of culture ; the nearest plots can be easily irrigated and give two crops in the year ; others, farther away, are more difficult to cultivate ; lastly, a third category is so far from the village that no planning of work can be accomplished there and the crop depends exclusively on the caprices of the monsoon.

In the presence of such a variety of conditions the custom is, on the decease of the cultivator, to allot to each inheritor an equal part of the lands of each kind and of each quality ; the Indian peasant instead of having land all in one piece thus possesses numerous parcels, all tiny and very far away from each other, which makes any rational and economical cultivation almost impossible. Mann has found in his typical village that 156 owners possessed 718 parcels ; 28 only possessed land in one piece, 31 in two, 13 in three, 19 in four, 9 in five, 13 in six, 8 in seven, 5 in eight, 4 in nine, 3 in ten, 5 in eleven, 3 in twelve, and last of all one possessed no less than twenty parcels.

As to the area of the land, 29 possessed more than 5 acres, 35 from 3 to 5, 67 from 2 to 3, 164 from 1 to 2 ; 423 less than one acre, with an average of two-thirds of an acre. Out of this grew the current practice of sub-letting the holdings. Of 156 owners, only 109

cultivated their soil ; 47 had left to find work elsewhere as agricultural labourers or industrial workers and were endeavouring to draw from their land a feeble supplementary income to help them to balance their budget.

The consequences of fragmentation are so disastrous that some efforts have been made to encourage the work of reuniting the dismembered properties, and here, too, they have taken the form of co-operation. When a co-operative for restriping the land is formed in a village, the members must pay an entrance fee and a small annual subscription to cover the expenses of administration, and agree to accept on trial, for a period of three years, the lands which will be allotted to them by a resolution of two-thirds of the members ; every question relative to the exchange of land and to the payment of premiums is brought before the panchayat of the co-operative, which gives the final decision. For three years, each one is supposed to cultivate his new land as farmer for the old proprietor, and the consolidation only becomes permanent at the expiration of the period of trial, if it is then accepted unanimously by the interested parties (which is nearly always the case, for when an experiment lasting three years has shown the advantages of the new arrangement no one wants to go back on it). It is especially in the Punjab that the co-operatives have had full scope. In 1928 they were to be found in 200 villages, associating 50,000 peasants ; 65,000 acres have been consolidated, reducing the number of parcels from 55,000 to 8,000, and raising the area from 1·16 acres to 7·5.

The co-operative movement is capable, then, of remedying to a great extent the dispersion of the holdings into several parcels ; on the other hand, it is

powerless against the swollen number of cultivators and the insufficiency of the total area to maintain each family.

Here we reach a third and last point, the birth of an agricultural proletariat. Among the dispossessed artisans only a small minority already held any parcels of land, or succeeded in procuring some and becoming independent; a far greater number came to swell the ranks of the farmers and agricultural labourers.

We have seen that the former, a relatively small body at the beginning of the English occupation, had seen their numbers grow during the nineteenth century to such a degree that the landowners had considerably raised their demands, and that laws had to be passed to set bounds to the rents obtained for the farms. As to the wage-earning farm labourers, they were always there; the greater number belonged to the untouchable castes and were descended, some like the *hali* of Bombay, from old-time slaves, hereditary servants of the landlord, receiving from him board and lodging and having no right to seek work elsewhere; others, like the *padials* of Madras, from one-time free men, whose indebtedness had degraded them to the state of serfs belonging to their creditors.

The number of these wage-earners has increased greatly in the twentieth century, and many ruined artisans have gone to work on the farms or in the big plantations opened by English capitalists. These plantations numbered 2,034 in 1921 and provided work for more than a million regular wage-earners; the chief being coffee plantations, india-rubber, and especially tea, concentrated in the region of Bengal and Assam and employing more than 800,000 workers.

At the present moment there are nearly 28 million

wage-earning farm labourers (43 with their families), that is about 25 labourers for every 100 cultivators. The proportion varies a great deal in the different provinces, and it seems clearly to diminish since the war, indicating a tendency on the part of the agricultural labourers to emigrate to the towns :

	1911	1921
	Per cent.	Per cent.
Assam	3	3
Punjab	15	12
Bengal	18	19
United Provinces	22	16
Bihar and Orissa	47	28
Bombay	67	41
Madras	55	53
Central Provinces	86	82

We shall see that it is, indeed, from among the agricultural labourers as well as the owners of parcels of land that most of the workers employed in the modern industries are recruited.

The ruin of the artisan industry in the course of the twentieth century, and the flow of the artisans to the land have, therefore, caused definite over-population among the peasantry, which shows itself in the diminution of the area of land possessed by each family and the growth of the numbers of agricultural workers.

India can only become prosperous if the pressure of the population on the land is reduced by a return to the workshops, which may take the form either of the revival of the artisan crafts, or, better still, the extension of large-scale industries.

PART II

INDUSTRIAL INDIA

PART II

INDUSTRIAL INDIA

ALTHOUGH India is pre-eminently an agricultural country, she could not remain long untouched by a movement which carried the whole world towards an ever-increasing industrialisation. Commercial capitalism, which began to take shape at the end of the eighteenth century, had been cleverly diverted from its goal and attracted to the land by the land settlements. The field had thus been left free for British industry, but the profits made by the landowners, and especially the money-lenders, who controlled the harvests and were the supreme organisers of internal commerce, led fairly rapidly to the renaissance of Indian capitalism, which once again sought an outlet in industry.

India is extremely rich in minerals. Her coal reserves, so far as they are known at present, are estimated at 84 million tons (the figures for other countries being: U.S.A. 3,412 million, Canada 1,327, China 1,072, England 162, Germany 144, France 17, Japan 8).* Her petroleum resources, with her oilfields in Burma, Assam, and the Punjab, amount to 995 million barrels of 42 gallons each, *i.e.* 2·2 per cent. of the world's reserve; her iron amounts to 2,761 million tons, ranking second only to France and

* These figures are drawn from the Census for 1921. See Das, *Production in India*

the United States, and far in advance of England with 1,267 and Germany with 1,230. She has gold mines in Madras and Mysore, and argentiferous lead, zinc, antimony and tin mines, and supplies 80 per cent. of the world's production of manganese. Lastly, and most important of all, she possesses inexhaustible hydraulic resources, estimated at 27 million H.P.; nearly equal to those of the United States (28), and greater than those of Canada and China (20), England (9), Japan (6), and France (5).

Moreover, the desire to obtain India's food products and raw materials more easily led England to improve her transport system, and especially to construct a very extensive railway system covering the greater part of the country. (In 1927 its length was 31,000 miles, while it served to transport 500 million passengers and 120 million tons of merchandise.)

History, the world over, shows that when the steam-engine and modern methods of communication have been introduced into a country possessing abundant mineral resources, no power on earth can thenceforth prevent the progress of machinery and the rise of industry on a large scale.

We shall study in the following chapters :

Chapter I.—The progress of industry.

Chapter II.—The workers' conditions in home and factory.

Chapter III.—The labour movement.

CHAPTER I

THE PROGRESS OF INDUSTRY

MODERN industry made its appearance in India towards the middle of the nineteenth century. As early as 1818 attempts were made to establish spinning mills in Bengal, and young mill-hands from Manchester went to Calcutta to act as teachers to the Indian workers, but the majority of these girls were unable to stand the climate and died soon after their arrival. The experiment was, therefore, not followed up, and it was only in 1851 that the first cotton mill was opened at Bombay, to be followed shortly after, in 1854, by the first jute factory at Serampur. Throughout the nineteenth century the cotton and jute industries made uninterrupted progress. Mining and smelting industries were soon added to the list, and in 1911 there were 2,553 factories in India of over twenty workers each, and of these 1,400 were for the manufacture of cotton alone, 175 for jute, 85 for smelting metals, and 59 were railway workshops.

In 1851, England did her best to retard the course of this development, and we have seen how up to the end of the nineteenth century she handicapped by heavy internal taxation the chief products manufactured in the country. In 1914 she was obliged to change her tactics completely. The requirements of the struggle, and particularly the need of munitions, were to give a sudden impetus to the metal industry,

while the blockade made relations with the mother country difficult, and forced India to reduce her imports and supply her own needs.

India consequently came out of the war a new country, with her system of industrial organisation perfected. In 1921, she numbered 11,000 undertakings employing over twenty workers, and was soon to be recognised by the League of Nations as one of the eight great industrial nations of the world.

Her chief industry to-day is the manufacture of cotton, which has made continuous progress since the end of the nineteenth century, as the following figures show : *

	Mills	*Looms*	*Spindles*	*Capital (millions of rupees)*
1879–1884 ..	63	14,500	1,610,000	65
1884–1889 ..	93	18,200	2,296,000	88
1889–1893 ..	127	25,300	3,263,000	116
1893–1899 ..	156	36,600	4,046,000	141
1899–1903 ..	195	42,000	5,000,000	168
1903–1909 ..	218	60,000	5,549,000	187
1909–1914 ..	257	88,000	6,406,000	224
1914–1918 ..	265	112,600	6,630,000	251
1918–1921 ..	278	128,000	6,652,000	562
1926	303	135,000	8,400,000	600

Thus, in fifty years, the number of mills has risen 341 per cent., the capital 764 per cent., the number of spindles 313 per cent., and that of the looms 713 per cent. Taking the cotton industry as a whole, then, the greatest progress has been with textiles. India, with her 4·5 per cent. of the world's spindles, 4·2 per cent.

* The figures are taken from the as yet unpublished report of Mr. R. K. Das of the International Labour Office. It is from this same report that we have drawn all the statistical information given below on the progress of India's industrialisation.

of its looms, and a consumption of 10 per cent., holds an important place in the world's production of cotton.

Home spinning, and particularly weaving, which is the traditional industry, are still in existence, but are losing ground every day before the progress of mechanical industry. It has been calculated that to weave a piece of cloth weighing 1 lb. costs 14 rupees in England, 17 by the mechanical loom in India, and 21 by the hand loom. In 1896, out of a total of 270 million yards of cotton thread used by Indian weaving industries, 187 were hand woven, 83 by machinery; in 1900 the figures were 162 and 99, and from 1910 the cotton consumption for mechanical weaving exceeded that of the hand-woven goods. In 1927, in spite of Gandhi's propaganda in favour of the Charka, out of 615 million yards 357 were factory woven, 252 by the hand loom.

The progress of modern spinning and weaving factories has also been effected at the expense of the foreigner, and imports from England in particular have proportionately decreased. The native production of cotton cloth rose from 1,164 million yards in 1913 to 1,700 million in 1925. In 1913 it equalled 20 per cent. of the imports, and in 1925 exceeded them by 25 per cent. Similarly, the manufacture of cotton thread rose from 432 million lbs. in 1895 to 608 in 1924; the imports decreasing from 38 million lbs. in 1905 to 24 in 1924.

At first the cotton industry was entirely concentrated in the town of Bombay. In 1887, for the first time an establishment was set up in another town—the Empress Mills of the great manufacturer Tata—which were built at Nagpur. Since then the spinning and weaving mills have multiplied, and new cotton

industrial towns have sprung up, such as Ahmedabad, Cawnpore, Nagpur, and Sholapur, while Bombay has gradually tended to lose its pre-eminence, as the following figures testify : *

	Factories	*Per cent.*	*Looms*	*Per cent.*	*Spindles*	*Per cent.*
1898 ..	74	44	22,209	58	2,388,000	58
1912 ..	77	32·3	44,804	57	2,806,000	44
1918 ..	86	34	59,162	57	2,884,000	45
1922 ..	83	33	62,000	50	3,024,000	44
1926 ..	79	28	70,754	48	3,378,000	42

We may therefore draw the following conclusions : Already before the war, in spite of the general progress of the textile industry, the town of Bombay saw its production decreasing in comparison with that of the rest of the country.

The war, on the other hand, and the period immediately following it up to 1923, brought an unprecedented prosperity to the whole textile industry. Considerable profits were realised, and for the years 1919 to 1922 the average dividends paid by the Bombay factories were respectively 40 per cent., 35 per cent., and 16 per cent., the real profits being far higher, for these dividends were calculated on a capital artificially inflated by the extravagant issue of shares. From 1918 to 1923, in fact, the capital of the Bombay factories rose from 12 to 35 million rupees, an increase of 196 per cent., while the number of spindles rose 36 per cent. and that of the looms 62 per cent. In the other towns the increase was far more moderate, and in 1921 the capital of the Ahmedabad

* Report of the Textile Tariff Board for Bombay, 1927.

factories did not reach one-sixth of that of Bombay, whereas the number of looms and spindles exceeded one-third.

After 1923 the cotton industry entered upon a period of depression from which it is even now (1929) barely recovering, while in Bombay the crisis is now most acute. The town's output has decreased in comparison with the other towns, especially Ahmedabad, and her business is seriously menaced by foreign imports, particularly Japanese, which in 1926 amounted to 7 per cent. of the total cotton goods manufactured, and 13 per cent. of those manufactured by machinery.

The difficulty of the situation led the Bombay manufacturers to demand the imposition of customs duties, and a Tariff Board was established in 1925 to investigate the causes of the depression. The Board's report traces all the difficulties encountered by the Indian textile industry, especially in Bombay, to four origins.

I. The over-capitalisation of the war period.

II. Japanese competition, due to more favourable climatic conditions, to State subsidies, the depreciation in the Japanese exchange and the relatively lower wages paid in Japan—lower because women are far more extensively employed than in Indian industry.

III. Bad methods of management, and especially the absenteeism of the owners, who, instead of supervising their factories personally, entrust them to managing agents. The latter, who specialise in the administration of businesses not their own, are paid either by a share in the profits (10 to 12 per cent.) or by a proportion of the output, or by a commission (3 to 4 per cent.) on the sales. Consequently they aim at the greatest possible output, profits or sale, but

always keeping only the immediate return in view, without the slightest consideration for the permanent interests of the business. Moreover, as they have to control a large number of establishments at the same time (the two principal firms are responsible for twenty-three factories, owning half the town's capital and two-sevenths of its looms) the offices are far from the works, and the agents are unable to have any contact at all with the hands.

IV. The last factor was the high cost of labour, due, as we shall shortly see, not to high wages but to the worker's low productive capacity.

The Cotton Board concluded its report by urging the Bombay manufacturers to reorganise their industry, transform their methods of administration, and, further, to introduce technical improvements which would increase the worker's level of production. It advised the imposition of a further 4 per cent. duty, in addition to the already existing duty of 11 per cent., for the transitional period, and the granting of a bonus of 1 anna per lb. on all cotton cloth produced. The government did not follow up these recommendations, for its finances did not allow it to furnish subsidies to industry. Moreover, the situation has considerably improved since 1926, and the output has increased from 687 million lbs. of cotton thread and 1,955 yards of cotton cloth in 1925, to 807 million lbs. and 2,259 million in 1928—a rise of 17 per cent. and 16 per cent. respectively.

Next to the manufacture of cotton, the chief Indian industry is jute, which is of particular importance, as nearly the entire harvest of the world comes from the alluvial soil of Bengal, and a growing proportion, instead of being exported to Dundee, is now worked

on the spot. In 1855 the first spinning mill was set up at Serampur, and in 1859 the first weaving factory at Barnagore. In 1868 there were five establishments with 950 looms, and in 1874 thirteen with 3,250 looms. At that moment Indian industry began to gain the monopoly of the Australian, United States, and Chinese markets at the expense of its Dundee competitors. New firms were founded and so rapid was the expansion (twenty-two factories in 1883, with 6,300 looms and 88,000 spindles) that over-production brought about a critical situation. The manufacturers finally arrived at a solution, and in 1886 the Indian Jute Mills Association was founded to fix prices by common agreement and limit the production. Since then progress has been steady.

	Factories	*Capital (thousands of rupees)*	*Looms*	*Spindles*	*Employees*
1879–1883 ..	21	270	6,300	880,000	38,000
1899–1903 ..	35	680	16,200	334,000	114,000
1909–1913 ..	60	1,200	33,500	692,000	208,000
1920–1921 ..	75	1,800	41,500	869,000	280,000

During the war the need of sand-bags for the army caused the industry to make great strides, and this prosperity continued during the period immediately following the war. At the present moment five times more jute is utilised by the Indian industry than by its Dundee competitor, and for the period 1914–1925 the former realised a total profit of £300,000,000 (after the payment of dividends plus the sums carried to reserve), a figure equal to eight times the wages paid during the same period and representing an average annual profit of 90 per cent.

Since 1925 the situation has been less favourable, and the Association has decided to open the factories only four days per week, and to forbid its members to introduce more looms.

Ninety mills are devoted to this industry, all concentrated on the banks of the Hoogly (one of the mouths of the Ganges) stretching nearly sixty-two miles above and below Calcutta. These hold 50,000 looms, 1 million spindles, and employ 350,000 workers. Thanks to the policy of the Association, prosperity is everywhere assured, for the Indian industry has the monopoly of bags and manufactured articles of ordinary quality, while the Dundee firms specialise in higher quality goods requiring more elaborate technical skill in their manufacture.

The mining industry has also undergone considerable expansion during recent years. 293,000 workers are employed in it: 138,000 below ground, 75,000 haulers, and 80,000 at the pit head. The total value of minerals extracted has risen from £3,450,000 in 1898 to £25,000,000 in 1926. At the head of the list come the coal-mines, which provide employment for 170,000 workers, and whose output has risen from 962,000 tons in 1878 to 20,475,000 in 1927—1·7 per cent. of the world's output. Half the coal production is drawn from the Jharriah basin not far from Calcutta, a particularly rich region where the main road over the concessions actually passes over a coal seam 5½ yards in depth. In spite, however, of the great richness of the deposits, backward methods, and especially inadequate means of transport within the mines, make the Indian miner's level of production only slightly higher than the European's (183 tons as compared with 94 in Japan, 127 in Belgium, 191 in England). Next

to coal the chief production is petroleum, amounting to 6·8 million barrels (=0·8 per cent. of the world production). Manganese comes next with 662,000 tons (60 per cent. of the world production). Then follow: gold (130 million rupees =3 per cent.), rock salt (163,800 tons = 9·8 per cent.); mica (half the world production), and, lastly, iron, of which India is barely beginning to utilise her immense resources, furnishing at the moment 918,000 tons, *i.e.* 0·6 per cent. of the world production.

The metal industry also occupies an increasingly important position in the industrial life of India. The first undertaking, the Baraka Iron Works, was launched in 1875 in the Jharriah neighbourhood, but went bankrupt as early as 1879. In 1881 the government itself attempted the manufacture of cast-iron, but after several years of poorly rewarded efforts it abandoned the undertaking to a private society, the Bengal Iron and Steel Company. The latter made very slow headway, its steel output remaining negligible, although its cast-iron production rose from 57,500 tons in 1912 to 87,700 in 1920. On the other hand, a few years before the war another venture was launched which was to encounter remarkable success. This was the Tata Iron and Steel Company, founded by the greatest captain of industry India has yet produced—Sir D. Tata. He installed his factories at Jamshedpur, a small village with a few hundred inhabitants on the main Bombay–Calcutta line, thus turning to account the iron and coal mines of Jharriah, and there opened the first coke-furnace in 1911 and the first blast-furnace in 1912. The cast-iron output was to rise rapidly, from 85,000 tons in 1912 to 158,000 in 1914, 215,000 in 1920, and 431,000 in 1924. Steel manufacture

encountered greater obstacles, but reached none the less a level of 195,000 tons in 1928, which were used to produce 117,000 tons of rails. The Tata enterprise alone provides employment for 50,000 people, and Jamshedpur has become an industrial centre of the greatest importance.

This progressive industrialisation of India is shown by a three-fold change in the statistics of her imports; a rise of the basic figure for this branch of commerce, a proportionate reduction in manufactured goods and a decrease of imports from England. The total figure for India's foreign trade rose from 234 million rupees in 1844 to 6,757 million in 1921, of which 3,819 million represented imports and 2,937 exports. The proportion of goods manufactured to the total imports was 78·6 per cent. before the war, and fell to 71 per cent. in 1921, although the proportion of goods manufactured for export has risen from 23 per cent. in 1913 to 26 per cent. in 1921, and 28·3 per cent. in 1927.

Thirdly, England's contribution to India's imports has decreased, as the following table shows:

	Imports			*Exports*		
	1909–13	1921	1927	1909–13	1921	1927
	Per cent.	*Per cent.*	*Per cent.*	*Per cent.*	*Per cent.*	*Per cent.*
England ..	64	56·6	47·1	25	20	21
Rest of the British Empire	7	7	8	17	15	14
U.S.A. ..	3	8	8	7	10	11
Japan	2	5	7·5	7	15	14
Java	6	8	6	—	—	—
Germany ..	6	2·7	7	10	6·7	6·7
France ..	1·5	1·8	2·4	7	4	5·3
Other countries	10·5	10·9	14	27	29·3	28

The reduction has been most marked in cotton goods, in which England's share has fallen from 96 per cent. before the war to 82 per cent., while that of Japan has risen from 1 per cent. to 14 per cent.

Although India possesses a certain number of important undertakings, and since the war has definitely entered upon the path of industrialisation, yet the process is only beginning, and enterprises on a large scale as yet form only a small proportion of the whole. In 1921 there were 11,000 firms of the modern type (employing over twenty workers) instead of the 7,000 in 1911, but these employed only 1½ million wage-earners, 1 per cent. of the productive population, whereas the local handicrafts, handicapped and exploited as they were by the money-lender, nevertheless provided a means of living for over 10 million independent labourers. In the modern establishments * the medium-sized firms, employing from twenty to fifty workers, numbered 2,300 (30 per cent.) in 1911, 5,000 (45 per cent.) in 1921, and employed 4 per cent. of the wage-earners in 1911, 6 per cent. in 1921. The large concerns, on the contrary, those with over fifty employees, constituted 70 per cent. of the modern type of undertaking in 1911 and only 55 per cent. in 1921, but they employed 95 per cent. and 94 per cent. of the workers. Lastly, those conducted on a very large scale, with over 400 employees, constituted 17·4 per cent. of the total in 1911 and 12·8 per cent. in 1921, the number of their employees remaining practically stationary—74 per cent. and 72 per cent. India appears, therefore, to be in a position analogous to that of Russia before the war, with on the one hand a multitude of small artisan enterprises, and at the other extreme

* R. K. Das's report.

the large-scale undertaking of over 400 workers, largely under foreign management and employing over three-quarters of the wage-earners engaged under the modern system. Between the two, the medium-sized concern is practically non-existent, at all events insignificant. True, it has made progress since the war, but it still employs only 4 per cent. of the modern salaried workers, and the relative diminution in the number of large firms is merely a sign that the latter are becoming increasingly amalgamated. In contrast to European industry, which passed by progressive stages from the small to the moderate sized, and thence to the very big concern, the modern system in India appears to have come into being ready equipped with the most up-to-date technical apparatus and abundant capital.

Here we touch on a particularly important point. Manufacturing industry in India has been established from the very outset on a large scale, because it is not in reality a national enterprise, but is largely financed by the foreigner. Since the war, in fact, England has modified her policy completely. Recognising the inevitability of India's development along fresh lines, she decided, far from opposing it, to give her enterprise full play, while subjecting it to British financial control. Hence arose the new policy, which began by nominating an Industrial Commission in 1916 to study the possibilities of the industrial development of the country, followed up this measure by the reforms of 1919 which recognise the right of the Indian National Assembly to legislate on customs tariffs under the control of the Crown, and finally accomplished its aim in 1921 by the elaboration of a system of protection which established for the

first time the economic autonomy of India. But at the same time that India was thus industrially emancipated, English capital was solidly establishing itself. In 1919, out of £237,000,000 of capital invested outside England, India received only £1,400,000 (*i.e.* 0·6 per cent.); while in 1923, out of £235,000,000, £36,000,000 (*i.e.* 15 per cent.) was destined for India, and to-day the entire jute industry, most of the mines and railways, and a large proportion of the cotton mills outside Bombay are in English hands. Besides this, 72 per cent. at least of the Indian joint-stock companies are in the hands of English shareholders. There are, in fact, 819 English joint-stock companies with a capital of 7,000 million rupees (£554,000,000), as compared with 5,311 Indian companies having a capital of 2,770 million. Among the latter, also, many are in English hands, for the number of British enterprises which change their seat of operations and register in India is continually increasing.

Modern industry in India is therefore very largely in foreign hands. The reason is not that capital is insufficient in India; the great landowners and the money-lenders have considerable reserves, but they shrink from the risks of industry and prefer to utilise their capital in loans for agricultural purposes, where the land is always available as security. It is only during recent years, in view of the progress of the co-operative credit system, that a certain number of money-lenders, feeling their traditional domain threatened, have turned towards industry. Such industrialisation of Indian capital would, if it occurred, be marked by an increase in the number of medium-sized undertakings, which would meet the limited needs of their locality, and which the Indian capitalists would regard with less distrust.

CHAPTER II

THE WORKING CLASS

THE development of industrialisation in India has naturally been accompanied by the formation of an industrial proletariat. We have seen that a rural proletariat existed already, and was composed of nearly 28 million wage-earners, deprived of all share in the land. About the middle of the nineteenth century these labourers, who were in a chronic state of unemployment, began to be attracted to the great European plantations. In 1911 there were in India (not counting Ceylon) 482 coffee plantations with 58,000 workers, 121 of indigo with 31,000, and 1,000 of tea with 600,000 workers. These last have undergone a further fresh extension since the war, and in 1926 700,000 acres were given up to the cultivation of tea, 420,000 (60 per cent.) being in Assam, and 210,000 (30 per cent.) in Bengal. These plantations provide permanent employment for 751,000 men, and temporary labour for 76,000, making a total of nearly 827,000 paid workers in tea alone, and nearly one million on all the plantations taken together.

Another opening for employment was provided before long by the railways, which required a plentiful supply of manual labour for the work of clearing and laying of lines. They required a staff of 400,000 in 1925, and of 741,000 in 1926; besides which 165,000 men were employed by sub-contractors

and worked indirectly for the companies, thus bringing their total number of employees to above 900,000 persons.

Since the beginning of the twentieth century the village crafts, which used to supply the peasant family with a supplementary income, have fallen more and more into disuse, while the increasingly widespread partition of land rendered such an income all the more indispensable, and these two facts combined to produce a steady migration of smallholders into the towns, thus supplying modernised industry with the necessary manual labour for its rapid extension.

In 1926 the total number of wage-earners in India had risen to 36½ million, representing a total population of over 100 million. But this number included 26 million agricultural labourers, 4 million petty officials, and 2½ million domestic servants, representing a total population of 90 million persons. And of the modern type of employee there were only *four* million: 294,000 miners, 900,000 railway-men, 100,000 sailors and dockers, 1,000,000 plantation workers, and 1,700,000 factory hands (773,000 in cotton and jute, 169,000 in metal, 155,000 in shipbuilding, 150,000 in chemical products, 109,000 in food industries, 82,000 in glass, etc.), making a rough total of 3,990,000, of which, if we leave out of account the plantation workers, a bare 3 million, representing a population of 19 million, constitute the wage-earners of modern industry.

The industrial labouring class, then, forms only a very small portion of India's manual labour; and, further, it can hardly be said to constitute a "class" in the strict sense of the word, on account of its lack of cohesion, and the fact that the majority of its

members feel their industrial occupations to be of a temporary nature. We come here upon a very real difference between the conditions in which the working class came into existence in Europe and in India. In Europe, and particularly in France, it was drawn at the beginning of the nineteenth century in very large measure from former artisans who had been ruined by the introduction of machinery and were reduced to selling their labour to the capitalist contractor. Even if some were drawn also from among the agricultural labourers, the great majority, in any case the *élite* of the working class, that section which gave rise to syndicalism, came from these former artisans, who inherited the traditions of the mediaeval corporations and possessed genuine technical ability. These workers brought their families to the towns, and rapidly began to form an urban proletariat. In India, on the contrary, the artisans constitute a tiny group in the whole body of workers; practically all the factory hands are drawn from the classes of agricultural wage-earners and small landowners.

These come to the towns attracted by the high nominal salaries offered, and hoping by this means to supplement the income of their families who have been left behind in the villages. It is true that more and more during recent years the women and children have taken to following the men to the towns, but it is always with the idea of succeeding, by dint of a grim struggle, in saving a small sum which would allow them to buy more ground, and to return home to die.

In Bombay, for instance, where 114,000 men, 30,000 women and several thousand children are

employed in the textile industry, 84 per cent. of the working classes are born outside the town. The great majority come from Ratnagiri, near Bombay, where the arid, dry soil, and a very dense population (194 to the square mile) have combined to produce a steady stream of emigration ; 20 per cent. come from the Deccan, 11 per cent. from the Indo-Gangetic Provinces, 9 per cent. from the Punjab, and the same number from the south of the peninsula. Out of a total of 15,000 workers, 5 per cent. only are former artisans, coming from communities of Mohammedan weavers, and they are always at the head of all risings and movements of protest. All the rest are recruited from the farming class ; roughly one-half come unaccompanied, and for 1,000 men one finds 525 women in the working-class quarters of Bombay.

At Madras, in the same way, 80 per cent. of the workers are recruited from various agricultural regions of the presidency, and keep in close touch with their village. At Calcutta the situation is even more striking ; 10 per cent. of the women, and 20 per cent. of the men, are natives of Bengal ; the great majority come from the United Provinces, the Punjab, Orissa, and Madras, and thus in each factory is to be found a complete mixture of practically every race in India. Here, again, most of the men come alone, leaving their families in charge of their land, and returning home at harvest-time. It is practically only at Nagpur and Cawnpore, where the textile firms have pursued an energetic housing policy for their workers, that one finds the majority of families permanently attached to the factory, having severed all connection with their native soil and forming the beginning of an urban proletariat.

Three characteristics very naturally mark a labouring class drawn from such elements.

The Indian workman is extremely unreliable. He takes on an average two months' holiday per year, at harvest-time, and if his village is not too far from the industrial centre, he takes French leave for two or three days a month to see his family. At Bombay the average number of absences per day reaches from 12 to 15 per cent., varying from 5 per cent. in December and January to 20 per cent. and even 25 per cent. in May and June, September and October. Firms are therefore obliged to employ temporary substitutes in addition to their regular workmen. The proportion of absentees is about the same at Calcutta and Madras, and shows not the smallest sign of diminishing as the years pass.

The workman's level of production is very low. The peasant comes to the factory not only without any technical qualifications, but also without the slightest conception of time, and having formed no habits of regular and rapid work. As has been pointed out, during one-third of the year the farmer is reduced to idleness ; during the rest of the time he is used to long hours of labour (from sunrise to sunset), but labour taken at an easy pace, carried on in the open air, and interrupted by frequent pauses and interminable conversations. Consequently, once at the factory, he feels completely at sea surrounded by the throbbing of the machinery and in the moist and overheated atmosphere of the works, and he proves incapable of submitting to industrial discipline, which requires swifter movements and more sustained effort during a shorter period. Hence the widespread loitering in the factories. The workman abandons his

machine on the most varied pretexts, and it has been estimated that each man is absent about ten minutes out of every hour, and at any moment two men out of twelve are not at their posts. The most Draconian measures of discipline have all failed before the peasant's utter incapacity to adapt himself to the quickened rhythm of modern machinery. This psychological deficiency added to a total lack of technical knowledge, to apparatus which is frequently out of date, to atmospheric conditions and the physical weakness of a people undermined by poverty, explains why the Indian workman's level of production is the lowest in the whole world. Simson, in an examination of the comparative productive capacity of a Manchester mill hand with that of one from Madras, has demonstrated that, on an average, three Indian workmen would be required to do the work of one Englishman.

Lastly, the Indian labourer has not yet consciously become an industrial worker. He regards his factory labour as something foreign to himself, temporary and remote from his deepest preoccupations. His thoughts remain centred round the life of his village, and he does not yet feel himself to be a member of an autonomous group, distinct from the peasant farmer. In a word, he has no class-consciousness.

The recruitment of labour in Indian factories is entirely in the hands of foremen, called, according to the district, mukkadams, sirdars, or more frequently jobbers. Each of these is bound, under pain of dismissal, to procure by his own efforts all the manual labour necessary for the section of which he is in charge. In order to do this, he multiplies his connections with the workers of his caste, or his quarter, or with those

who are natives of the same region as himself. He arbitrates in their disputes, acts as their advisor, advances them money and thus becomes the head of a little community on which he can draw according to his needs. At the same time, he keeps in touch with his village, returns there every year at harvest-time and dazzles the eyes of those whose crops have been poor by conjuring up visions of the high wages paid in modern industry. A few decide to follow him, and leave their families behind, borrowing the money needed for the journey, or using all their savings for the purpose. On their arrival in town they take up their abode with a family of their own caste, and coming, if possible, from the same district. Immediately, their difficulties begin. They have to pay their board in advance, and several days, several weeks even, may elapse before vacancies can be found for them, in which case they are obliged to have recourse to the money-lender, who charges exorbitant rates (12 to 15 per cent. per month), or else to the foreman, who grants them easier terms (6 to 8 per cent.). When once the newcomer is engaged it is at first only as a substitute for irregular and temporary work, without any security and very badly paid ; and at the same time he becomes acquainted with two of the greatest evils of Indian industry—delay in the payment of wages, and the practice of *dasturi*.

Most of the workmen are paid fortnightly, the skilled worker monthly, and as they are usually paid by piece-work, the calculation of the sum due to each man is fairly complicated, and requires time. The worker therefore only receives his wages after some delay—five or six days after the completion of the fortnight, ten or twelve days after the end of the

month, according to the method adopted. Moreover, the firms are in the habit of keeping back the first month's wages, instead of paying them to the employee. It forms a guarantee from which fines can be deducted in case of late arrival, breach of discipline, or absence without sufficient reason, and can be confiscated in its entirety if the workman quits the factory suddenly without giving the required fortnight's notice. (The same regulation stipulates that the employee may be dismissed at any moment without notice or compensation.) The newly engaged workman, therefore, receives his first pay about seven weeks after beginning work; during the interval he must once more turn to the money-lender or the foreman.

But the latter, on his side, very soon gives the man to understand, if he is anxious to obtain a permanent and stable position, that these are only granted to men who know how to make the necessary sacrifices, and the practice of *dasturi*, or bribery, is general. Foremen, whose wages do not exceed 50 or 60 rupees per month, manage by this means to earn from two to three hundred. The best positions are given, therefore, not to the most competent but to those who pay most; for after paying a few rupees to obtain the situation, a man must spend a few annas every month in order to keep it. Numerous protests have been raised in wage-earning circles against this practice, but as yet no efficient measures have been taken to combat it. It is, in fact, never possible to prove that a foreman has sold a position to the highest bidder. Such is his influence over the masses that no one, unless he has already been dismissed, will venture to testify against him; and even if he is surprised in the act of receiving money from one of his subordinates, it is

impossible to tell whether this particular instance is a case of a dasturi or the repayment of a sum advanced.

Under these circumstances, when at the end of seven weeks the workman at last receives his first wages, little enough of it remains to him once the dasturi and the interest on sums borrowed have been paid. Towards the end of the third or fourth month, and not before, he can send a few rupees to the village, but his indebtedness has been so great from the outset that he has to give up all hope of freeing himself, and a large part of his earnings is swallowed up in advance by the payment of interest. Then his wife, receiving practically nothing, and being unable to gain a sufficient income from the land, may decide to join her husband and go into factory work herself, leaving the children in the care of a relative. A large number of families live in this way, and if the couple both work with dogged perseverance, and the man neither drinks, gambles nor smokes, they can maintain the children left in the village. If they are unable to achieve this, the latter are in their turn brought to town after the first seasonal return to the village, and the entire family thus finds itself absorbed into industrial labour.

Female and child labour are therefore not unknown to Indian industry. In fact, formerly they were very widespread, and the development of the textile industry in particular was accompanied at the end of the nineteenth century by the same atrocities as England witnessed at the end of the eighteenth. In 1875 Major Moore, chief inspector of the Bombay Cotton Department, drew the attention of the public to the employment of women and children of five or six for

fifteen or sixteen hours per day. A campaign was immediately launched which was to continue until the outbreak of the war, and lead to the progressive elaboration of Indian labour legislation. In this campaign the initiative in most cases came from the government of the province of Bombay, with the energetic support of social reformers in India and England, and also of the Manchester manufacturers, who were afraid of the advantage their rivals might gain through such ruthless exploitation of labour. Pressure from Manchester was largely responsible for the energy shown in the matter by the British governments of every party; the most conservative showing the greatest enthusiasm. In India the movement was checked by indifference on the part of the Viceregal government, and open hostility in factory-owning circles, Indian as well as English, and especially in Bengal, where the Chamber of Commerce of Bengal declared in 1877: "There is no more pleasing spectacle than the sight of these little children working at the looms, in radiant health and excellent spirits." A law of 1881, which inaugurated protective legislation for the worker, forbade the employment of children under the age of 7 years, and limited those between the ages of 7 and 12 to a nine-hour day. But this only applied to factories of over 100 workers where mechanical apparatus was in use, and no serious measure was taken to ensure the inspection of workshops. In 1882 the Bombay government engaged the services of Meade-King, an inspector of factories in England, and formed an industrial commission to investigate the application of the law. The enquiry revealed that children of all ages continued to be employed, and that the conditions were worst, not in

the large establishments of over a hundred workers but in the small concerns working at set seasons, where cases were found of twenty-three hours' continuous labour. Consequently King proposed that the law of 1881 should be completely remodelled. The Indian Government having refused its consent, the government of Bombay appointed a fresh inspector, Mr. Jones, who reached the same conclusions, and on his return to England in 1887 published a most condemnatory report on the labour situation in India. Public opinion was again aroused, and in 1891 Parliament passed an Act forbidding the employment of children under the age of 9, and fixing a seven-hour day for those under 14 and an eleven-hour day for women. Further, the law applied to factories employing over 50 workers, and the provincial governors might extend it to any employing over 20. This was a marked improvement, but unhappily only in theory, for the application of the law was entrusted to judges and local doctors, who very soon revealed their utter incompetence.

The country, moreover, was entering at this moment upon a period of intense industrial activity, and the number of firms affected by the law was to rise from 656 in 1892 to 1,533 in 1902, the number of their workers increasing from 317,000 to 541,000. At the same time electric light was coming into general use, making work by night possible. This led to a further prolongation of the average working day, which, after having fallen to thirteen hours for adults, rose again to fourteen and fifteen. This time the protest originated in an Anglo-Indian journal, the *Times of India*, which published a series of articles in 1905 describing working conditions, and showing that these

were due in large measure to the existence of the managing agents, whose object was always to obtain the maximum production even if it entailed very high costs. Another commission was appointed by the government of Bombay, which revealed that 50 per cent. of the children employed in the spinning-mills were less than 9 years old, and 25 per cent. of those employed fourteen and fifteen hours were under 14, while the adult's day exceeded fifteen or even sixteen hours. Then at last was passed the law of 1912, prohibiting afresh the employment of children under the age of 9 and limiting the working day to six hours for those under 14, while establishing in the textile industry an eleven-hour day for women and a twelve-hour day for men. Further, the Act created a body of factory inspectors, and laid down for the first time severe penalties for breaking the law.

The war and the social disturbances to which it gave rise hastened the advent of social progress in India, and the Washington Conference proposed three conventions for India's signature. The first limited the number of working hours to sixty per week, the second prohibited the employment of children under 12, and the last forbade night labour for women and children under 14. In consequence the Act of 1921 established the sixty-hour week, and forbade the employment of children under 12, or 11 if they had received elementary instruction. It applies to all factories containing over 20 hands, and provincial governors may extend its application to those employing over 10.

An Act of 1923 has since prohibited the employment in mines of children under 13, and fixed the number of working hours for the adult underground

at fifty-four. Lastly, an Act of 1921 established the principle of an hour's regular interval in the middle of the day, this being reduced to half an hour if the whole working day is less than eight and a half hours long.

If the situation has largely improved thanks to this legislation, the position of women and children in Indian industry none the less remains tragic. In 1927 the seven thousand firms with over 20 hands employed 1,600,000 workers, of whom 1,300,000 were men and 300,000 women. The latter are chiefly in jute, where they constitute 25 per cent. of the operatives, in cotton, and in the mines where husband and wife work together below ground, the man hewing the coal and the woman transporting it in baskets on her head. No measures whatever have been taken so far to protect the mother. Pregnant women continue to work up to the last day, and there are barely a few dozen firms who grant leave on half pay for the two or three weeks preceding or following the birth of the child. After its arrival, no one takes any notice of it; few of the factories possess crèches, and the mother has to choose between two alternatives—either to leave the child behind in the care of a neighbour, after pouring a few drops of opium into its bottle to ensure that it shall sleep right through the day, or else to take it to the factory and keep it by her while she works. Rows of cots drawn up between the looms are often to be seen, or else children lying on the ground, breathing the suffocating atmosphere all day long and covered with the cotton dust of the works.

Industry in India still utilises child labour. Statistics give only five to six thousand children as being

employed, but the reality is infinitely more serious—the lack of a registry of births, marriages, and deaths affords an easy loophole for the employment of children by making them pass for older than they are. Some parents do not hesitate to urge their children, whose working day is restricted to six hours, to work in two factories at once, thus completing a full adult day. The presence of children brought by the mother is a fresh source of complications, for it is very difficult for an inspector to distinguish between those who are there to work and those who are simply playing or brought by the mother. The employment of young children still continues to-day, therefore, and in certain districts, particularly at Ahmedabad, has developed into an actual traffic known as the *sethi* system. Recruiters make a tour of the villages, asking parents to loan their children for a period of five years, and offering them the immediate payment of a lump sum of 30 to 40 rupees. The children are then placed in the factories, and the recruiter, to whom parental authority has been delegated, takes all their earnings for himself, supplying them with the barest necessities to prevent their dying of hunger and exhaustion before the five years' term has expired.

The working conditions in Indian factories are very similar to those of European establishments of the same nature. From the point of view of hygiene, they are even more favourable in the Bombay mills than in those of Manchester. Being of more recent date, Indian industry has been able to reap the advantage of the latest technical improvements. The buildings are on the whole quite satisfactory as regards temperature, ventilation, and lighting. Those in the

jute manufacture are single-storied buildings, long and narrow in shape; the cotton mills, on the contrary, are four or five-storied blocks. In both cases the roof is of corrugated iron, for no other type could stand the torrential monsoon rains, and tiles, for instance, would soon be used by the monkeys in their mock battles. The consequent heat is partially reduced by the excellent arrangement of the windows, placed at the level of the roof and shaped like the teeth of a saw, facing east and west in order always to allow the cooler air and the maximum of light to penetrate. At the same time the ventilation and the absorption of cotton dust appear well managed in most establishments. There remains the moisture, a necessary evil in cotton manufacture, but which is particularly debilitating and exhausting in this torrid climate, and constitutes one of the most unpleasant features of factory work. Precautionary measures have been increasingly taken, especially since the passing of the Act relating to accidents at work, to ensure the safety of the hands, but the fact that they come from widely differing districts, speaking different languages and unable to read or, often, to understand the foreman's orders clearly, makes it extremely difficult to educate them in this respect. In addition to this the physical deficiencies of the workers, and their unsuitability for industrial labour, explains the relatively high number of accidents, which amounted to 4·32 per 1,000 in 1892, 5·74 in 1902, and 9·79 in 1927. The proportion was particularly high in the railway workshops (46 per 1,000 in Bihar and 34 per 1,000 in Madras, as against 6 per 1,000 in the textile industry). On the other hand, the proportion in the mines was relatively low: 1·4 per 1,000 in 1903, 2·95 in 1926.

Working hours, as we have seen, have been limited by the recent Act to ten per day or sixty per week. In practice they tend to fall below the legal minimum, and certain firms in the large centres have introduced the fifty-four or even the forty-eight-hour week. In 1926, 26 per cent. of the factories employing over twenty hands worked only 48 hours, 12·4 per cent. from forty-eight to fifty-four, and 61 per cent. from fifty-four to sixty. Those working less than fifty-four hours constituted 69 per cent. of the firms in Bengal, 38 per cent. of those in Madras, 21 per cent. in Bombay. The law prohibits underground work in the mines from exceeding fifty-four hours, and in practice the actual working time varies from fifty to fifty-two. To conclude, one hour's off-time in the day is granted in all factories. In most cases the whole hour is taken at a stretch; occasionally it is divided into two half-hour periods.

As to the relations between workers and managers, they are of three kinds.

Most frequently, and particularly in the jute industry, the European owners and directors are incapable of understanding the vernacular, and have little desire for contact with their workers. All the real power is therefore in the hands of the foremen, whose business is infinitely more important than in Europe; they are, each with regard to his own work, the omnipotent representatives of some mysterious and nearly always invisible director. They alone are competent to engage the workers, determine their wages, supervise and judge their work, impose fines and pronounce dismissal. Such absolute authority and the absence of all control leads them to abuse their power, allotting the best situations to their

own protégés, and making life a burden in a thousand small ways to the men and women who will not consent to yield to their every whim. The position of the women is particularly difficult, and their lot is hardly better if they are supervised by a forewoman, for the *naikins* have an abominable reputation and often use their authority to incite the girls under their orders to prostitution.

Sometimes, on the other hand, especially in the cotton mills and the metal works, the director, European or Indian, concentrates all the power in his own hands, and reduces the foreman to a subordinate position. The worker's position is then more favourable, for he is secure from personal annoyance, but the management of the factory is still autocratic, without the slightest regard for the personality of the employee. The evil is particularly great in the firms under European management. The Englishman, more than any other, is imbued with the sense of his racial superiority, and is very ready to consider his native staff in the light of inferior beings to be guided by blows. As a result, he behaves at times with intolerable brutality, and numerous strikes have had their origin in protests against assaults of which the workers have been the victims.

A particular type of relationship which must be mentioned is that which characterises the tea plantations in Assam and Bengal. These afford employment for over 800,000 workers, most of them recruits from outside the district. For a long time the recruitment was conducted by special agencies organised for the purpose of enlisting men. They would attract their prey by fallacious promises, often after making the men drunk, and bind them to engage-

ments of five years or longer. Once the contract was signed, the labourers were shut up on ships, where they were ill-treated and under-nourished, a large number dying before reaching the plantations. Such were the conditions that protective legislation had to be set up, and laws of 1858,* 1860, 1865, 1870, 1873 and 1890 successively laid down very strict rules as to the methods of recruitment. Before leaving for the plantations, the recruiter was to appear before the district magistrate with his men, and the latter were to certify the voluntary nature of their engagement; medical inspection was made compulsory, and transport conditions and food were closely controlled, while a government representative was to be aboard the ship taking the emigrants to Assam. Lastly, the Act of 1915 prohibited the engagement of workers through intermediaries, and to-day the planters effect it directly through their sirdars. A Labour Board has been set up to control the latter and protect the workmen against them.

The plantations being a long way from all the populous centres, the costs of transport are always very high, and each man engaged represents an expenditure of roughly 100 to 150 rupees. The planters are naturally anxious that the men should remain in their service long enough to compensate them for their outlay, and the laws enumerated above were intended to apply to contracts binding the workers to the plantations for a minimum of four or five years. If the worker ran away before the expiration of the contract, he could be immediately arrested by the planters themselves and condemned to several months' imprisonment, his term of detention being additional

* R. K. Das's report, previously quoted.

to the duration of his contract. Besides this special legislation concerning the emigrants to Assam and Bengal, a general law for the whole of India, the Breach of Contract Act of 1857, also punished by imprisonment (but without the planter having the right to make an arrest himself) any worker refusing to carry out his contract after receiving advances on his earnings. In this way the local peasants and the emigrants who had completed their five years' contract were lured by an immediate money-payment into engaging themselves for a fresh period of three to five years, and thus found themselves bound in a new guise to the plantations.

The labourers having thus lost their liberty found themselves forced to accept the worst conditions of work and very low wages. In 1920 the men received barely 10 rupees per month in the Assam valley, and 8 in that of the Surma, the women 8 and 6; these being the same figures as in 1911, although the cost of living had increased 70 per cent. and the wages of agricultural labourers taken as a whole had risen 60 per cent. True, they also received for a very low rent a plot of an acre to cultivate, and rice was supposed to be supplied to them cheaply, but it was just the high price of this rice and its definitely unsatisfactory quality that caused the strike of 1920 which, in the Surma valley, took the form of a general exodus of the population. At the present moment the situation is considerably improved; since 1915 the special laws concerning the plantations have been annulled; as to the Breach of Contract Act, after being amended by the law of 1920, forbidding advances of over 300 rupees, and allowing the magistrate to refuse to impose a penalty if he considered the terms of the

contract unjust, it also was repealed in 1926. Nevertheless, there still subsist among the members of the owners' association agreements by which each undertakes not to engage labourers who have been dismissed by another member, or who have run away from a plantation. If a labourer on one plantation wishes to marry a girl on another, the marriage cannot take place unless the man's employer provides a substitute for the girl. The labourers are housed on their employer's land, which they may not leave without permission. The fact, however, that the duration of a contract may no longer exceed one year, constitutes one genuine improvement.

On the subject of wages, three pronouncements can be made :

(1) The money-wages do not really indicate the total of the worker's remuneration.

(2) The wages vary widely according to sex, profession, race, district, and even the firm. So great is the diversity that it is difficult to arrive at an average wage.

(3) The wages are all extremely low, and their level has risen only very slightly during recent years.

The result is a standard of living which is one of the lowest in the world.

(1) *The money-wages do not represent the exact total of the worker's remuneration.*—To arrive at the latter one must add certain supplementary payments, and deduct other sums.

In addition to the regular wages there are supplementary payments in money or kind of which it is not always easy to estimate the value. It has been the custom since the end of the war to add to the basic

salary which remains unchanged a cost of living bonus which is purely temporary, and may be withdrawn at any moment. In 1918 the Bombay factories granted an increase of 15 per cent. as a temporary bonus, and this rose to 70 per cent. in 1921 for the time-workers, and 80 per cent. for the piece-workers. To-day most of these additional payments have been suppressed, or, as is most frequently the case, consolidated and incorporated into the regular wage. On the other hand, a monthly bonus for accuracy and regular attendance is now paid by most of the big firms. It generally amounts to one rupee per month, and is granted to every worker who has been absent less than two days without authorisation. A few firms will allow one day's unauthorised absence per month, but withhold half the bonus on the second occurrence, and the whole sum on the third. At Ahmedabad a combination of this bonus and the indemnity for the high cost of living has been adopted in the shape of an annual indemnity for the cost of living, equal to one month's salary and paid exclusively to those workers who have attended at the factory continuously for more than eight months. In the same way at Bombay a bonus of one month's wages has been paid since 1921 to those who can show over nine months' service, three weeks' wages to those with a record of from six to nine months, and a fortnight's pay to those with under six months, which corresponds to about 83 per cent. of the wages fund.

Besides these monetary supplements, payments in kind must also be taken into account. Several firms, especially at Cawnpore and Nagpur, have undertaken the construction of workers' quarters, which they let at much lower rents than those asked by private

individuals—lower sometimes than the cost of construction. The majority of the big factories have opened stores where the workers can buy cereals and cloth below current prices (at half or one-third of the market price). The combinations in this respect are innumerable. In some firms all the workers have a right to the store's products, and can obtain their supplies there to the value of half the wages owing to them ; in other cases the right of purchase is restricted to workers who have been a certain length of time in the factory, and have not exceeded the maximum number of days' absence. Purchase can always be made on credit, the amount being noted in the workman's book and withheld later when his wages are paid. In all these cases, whether of low rent or the sale of goods below current prices, the employer could easily pay higher nominal wages ; he prefers to keep these low and add supplementary payments, for the latter offer a two-fold advantage. The firm undertaking the construction or purchase wholesale and having plentiful credit at its disposal, can effect these operations at far lower cost than the individual ; consequently it can achieve with a smaller outlay a more substantial improvement in the worker's standard of living. In the second place a part of the increase of wages falls on the middlemen, landlords or merchants, who formerly exacted their profits from the workmen. Further, these methods of attaching the workmen by means of supplies on credit to the dwelling, and especially to the shop provided by his employer, tend to make him lose all independence, and allow the firm to have at its disposal a docile body of employees on whom pressure can very effectively be brought to bear.

Such, then, are the sources of income in addition to the nominal wage. There are also the deductions of a whole series of different types, made on the most varied pretexts at the moment of paying the wages.

First of all, there is the loss of arrears of wages. We have seen that the firms retain one month's wages in their possession as a guarantee. This can be confiscated under the most varied circumstances. For instance, a labourer may leave the factory without notice, be dismissed, fall ill, or suddenly cease work for some other reason without being in the least to blame ; in every case the arrears are forfeited. The same thing happens if the worker, having asked for and obtained leave of absence, remains away a day or two longer than his leave allows. On his return he is refused readmission, and his arrears are confiscated. Again, there are frequent cases in which the worker is absent with the *verbal* authorisation of the foreman. The latter forgets that he has given this, finds a substitute, and refuses to take the man back on his return. Often the worker who leaves the factory after giving the required notice is unable to return a week or ten ten days later to draw his wages ; he then has it collected at the end of the month by the money-lender, who deducts one anna per rupee (6 per cent.) and represents him on pay-day.

Another type of indirect stoppage is the practice of deducting from the worker's pay the value of all second-rate work. Any piece of cloth showing a defect must be bought at wholesale price by the worker, without any enquiry whether the defect is really the latter's fault, or due to the bad quality of the raw material supplied.

Finally, exaggerated fines are another evil of Indian

industry. The power to inflict fines lies entirely in the hands of the foreman, who is the supreme judge of the gravity of the offence and the fine to be imposed. He is not even bound to notify the worker, who often learns only on pay-day the penalty which has been inflicted. Generally, the fines are imposed for unpunctuality, bad work, absence without sufficient reason, or breach of discipline, but most factory regulations ignore the question, leaving the foreman a free hand. Those which attempt to determine the penalties do so in deplorably vague terms, as, for instance, the following: "The worker who arrives more than ten minutes late at the factory shall suffer such deduction of wages as the manager shall think fit to impose." . . . "The worker who is absent for more than three days without permission shall pay a fine or be suspended from work for a period to be determined by the manager, or he shall be considered as having left without notice, and shall forfeit his arrears of wages." . . . "The worker entering or leaving the factory by a door other than that intended for the purpose shall pay such fine as the manager shall think fit to impose." . . . "The worker who disobeys the orders of his superiors shall pay a fine, or shall be dismissed and his arrears of wages shall be confiscated." The manager (really the foreman), therefore, has supreme power; he alone is competent to define the offence, estimate its gravity and determine the penalty. According to the estimates of the Bombay Trades Unions, the total of these fines, confiscations of arrears and other stoppages amount to 8 or 10 per cent. of the nominal salary. These reductions therefore equal and sometimes even exceed the value of the supplementary payments.

(2) Wages vary excessively :

According to race.—This is chiefly apparent in the railways, where an Indian inspector receives £12 to £14 per month, an English one from £26 to £30 ; a European guard from £12 to £14, an Indian £5 or £6 ; a European engine-driver from £12 to £14, an Indian from £3 to £6 ; an Anglo-Indian stoker from £7 to £15, an Indian £1 or £2. Lastly, a European station-master is paid from £15 to £37, an Anglo-Indian from £21 to £24, an Indian from £3 to £9.

According to sex, profession and district.—A woman's wage is generally equal to half a man's. In the mines a man working underground is paid 10 annas per day in the Ranigang district, 1 rupee * 5 annas in the Jharriah district, 1 rupee 9 annas in the gold-mines of Madras ; a woman receives from 6 to 8 annas, a surface-worker from 8 annas to 1 rupee 3 annas. For indoor work the wages are 1 to 2 rupees per day for masons and locksmiths, 1 rupee and a half for joiners in the country, 3 for those in town. For coolies, however, the wages are only 10 annas for a man, 6 for a woman. Wages are lowest in the jute industry, being about £12 *per annum*—that is to say, about 4 rupees per week of four days for a good worker, 3 for a coolie, and 2 for a woman. The cotton industry, on the contrary, has the reputation of paying the highest wages, but here even more than elsewhere there are great differences, not only from one district to another, but often between two neighbouring factories. An enquiry has, however, been conducted in the Bombay Presidency, and a certain average has been arrived at which it will be possible to use as a basis for consideration (for the enquiry covered

* 1 rupee=16 annas.

80 per cent. of the textile workers in the province), though it should be borne in mind that an average obtained by adding together real wages varying as widely as we have indicated is necessarily of an artificial nature. The weavers, who constitute 22 per cent. of the operatives, and generally have to supervise two looms, were paid from 1 rupee 7 annas to 1 rupee 9 annas, those having three looms 2 rupees 3 annas; the spinners received from 1 rupee 10 annas to 1 rupee 15 annas, the winders from 12 annas for the women, to 1 rupee for the men. For the province as a whole the table of relative salaries was the following:

	Men	*Women*
	Per cent.	*Per cent.*
9 annas	0·7	29·6
9–14 annas	10·8	31·8
14–19 ,, ...	35·4	33·9
19–24 ,, ...	17	3·3
24–29 ,, ...	15·3	1·4
29–34 ,, ...	10·4	—
Over 43 ,, ...	10·4	—

It can be said, then, that the average daily wage of an Indian workman in a textile factory is 1 rupee 4 annas (1*s.* 10½*d.*), and of a woman hand, 12 annas (1*s.* 1½*d.*). For the whole manufacturing industry the average is a little lower; 1 rupee for the men, and 10 annas for the women.

(3) If we compare these wages with those before the war, it will be found that up to 1920 the increase in workmen's salaries remained far below that of the cost of living, but has exceeded it since that date. From 1914 to 1919 salaries rose only from 3 per cent. in jute, to 20 per cent. in cotton, with an average of 13 per

cent. for manufacture as a whole, while the cost of living had increased from 70 to 90 per cent. according to the district. Since the strike of 1920, and the rise of the labour movement, the increase of wages has become general throughout the country, reaching 110 per cent. in the cotton industry and 96 per cent. in industry as a whole. As in 1926 the cost of living had risen only 67 per cent. in the Presidency of Bombay, and 72 per cent. in the town itself,* the real increase of wages amounts roughly to between 15 and 20 per cent.

If we now compare the salaries paid to workmen with the profits realised by the factory owners, it becomes obvious that the latter are extremely high, and that better wages might easily be paid to the workers. In the cotton industry, leaving out of account the recent crisis of 1924–1926, we find that for the period 1904–1925 the profits varied from a minimum of 160 million rupees in 1909 to 1,300 million in 1920, while the wages bill rose from a minimum of 18 million rupees in 1905 to a maximum of 74 million in 1922. Further, if we divide these nett profits by the total share capital we find a profit varying from 70 per cent. in 1923 to a maximum of 82 per cent. in 1920. In the jute industry, profits are still higher ; the average dividend of the ten largest firms for the period 1915–1925 reached a minimum of 77 per cent. in 1917, and rose to a maximum of 185 per cent. in 1920 ; and in 1927 the average dividend paid out for all the jute firms taken together was 83 per cent.

Lastly, with regard to the mining industry. Here are

* This figure is only roughly approximate, for a reliable index of prices has been drawn up at Bombay only, and not earlier than 1923. Any comparison with the period before the war is therefore very unsafe.

the average figures for the dividends paid out since 1900 by the eight most important mining companies : *

	A	*B*	*C*	*D*	*E*	*F*	*G*	*H*
	Per cent.	*Per cent.*	*Per cent.*	*Per cent.*	*Per cent.*	*Per cent.*	*Per cent.*	*Per cent.*
1901–1905 ..	37·5	17·5	17	16·2	8	12	8·5	—
1906–1910 ..	96	53	36	25	40	52	32	54
1911–1915 ..	91	48	10	16·4	36	28	40	62
1916–1920 ..	109	58	—	29	36	45	39	46
1921	160	55	17	50	17	80	50	85
1924	150	67	25	50	40	85	57	—
1926	110	50	5	50	55	90	57	—

A daily wage of 1 rupee 4 annas already gives one a notion of what the Indian worker's poverty can be ; but to form an accurate idca of it, it is essential to know to what standard of living such a nominal wage corresponds. This has been established by two enquiries into family budgets conducted in 1923 and 1925 in the great industrial centres of Bombay and Sholapur. The first enquiry based its report on 3,000 families, all of peasant origin, of which 90 per cent. were Hindus, 6·8 per cent. Moslems, 2·2 per cent. Christians. Over half worked in the textile industry, 15 per cent. in the municipal services, the remainder in the engineering trade.

A normal family consisted of 4·6 persons, the father and mother, two children in town and 0·6 of a child left in the country. The second enquiry was based on a thousand families, of which 80 per cent. were Hindus and 20 per cent. untouchables, members of a criminal caste. Among the Hindus, the average family consisted of 4·68 persons ; of the families of an ordinary type, 24 per cent. were composed of husband and wife,

* Das's report.

27 per cent. had one child, 25 per cent. two, 12 per cent. three, 8 per cent. four, 3 per cent. more than four. But besides these ordinary families, in 56 per cent. of the cases at Sholapur patriarchal families were to be found where all the children, sons and daughters-in-law lived together under the same roof. In 17 per cent. of these cases only the head of the family worked; in 10 per cent. his wife did also; in 27 per cent. two male adults, and in 25 per cent. two male adults and one woman worked. Finally, in the criminal families the average was 4·9 persons, of which two went to work.

The monthly incomes of these families were as follows:

	Bombay	*Sholapur*
	Per cent.	*Per cent.*
30 rupees	2·7	31
30–40 rupees	11	25·5
40–50 ,, ...	33·7	20·6
50–60 ,, ...	21·8	13·3
60–70 ,, ...	19·6	5·4
70–80 ,, ...	6·8	3·1
Over 80 ,, ...	4·4	1·1

The average family income in Sholapur was 38 rupees for a Hindu family, 30 for an untouchable; the men's earnings being respectively 21 and 15 annas per day, the women's 8 and 6. In Bombay, on the contrary, the average income was 57 rupees per week, 43 for the men and 16 for the women.

Expenses were made up as follows:

	Bombay	*Sholapur*	*Sholapur untouchables*
	Per cent.	*Per cent.*	*Per cent.*
Food	56·8	49	53
Lodging	15	16·3	13·2
Clothes	7·7	11·8	11·3
Miscellaneous	20·5	22·9	22·5

Food is naturally the most important item of the workmen's budget, definitely exceeding half his total expenses. It consists of a small quantity of " jewari " grain (which constitutes two-thirds of his expenditure on food), a little rice, oil, and sour milk. A diet of this kind, though superior in quality and quantity to the peasant's normal fare, is utterly insufficient ; the weight of cereals consumed per head for all the families under survey was found not to exceed 1·29 lbs. per day, and that is exactly the figure laid down by the government of Bombay for the distribution of cereals to the poor in time of famine. In the prisons, the regulation weight is 1·87 lbs. for the prisoners engaged in manual labour, 1·54 for the others. The Indian workman is therefore far worse nourished than a convict.

Lodging is the second item on the worker's budget. At Sholapur conditions are relatively bearable ; 12 per cent. of the workers are housed by their employers, and many others continue to live in their own neighbouring villages, so that the majority of the families possess two rooms, for which the average rent does not exceed 2 rupees 8 annas per month. The conditions are also fairly good at Cawnpore and Nagpur, where the factory owners, textile companies and railways have built workmen's cities, where each family has, for a rent of from 2 rupees to 2 rupees 6 annas, a large and airy room with a verandah in which cooking is done. On the other hand, at Ahmedabad, Calcutta, Jharriah and Bombay the situation is appalling. At Calcutta a working family has only one small room without any verandah for four people ; at Jharriah the miners live in the " lines," holes (there is no other word) cut in rows into a wall of free-stone. Their dimensions are barely two yards by three, and it is necessary to

stoop when entering them in order to avoid knocking one's head against the roof. At Ahmedabad the overcrowding is serious in the centre of the town, and a large number of workers are reduced to living outside the city in little bamboo huts less that two yards high, with an iron roof and with no other opening than the narrow door leading into the room. As to Bombay, the town is situated on an island where the available building area is almost entirely covered, and it is no longer possible for the city to expand except on a narrow strip of land towards the extreme North. Seventy per cent. of the families in Bombay live in a single room, with an average of 4 persons per room ; 14 per cent. in two rooms with 2·11 persons per room ; and only 7 per cent. of the town's population possess over three rooms, with an average of 1·6 persons per room.

The houses are of three types. The first thing to catch the visitor's eye is the sight of the great blocks of buildings recently constructed by the Improvement Trust, an autonomous municipal body founded immediately after the plague of 1896. In 1920 the trust demolished twenty-four houses, opened great thoroughfares in the most noisome of the slums, and rebuilt 21,000 blocks. At the moment a scheme for the construction of 50,000 houses is in operation, financed by a duty of 1 anna on every bale of cotton entering the town. They are large buildings of three or four storeys in reinforced concrete, with wide airy spaces between each one and the next. Each dwelling consists of one room and a verandah, the room giving on to a somewhat dark central corridor where the washing is hung, and where hens, and, on the ground floor, sheep, wander at large. These dwellings are tolerably

habitable, but the rent is very high, 3 or 4 rupees per month at least, and most of the workers are unable to afford such a luxury. They are for the most part occupied by foremen or municipal employees.

A large number of workers, especially the untouchables, live, as at Ahmedabad, in huts of bamboo and dried leaves with an iron roof. The rent is barely 1 rupee per month, but as much again must be allowed for the repairs, for at the time of the monsoon rains the houses are frequently flooded, or else collapse on top of the inhabitants.

Finally, 80 per cent. of the workers live in " chawls." These are for the most part former private houses built by some family for its own use. Later, the family wished to make a profit out of them ; storeys were added, and the houses built onto at the sides till they filled the courtyard and all the remaining free spaces between them and the neighbouring houses. In this way five- or six-storeyed houses have grown up, separated from each other by a narrow alley, barely a yard or two wide. The lower storeys are completely deprived of air and light ; there is no drainage, and refuse is thrown into an open gutter, barely a foot wide, running down the alley which separates the houses. Human excrements are allowed to accumulate in wicker baskets placed in the alley which the roadmender is supposed to empty twice a day (often he merely throws the contents into the gutter). As an exception, a few chawls have the luxury of one lavatory for some sixty or eighty families. Water is obtained from a pump which is common to all the occupants of one or several houses ; the gutters frequently become blocked and all the dirty water overflows into the alley, nurturing a cloud of mosquitoes and emitting a foul stench. The

dwellings consist of one narrow room, with a maximum area of 12 to 14 square yards, where four or five persons live together ; often there is neither a window nor a chimney, and the only ventilation is through the door. All the cooking is done in this one room, and the smoke escapes by the door after blackening the ceiling and walls. Two fires are frequently made in the same room if the family has taken in a lodger of a different caste, a custom which is very widespread in Bombay on account of the over-population and the large number of unmarried persons. As a result, 36 per cent. of the families are known to live in rooms occupied by at least six persons, and in 1925, 135 cases were found of six families, representing at least twenty-five people, occupying one room.

Such conditions naturally give rise to an alarming death-rate, especially among children. In 1921 infantile mortality reached 348 per 1,000 at Ahmedabad, 397 per 1,000 at Sholapur, and 666 per 1,000 at Bombay, and out of every three children born two did not live a year. Even if this death-rate can be partially explained by the lack of food and the parents' ignorance, it is mainly due to housing conditions, for the infantile mortality at the same date, which was 133 per 1,000 in families occupying over four rooms, 191 per 1,000 in the case of three rooms, and 201 per 1,000 in the case of children born in hospital, reached 222 per 1,000 in families occupying two rooms, 485 per 1,000 among children who arrived suddenly in the street or at the factory, and 828 per 1,000 among those born and brought up in a single room.

After lodgings, one of the most important items of expenditure is the miscellaneous category which in most of the budgets represents 20 per cent. of the total.

This is by no means a sign of comparatively easy circumstances, for over half the miscellaneous expenses consist of interest on debts and drink. Debts are to be found in nearly all the budgets, and the payment of interest amounts to between 3 and 5 per cent. of the total expenses. The capital of the debt equals on an average two or three months' wages, and the rate of interest varies from 1 to 2 annas per rupee per month, *i.e.* from 75 to 150 per cent. per year.

As to alchohol, it is consumed in 75 per cent. of the families, and is responsible on the average for 4 per cent. of the total expenses on the budget, and for 8 per cent. or even 10 per cent. in the case of the untouchables and the poorest workers. Moreover, these figures would seem to indicate less than the real facts, for the inquiry was conducted at the moment when Gandhi's Non-Co-operation movement was at its height, and brought with it a general boycott of public houses. In a normal year the sum spent on drink would in all probability have been considerably higher. The remaining miscellaneous expenses are for education (this appears in 21 per cent. of the budgets, amounting, on an average, to 2 per cent. of the expenses); for illness (1 per cent. of the expenditure in 11 per cent. of the budgets); while from 4 to 5 per cent. is devoted to family ceremonies or the traditional festivities of Hinduism.

Such, in their main outline, are the conditions of the Indian town workers. Their food and clothing are very slightly better than those of the peasants; their housing conditions, on the contrary, are far worse, and throw into the shade the worst horrors we have known in Europe. But what no figures or statistical enquiry can show, and what is more terrible still, is

the moral degradation of the industrial labourers in India. Their housing conditions, the long hours of monotonous work in a fetid and moist atmosphere, the inadequacy of their wages, the celibate existence led by large numbers of these men whose families have remained in the village, the subjection of the women, who are obliged to submit to every caprice of the jobber, or to the naikin's insinuations, all these things tend to the worst excesses, to alcohol, gambling, and prostitution.

The case is all the more serious because there is nothing to check the workman in his downward path. In the village his whole existence was steeped in a religious atmosphere, and Hinduism, in spite of its limitations, could give the humblest a sense of the infinite, and of communion with nature. At the factory a man finds himself face to face only with inert machines, obeying mechanical laws, with men accustomed to obey orders without understanding them, and superiors whose thoughts and actions are all ruled by the one anxiety to grow rich and reap the highest possible profits. Naturally, an irreligious and materialist conception of life very soon grows upon the workman, because that is the only one which corresponds to his own actual experience as a factory hand. In the country the man lived in a rigidly constituted society, subject to the strict discipline of the caste system. The latter, as we have seen, was terribly narrow ; it separated the workers into rival clans which mutually despised each other and rejected all thought of collaboration ; it hindered without any doubt the free development of powerful personalities, and was a serious obstacle to economic and social progress ; but for the mass of men, who lacked both moral stamina

and initiative, it provided a stable basis, strengthening them by its own solidarity, allowing them to escape from the struggle for existence, and imposing on them a system of discipline which enabled them to work out a rule of life for themselves. At the factory, castes disappeared; not through any internal revolt of individuals who had discovered how to direct their moral life, and had therefore no longer any need of collective discipline, but simply because the new conditions of production ruthlessly destroyed them. The factory requires man-power, one worker is just the same as another for its purposes, and men of every district and every caste are employed indifferently at the same machine. The caste system thus crumbles under the shock from outside circumstances; nothing comes to take its place, and the man, far from being emancipated, finds himself more a slave than ever in the past—a slave to his passions and instincts and to the fatalism produced by his new conditions of life and work, which little by little destroy all his moral sense, and lead stage by stage to the degradation of his physical and spiritual being.

In the face of this tragic situation, one's first instinct is to react against it. Since modern industry brings such suffering in its train, since it only serves to create distress and destroy moral values, let us by all means fight industrialisation, and strain every nerve to return to the past and give a new lease of life to the art of the village craftsman. This is the view taken by some of the best minds in India, and it finds its most fervent expression in Gandhi's vehement campaign in favour of a return to the spinning-wheel. His appeal has secured for the time being, at least, the support of a

large measure of Indian opinion; to such an extent that at one time the National Swarajist party ordered its followers to spin a certain weight of cotton each day, and at meetings only allowed those members who were dressed in khaddar, a hand-spun and hand-woven cloth, the right to vote. It is important at this point to mark the distinction clearly between the two different elements in the Gandhist movement in favour of the return to the spinning-wheel.

There is, in the first place, an effort to solve a clearly defined economic problem. The country districts of India are, as we have seen, over-populated, and the area cultivated by each family is not sufficient to ensure its subsistence. Moreover, climatic conditions force the peasant to remain idle for three or four months in the year. If his lot is to be improved, on the one hand he must be supplied with supplementary industrial work for the period of enforced idleness, and on the other the surplus peasant population should be attracted to some occupation in the towns. The latter should under no circumstances be a modern large-scale industry, which would, it is true, perhaps absorb a small proportion of the peasant population, but by its very extensiveness would displace five or ten times as many artisans, and rob these of employment. In order to improve the peasant's position, and at the same time increase the wages paid in the big industries, by reducing the reserve force of unemployed to a minimum, it is essential if not to reconstitute the village industry, at least to organise it so that it shall be replaced by modern factories as gradually and slowly as possible. Gandhi's policy of restoring supplementary work in the family, and protecting the small industry is perfectly correct in theory; but

regarded as a practical question, it seems to call for two modifications. In the first place, village crafts could only hold their own in cases when manual work was genuinely superior to mechanical ; such as on the one hand repairs, and rough manufactures intended to meet the needs of local consumers ; on the other hand, luxury trades supplying certain needs of modern life. In the South of India, Protestant missionaries have given an entirely new lease of life to some of the villages in this way, developing secondary crafts among the peasant population such as the manufacture of postcards, artificial flowers, dolls, boxes, furniture, embroidery, carpets, etc. In weaving, on the contrary, and still more in spinning, the machine-made product is so far superior both in quantity and quality that any serious home-craft competition is out of the question. Gandhi's movement can only enjoy a relative measure of success during the transitional period while the manufacturing industry is still unable to meet the national consumption, and while the appeal to patriotic feeling may decide the consumer to buy khaddar rather than foreign products, in spite of the former's indubitable inferiority. Moreover, it is not by remaining faithful to old customs and traditional habits that the village crafts can in any measure hold their own, but, on the contrary, by endeavouring to improve their methods and transform their technique. To achieve this it is above all essential that the artisans should reap the profits of their work themselves, and escape by the co-operative credit system from the clutches of the money-lender. They need to develop their technical knowledge and to pool all their energy and resources in order to improve their tools. Lastly, far from remaining content merely to supply the needs

of the village communities, they should make a vigorous effort to supply the local, and, if possible, the national market, and endeavour to establish, in competition with the large-scale industry financed by foreign capital, a smaller national co-operative one. In a word, few of the village crafts will endure unless they learn, by associating together, to secure the chief advantages of modern industrial life.

But here we touch upon the second factor in the Gandhist movement. Gandhi, in fact, does not seek merely to restore the village industries, and supply the peasant with a supplementary income ; his object is also to fight the rising large-scale industry and bring India back to the stage of local economic autonomy, in which small groups of men, reducing their needs to a minimum, manage to supply all their own requirements for themselves. There are three essential elements in this attitude : a distrust on principle of industrialisation, a sentimental attachment to the local unit, and, thirdly, an ascetic and purely agricultural conception of life.

Gandhi shows an instinctive distrust of industry on a large scale, attributing to it all the evils which are crushing down the Indian worker at the moment. For Gandhi, and for a large number of outstanding figures such as Tagore, machinery is a means of slavery and oppression, which destroys the dignity of man and only serves to increase his sufferings. He cannot distinguish between machinery in itself and the use to which it is put by present-day capitalism. In reality, machinery is a liberating force, drawing man out of inertia and immobility, arousing in him new needs and new desires, training him to make, day by day, a sustained effort, and teaching him the discipline

of work. It allows him to increase enormously his output of products of every kind, which he can use to improve his standard of living, and finally, by affording an outlet for any who desire to work, it increases the wealth of a country and offers the most effective weapon against poverty. If at the moment it does not produce all these results, it is because it is in the hands of a class that uses it to make profits for itself at the expense of the workers, and organises the output in an autocratic fashion which robs the operative of all initiative and interest in his work. What it is most important to fight is, therefore, not industrialisation, but capitalism ; and to this end the workers should be organised so as to win by main force the advantages which the latest technical improvements in production are bound to bring them. Gandhi has felt the need for this work of organising labour, and we shall see shortly how genuinely he has influenced the rising labour movement; but he does not appear fully alive to its future possibilities, and he remains fundamentally opposed to the progress of industrialisation in India.

His distrust of machinery is accompanied by a profound attachment to the small home industry, and the conditions of work which are characteristic of local self-sufficiency. He has himself expressed this attitude very clearly in an address delivered at Madras on February 16, 1916. " I am certain," he said, " that we are running counter to one of the most sacred laws of our existence, when we leave our neighbour and go to another man to supply our needs. If a man comes here from Bombay and offers you goods, you have not the right to encourage him, and buy from him, when here in Madras itself, at your very door, you have another tradesman. That is my conception of

Swadeshi. In the same way, in your own village, if you have a barber you should go to him, even if you are better satisfied with one at Madras. If you wish your village barber to have the same technical skill as the latter, train him yourselves. Send him to Madras to learn so that he can become thoroughly skilled, but you have no right to go to another man. Again, if there are goods which cannot be procured in India, it is better to consent to do without them than to seek them from abroad."

This economic parochialism, governed by the doctrine that each profession should provide its members with a sufficient livelihood, that all competition should be eliminated, and that one single artisan in each separate profession should supply the needs of the small local group, bears a singular resemblance to our mediaeval conceptions of fair price and fair wages, but if it expresses the ethics of the Indian village community admirably, it is untenable to-day, when this community is being shaken to its foundations and India has been swept into the current of world exchanges.

Here we come to the third point, in which the opposition between Gandhi's conception and the fundamental ideas underlying modern industrial progress becomes most clearly apparent. It is the question of asceticism. Here again we must make the needful distinctions, and separate carefully two very different things: meritorious asceticism, and asceticism for love.

Meritorious asceticism is found in every philosophy which unites a radically pessimistic view of the world with the belief that man, by his own unaided efforts, can gain his salvation and rise to a spiritual life of a higher order. This is particularly the case with

Hinduism, as we have seen, and Gandhi shows traces of this form of asceticism in his instinctive distrust of the satisfaction of all material desires.

On my arrival at his Sabarmati retreat I feasted with marked enjoyment off the excellent black bread, creamy milk, and raw carrots and turnips which were served me. "That," said Gandhi smiling, "is a heinous sin. You should eat to sustain your body, but without deriving the slightest satisfaction from doing so. You should drink your milk as if it were cod-liver oil." Under this deliberately fanatical and paradoxical form he expressed very accurately the spirit of Hindu asceticism, with its complete condemnation of all desire, its thirst for purification, and its endeavour to escape from the world. It is an asceticism which, in spite of its beauties, can be terribly dangerous, for it holds men back from action, and is of a piece with a religious philosophy in which man seeks above all things to win his salvation by his own efforts. The expressions "self-realisation," "self-purification," "self- . . .," etc., recur incessantly in Gandhi's conversation, and some of his young disciples seem to go out of their way to look for suffering—especially imprisonment in the struggle for independence—as a means of purification, rather than to accept it as unavoidable.

That, however, is no more than a survival of the past in Gandhi's intellectual system, and his real asceticism appears to belong far more to the second type—asceticism for love. From the day, in fact, that Gandhi launched his campaign for the political independence of his people and their social progress, he has been obliged to attribute a certain value, relative but real, to this world of sense which he is striving to

uplift and to spiritualise. In a word, he has had to admit the possibility of incarnation, of the transformation and regeneration of nature by spirit. Henceforward, it is no longer a question of acquiring merit by mortifying the flesh, but of showing forth the spirit in the flesh by acts of love and service; and asceticism becomes a manifestation of brotherhood, through man's refusing to satisfy his personal needs so long as his brothers are in want. This is the meaning which Gandhi attributes to it, and in the same speech at Madras he said: "One of the fundamental moral rules is not to steal. If I take something for which I have no immediate need, and keep it, I am depriving another of it. I believe that nature provides sufficient for the needs of us all, day by day, and there would be no poverty on the earth, no man would die of starvation if each took only what was indispensable and no more. It is when we take more that we steal. I wish to rob no one, but for my part I declare that I may possess nothing beyond what is absolutely indispensable. We have 30 million men in India who have to be content with one meal per day; we have no right to possess anything so long as these 30 million are not fed and clothed. You and I, who know, must reduce our needs, and even consent to suffer the pangs of hunger so that our brother may be nourished."

We have here one of the noblest and highest expressions of asceticism for love—one that is analogous to that other expression it found in Europe, in the Franciscan movement. But here again we must emphasise the definitely agrarian character of the theory.

Agriculture obeys the law of decreasing returns, and in any given stage of its technique a point is

rapidly attained at which man's efforts to obtain a much higher yield become fruitless. The earth's production can therefore be regarded as a constant, and the only means of improving the lot of the poor is for each individual to reduce his own consumption to a minimum, so as to leave the greatest possible share for the others. Asceticism, as understood by Gandhi or St. Francis, is thus the most perfect manifestation of human brotherhood in an agrarian state.

But the very point which Gandhi does not see, is that this use of machinery, to which he is opposed, entirely alters the facts of the case. Industrial production is not a constant but a variable quantity, and man's effort can increase it to an almost unlimited extent. It becomes less a question of reducing one's own consumption than of directing one's fullest energy towards the attainment of an ever-growing production which can supply the necessities of life to all. Modern asceticism thus comes into being, its object being to reduce to a minimum not the requirements, but the existing disproportion between requirements and effort. It is henceforth no longer a case of restraining or denying one's desires, but of disciplining them, and subordinating the lower to the higher: of controlling the purely physiological, which are necessary for the maintenance of physical existence, and encouraging and developing to the utmost those of a mental order favourable to the development of the intellectual and moral personality. Work and vigorous effort are imperative above all else, so that the community may obtain more than is asked of it. But the great tragedy of India at the present day is the lack of energy and will-power, the complete, heartbreaking absence of requirements. Accustomed to poverty, bowed before

it as if before some inevitable doom, the Indian peasant and workman seem to have lost the desire for a healthy and hygienic life, airy and clean dwellings, and a proper education. Only too often a rise in wages is followed by an increase in the number of absences, the workman preferring to remain idle a few days longer rather than to earn a higher salary which would allow him loftier pleasures. And here it must be admitted that capitalism, in spite of all the horrors and suffering it entails at the outset, has a certain educative value. It takes men who are inert and passive, accustomed to a paralysed and resigned existence, and by its harsh discipline it trains them to persevering and sustained labour, and gradually moulds them into productive workers of the modern type. Far from opposing an education of this kind, it is for us to complete it, to go further than capitalism can go, and develop in each individual the desire for a fuller life, the sense of the eminent dignity of his work, the love of endeavour and the joy of battle. That is why Trades Unionism would seem to be a movement far more effective than a mere futile and disappointing struggle against the progress of industrialisation.

CHAPTER III

THE LABOUR MOVEMENT

IT is customary to divide the history of the Indian labour movement into three periods. The first, marked chiefly by the laying down of regulations governing employment in factories, the second by the abolition of abuses, and the third by the internal organisation of the movement. Actually the beginning of the trade union movement, properly so called, came only with the commencement of the third period after the war. The first two saw only the isolated efforts of a minority of intellectuals to awaken the masses and arouse them to a practical campaign.

The first period, from 1872 to 1892, is wholly occupied with the struggle for the regulation of the conditions of labour of women and children. It is well known that in this movement of social progress the government of Bombay has always been in the van, and that it has given an energetic lead on many occasions. Its attitude has been largely due to pressure from a group of Indian intellectuals who attempted to organise a popular agitation to reinforce their demands. Thus, in 1884, 1885, and 1890, meetings of several thousands of workers were held at Bombay, followed by public demonstrations and the lodging of petitions with the Governor. One of these intellectuals, Lockhanday, even founded a trade union, the Bombay Mill Hands' Association, and launched the first journal *Dinabandhu*

(" The People's Friend "), but he met with little success and the Association was soon dissolved.

After the passing of the law of 1891 real progress was achieved in the way of regulation, and the movement was to progress steadily until the war. The intellectuals meanwhile directed their energies into a new channel, the struggle against indentured labour.

Following on the abolition of slavery, many South African colonies, lacking labourers, imported Indian workmen by means of contracts of indenture for long periods, whereby the workers pledged themselves to work for terms of from five to six years. The condition of these workers was lamentable in the extreme. They possessed no property and were forbidden to take part in trade, their wages were trifling and their housing accommodation insufficient. Marriage with a woman of another race was forbidden, and as the emigrants were almost all men terrible immorality resulted. Finally, as they came to take the place of slaves, they were regarded as inferior beings, ill-treated by their masters, whipped and imprisoned for the smallest offence. Their position was so tragic that towards the end of the nineteenth century there broke out among them an epidemic of suicides which profoundly moved Indian opinion. It was then that Gandhi, a young barrister recently called to the Bar, left for Natal to become legal adviser to these workmen. Soon after his arrival the Boer War broke out. The Indians who had suffered so much under Boer rule took the British side, and Gandhi recruited among them an ambulance corps, the value of whose help was recognised on several occasions by the British Government. But the oppression continued, and even grew worse under British rule. The ban on Indians taking

part in trade was maintained, their marriage with local women was declared illegal, and special laws required the finger-prints of all Indians to be taken and forbade them entering into certain districts. Gandhi then founded an Indian paper, *The Opinion*, and on two occasions organised a mass movement of pacific non-co-operation. In 1910, in particular, many bands of Indian workmen, under his direction, occupied forbidden districts and refused to leave them. Some thousands of men were arrested, beaten and imprisoned, but endless new crowds repaired to the forbidden places and allowed themselves to be arrested without protest. The courage and the unwearying tenacity of Gandhi and his followers finally had its effect on public opinion, and from 1912 onwards most of the anti-Asiatic laws were repealed. Finally, at the beginning of the war, the government of India prohibited the emigration of Indian labourers to foreign countries under contracts of indenture. Indian immigration into South Africa is now free and Indians are not subjected there to any special rules. Moreover, the government of India has a special representative in the country, whose duty it is to watch over the interests of the Indians who come within his jurisdiction, and this representative, one of the finest personalities of modern India, Mr. Srinivasa Sastri, has succeeded in removing the last traces of the oppression to which Indians have been subject in this country.

True workers' organisations did not appear until after the war; though even in the early years of the twentieth century some isolated unions had been founded, such as the Printers' Union at Calcutta in 1907, that of the Sailors in 1908, and then the Post Office Employees' Union in 1910, but the first general

movement dates from the period 1918 to 1920, when a large number of strikes broke out simultaneously all over the country. The war, and the fall in value of the rupee, corresponding to the fall in the £ sterling, had in fact led to a general increase in the cost of living, which far surpassed the rise in salaries. In 1920, the agitation in favour of autonomy, led by Gandhi, was at its height, and for the first time touched the masses of workers and peasants. Finally, the example afforded by the Russian revolution aroused great hopes of emancipation.

It was at Madras in 1918 that the first great labour organisation, the Madras Labour Union, was founded, which soon numbered from 8,000 to 10,000 members. It is interesting to consider its origin in detail, for it throws well into relief the important rôle which the intellectuals have played up to now in the direction of the whole of the Indian labour movement. At the beginning of the year 1918, several workmen from the chief cotton firm in Madras, the Buckingham and Carnatic Mills, presented themselves at the office of *New India*, the organ of the Theosophic Society, and also of the league in favour of Home Rule, and complained of the ill-usage which they suffered in their mill. P. Wadia, one of the editors of the paper, decided to make a study of the question. He interviewed a large number of workmen, heard their grievances, and asked permission to visit the factory. Not only was this permission refused, but the Buckingham and Carnatic Mills pronounced a lock-out of their 5,000 operatives, and sued Wadia, accusing him of seeking to corrupt their hands. The Madras Labour Union was then organised, practically all the locked-out workmen becoming members, as well as the work-

men of several other mills (particularly the Choolai Mills), and a series of meetings was held by Wadia, meetings which served both social and religious purposes, and to which came various orators to exhort the workmen to consider their personal interests, and to develop in them the idea of their own dignity so that they might be capable of securing the respect of their employers. At the same time co-operative shops were opened supplying cereals at a low price, and attempts at conciliation were multiplied. Wadia declared that he had no subversive ideas, and only wished to make an objective study of the position of the workmen. Thanks to the intervention of the Governor of Madras, an agreement was finally reached. All the workmen were re-engaged, and Wadia was authorised to visit the factory. His enquiries concluded, he drew up a statement of their demands, which he set out in a letter addressed to the company, and when this was ignored he elaborated it in a series of articles in the columns of *New India*. He proposed :

(1) An immediate reduction in the length of the working day to twelve hours, with a promise that it should be further reduced to ten at the end of the war.

(2) The extension of the lunch interval from forty minutes to one hour.

(3) A rise in salaries sufficient to bring them up to the same level as the cost of living.

(4) The concentration of the right of dismissal in the hands of the manager.

(5) The payment of wages one week, and not three, after the work was done.

(6) Effective guarantees against the infliction of ill-treatment on the workmen by the English managers.

In spite of the continued silence of the company,

Wadia refused to call a strike, not wishing to interfere with the production of a factory manufacturing clothing for the Army. He contented himself with developing the co-operative shops, and with organising in connection with the union a great deal of social work, and at the same time he continued his campaign in *New India*. The company, passing to the offensive, then declared a lock-out in October, 1918. Wadia advised the workers to submit, declaring afresh that he did not intend to press his demands until after the cessation of hostilities, and after a few days work was resumed. But in November the position became serious, and a strike was about to break out when, on the 20th, the company, taking advantage of the pretext that a workshop foreman had been attacked and beaten in the factory by unknown workmen, declared a new lock-out. The factory was closed for eight days, and the company then announced that it would take back one by one such workmen as presented themselves to apologise for their misbehaviour, and undertook to obey the orders of their superiors for the future. Wadia replied that the workmen would present themselves for work in a body, and after their demands had been satisfied. After several days, as the solidarity of the workers showed no signs of weakening, the Buckingham and Carnatic Mills became less intransigent, and it became possible to effect a compromise. The workmen were taken back in a body, half-salaries were paid for the period of the lock-out, the union was officially recognised, and finally all the workmen's demands were submitted for arbitration to the Rev. F. Andrews, who, with the exception of Gandhi, had more influence over the masses than any living man in India. Andrews came immediately, and on the essential points

gave a verdict for the workmen, so that the struggle which had lasted for more than a year ended in a victory for the workers. Since 1918, the Madras Labour Union has had a less troubled career, and the last ten years have been employed in consolidating the advantages gained, and in educating the worker. Wadia, having left for the United States, was replaced in the presidency of the union, first of all by the Anglican Bishop Arundale, and later by an Indian advocate, Shiva Rao. In addition to the textile workers, the printers, the tramway employees, and the workers in the railway repair shops have in their turn formed organisations. Meanwhile, the influence of the Madras Labour Union over the Buckingham and Carnatic Mill hands has diminished. Actually, the management of the factory, recognising the inevitability of the tendency among the employees to organise, has itself decided to bring the movement under its own control, and founded the Buckingham and Carnatic Mill Workers' Union, a kind of factory council wholly subject to the influence of the owners. The two associations share in almost equal proportion the adherence of the workmen in the Buckingham and Carnatic Mills, each claiming about 2,500, and the Madras Labour Union having also about 5,000 or 6,000 members drawn from less important mills under Indian control. The union is at the same time a mutual benefit society, which provides legal and medical assistance for its members, a lump sum of 20 rupees in the event of death, a maternity bonus of three months' wages at half-rates for the wives of those who have been members of the union for at least a year, and, finally, strike pay at rates varying according to the resources of the moment. Funds are provided

by an entrance fee of 2 annas and a monthly subscription of the same amount, supplemented by donations given by philanthropic persons. The affairs of the union are administered by a mixed executive committee, of whom half are workmen elected by their fellows, while the other half are honorary members, intellectuals to whom are entrusted all the responsible offices, and who in fact make all the decisions. A collective contract has been made with most of the factories, but relations with the Buckingham and Carnatic Mills remain strained and local unauthorised strikes are there endemic.

The Madras Labour Union was the first important Indian labour association, but it was closely followed by the textile unions of Ahmedabad, who are to-day b far the most powerful and effective organisation of th kind in all India. In this case, also, the origin of the movement is to be found in a revolt of the workers against bad conditions of labour, and especially against insufficient wages. The latter had, in fact, remained unchanged since 1914. In 1917 a cost of living bon had been added, but it was of an essentially tempora and revocable character, and at the beginning of 1918, almost at the same moment as the troubles commenced at Madras, the employers at Ahmedabad announced their intention of withdrawing the bonus and replacing it by an increase of 20 per cent. on the basic salaries. The workers immediately protested, declaring that nothing less than an increase of 50 per cent. would suffice to counterbalance the rise in the cost of living. Here again resistance was organised by intellectuals, who sympathised with the cause of the workers, and particularly by a woman, Miss Anasuya Sarabhai, who was to become president of the unions. The

question of wages was, at her demand, submitted to a committee of arbitration consisting of three representatives of the employers, an English official who presided, and three workmen's representatives, of whom one was Gandhi. This body had hardly commenced operations when the workers started to down tools, and in spite of the efforts of their leaders the cessation of work became general throughout the town. The owners then withdrew from the arbitration committee, considering that its existence was no longer justified, since it had failed to avert the struggle. The other members were of a different opinion. The chairman and three representatives of the workers continued to sit and pronounced in favour of a minimum increase of 35 per cent. on all salaries. The workmen, pressed by their leaders, accepted this figure after some protests, but the owners unanimously rejected it, and affirmed their adherence to their original proposal of 20 per cent. Gandhi, after having done his utmost to secure an agreement, undertook the direction of the struggle, and pursued it with the invariable energy and self-control which are characteristic of him. All the workers assembled and took a vow not to recommence work until they had obtained their figure of 35 per cent., not to resort to any act of violence, and to face death rather than yield. This adoption of a religious vow in a political and social struggle is characteristic of Gandhi's methods, and it certainly gives to those who take it an energy and daring equal to every test.

However, the Ahmedabad workers could not long continue such a struggle ; the poverty was shocking, and in spite of the assistance that poured in from all sides, at the end of three weeks the movement began

to weaken. Let us quote Gandhi's own words: "Twenty-one days had passed; hunger and the employers' emissaries were doing their work, and Satan was breathing into men's hearts the thought that there is no God on this earth who can help them, and that religious vows are not to be taken seriously. One morning, instead of an energetic and enthusiastic crowd of from five to ten thousand people, we met a body of two thousand men only, with despair written on their faces. The workmen of a certain quarter had refused to join the meeting, and were preparing to start work again, accepting the 20 per cent.; some said it was easy enough for us, who had motors to use and were not in the least short of food, to come and organise meetings and advise them to hold on to the death. What could I do? I believe in God, and in the necessity of remaining faithful to a vow at all costs, but I know also that even the best among us has only a vague and shadowy experience of God, and that these men had been bearing unspeakable sufferings for twenty days. And I arose, declaring to these men that, if they broke their vows, it would be so intolerable to me that I would take no food until the 35 per cent. had been obtained, or they had all perished. I preferred to take such a decision, in spite of the misunderstandings to which it could give rise, rather than endure the idea that ten thousand men should break a vow they had taken twenty days earlier, and repeated each day before God. I am indeed fully convinced that men cannot form a nation and perform great things unless their promises can be considered as inflexible and as unbreakable as steel." This determination of Gandhi's, asserting his fellowship with the mass of the workers even down to the pangs of

hunger, caused a change of opinion, and the struggle began anew with fresh energy. On the other hand, some of the employers were stirred, and under the guidance of the trades union president's own brother, Mr. Amabal Sarabhai, took the initiative in further negotiations. Finally, an agreement was reached; the 35 per cent. was granted, the workmen's associations were recognised, and the arbitration commission remained competent to judge differences, which were all compulsorily to be brought before it.

Following on this strike, a trades union organisation was set up, which, unlike similar associations in other towns, does not link up in one single group all the textile workers, but is made up of five independent and federated trades unions: those of the weavers, the winders, the carders, the spinners, and, lastly, the mechanics and lorry-drivers. Each of these has a committee of representatives elected by the workmen in the ratio of two or three delegates per factory. These act as a link with the masses, and report every month to the factory meeting. The members of the five councils together constitute the general committee of the Textile Federation, which takes all important decisions, has charge of the finances, and appoints the president and secretary, who are two intellectuals, Miss Anasuya Sarabhai and a former economics student, Lal Nanda.

Since 1918 the union has had a somewhat chequered history; a fresh general strike occurred in 1923, when, owing to the crisis in the textile industry, the employers reduced salaries by 25 per cent. The struggle ended in partial failure, the workers having to accept a reduction of 18 per cent., and the federation was considerably weakened; in January, 1924, it

numbered only 5,000 members ; in 1927 the figures had risen to 15,000 again with an income of 25,000 rupees, drawn from a monthly contribution of 4·2 per cent. of the wages of each individual.

As elsewhere, the union has a number of social and philanthropic activities, and indeed this side of its work is particularly developed at Ahmedabad. The union owns a hospital of twenty beds, a dispensary, and a maternity ward ; in these 176 persons were admitted in 1927, and 102 operations were performed ; there had been nearly 10,000 consultations, the out-patients' department being open to all wage-earners, while treatment as in-patients was reserved to trade union members. There were also five day schools and fifteen evening schools, with 623 and 633 pupils respectively, a secondary school, and a nursery school for children under six years of age. The cost amounts to 40,000 rupees, but the employers' organisations contribute half of the upkeep and a large subsidy is paid by a charitable foundation, the " Tilak Swaraj Fund."

The federation gives free legal advice, particularly with regard to accidents incurred during work. The federation itself initiates legal proceedings, receives the compensation and hands it over by monthly instalments to the victim. In 1927, 79 claims for compensation were made, of which 9 were rejected, 37 were satisfied in full, 20 were met in part, and 13 still awaited judgment at the end of the year.

A co-operative store was set up, selling cereals at a price 10 per cent. below market prices ; fifty tenements were rented for a lump sum, and sub-let to members for 3 rupees 8 annas a room, whereas the normal price was 4 rupees 8 annas ; a credit co-operative is also in existence, which accepts deposits at 6 per cent., and

advances money to union members at 6½ per cent. In 1926, 22,000 rupees were advanced in this way; 23 per cent. to cover a deficit in the budget, 55 per cent. to pay back a previous debt, 20 per cent. to cover the expenses of family festivals. A " victimisation " fund has also been formed, guaranteeing half-pay for a month to any workman who has lost his work as a consequence of his activity in the union ; and since 1925, a reading-room has been opened. The federation publishes in Gujarati a weekly paper that is distributed free to members who can read, and the secretary has begun a series of enquiries on salaries and the cost of living, as well as the price of cotton and the profits of undertakings. These have proved most useful in negotiations concerning salaries.

Besides its social and philanthropic activity, the association also pursues its proper functions as a trades union. It is recognised by the employers' association ; the secretary is entitled to bring before each employer his workmen's complaints, and he has the right to enter every factory at any hour to investigate on the spot whether these complaints are justified. The secretary's position is, moreover, rather curious, and very symptomatic of Oriental customs ; for he not only receives the trades union members' complaints against their employers, but against a workman, or even a member of the plaintiff's family ; he thus combines the functions of workmen's representative to the employer, and, within the union, of justice of the peace and arbitrator in all the differences that arise between members.

If the complaints brought before the owner are unsuccessful, the secretary turns to the employers' association, and if an agreement cannot be arrived at, he can ask for arbitration. This is compulsory as

soon as one of the parties expresses the wish for it. The decision is taken by a mixed commission consisting of a representative of the employers, of Gandhi, and of a third person if necessary ; that, however, is very rare, as Gandhi almost always succeeds in convincing those with whom he is treating. In 1927, out of 900 complaints laid before the secretary, 58 were rejected by him, 616 dealt with in a manner favourable to the workmen, 16 decided against them, and in 36 cases a compromise was arrived at. The remainder were still pending at the end of the year.

Of these complaints, 10 per cent. had regard to wages, 14 per cent. to working hours and holidays, 26 per cent. to unjustified fines, 35 per cent. to dasturi, the foremen's acts of brutality, or to obstruction to the activity of the union. The question of rough handling, indeed, very nearly led to a fresh general strike at the time I passed through Ahmedabad, in February, 1929. A workman had been attacked and violently struck by a foreman, receiving such injuries that he had been admitted to hospital as an urgent case. The workmen of the factory at once downed tools ; the union demanded, and the arbitration committee ordered, the instant dismissal of the foreman and the payment of compensation to the victim. As the employer refused to give way in the smallest degree, the federation at last sent an ultimatum to the employers' association, threatening a general strike if it could not induce the recalcitrant employer to agree. The association yielded and threatened to expel the employer who was in fault, and he accepted the arbitrators' decision.

The arbitration system, therefore, seems to be working to the general satisfaction at Ahmedabad, and does not in the least appear to have checked the growth of

the militant spirit; nevertheless, this success is entirely due to one exceptional fact, Gandhi's presence on the arbitration committee. Moreover, the large number of questions pending at the end of the year is a sign that there is something defective in the organisation; the number of cases brought before the arbitration committee is excessive, and it would be a good thing to set up, in the workshops themselves, joint councils equally representing masters and men to apply in each particular case the principles decided on by the arbitration committee, referring to the latter only such cases as involve a fresh question of principle.

Another example of a trade union, though on a very much smaller scale, that came into being in the troublous times of 1918–1920, and that also owed its origin to the initiative of a minority of intellectuals, is the Indian Colliery Employees' Association, which unites the miners of the Jharriah district. In this case it was an engineer, Satakali Bose, who, stirred to indignation by the low wages and the disgraceful working conditions, took the initiative and formed a group. He was supported by an Indian employer who had carried out a few reforms in his own mines and paid wages slightly above the average; the competition of other mines had put a stop to his efforts, and realising the insufficiency of what he had effected, he wished to see a powerful organisation insist on obtaining better conditions from all employers.

From the outset, the Employees' Association received the support of Indian Nationalist circles. Of the leaders of the Swarajist party in Calcutta, Subhas Bose and Sen Gupta, the former Mayor of Calcutta, are its president and vice-president respectively. As for the engineer, Satakali Bose, his activity speedily resulted

in his dismissal from his employment, and he was thus able to devote the whole of his time to his secretarial duties.

The association in its early days went through an extremely difficult period. At the time of its formation it numbered only 400 to 500 members, recruited almost exclusively from the higher ranks of employees, clerks or foremen ; the mass of the miners recruited from among the peoples of Orissa are so completely ignorant as not even to suffer from their wretched state. The chief point then was to awaken the masses and slowly to win their allegiance, and to this end the association for more than five years confined its activities to those of a mutual aid society, acting in conjunction with a large number of employers. It opened reading-rooms for the best of the men and gave educational magic-lantern lectures dealing particularly with questions of hygiene, the care of the sick, and the education of children. These meetings were very successful, and in 1924 more than 20,000 people could be reached in this way ; lastly, the association founded a mutual insurance society for old age, sickness, and maternity, and by these methods managed to secure, in 1926, 1,700 members, of whom over 1,000 were miners working below ground.

The association was then strong enough to enter upon the normal sphere of activity of a trades union. In Indian mines, the workman and his wife work five days a week, and must hew and load three trolleys full of coal a day ; they remain underground for about ten to twelve hours, although the work could easily be done in six if the trolleys were distributed with care, and if the workers did not have to wait two or three hours before being able to load up the coal

that is ready hewn. Further, safety measures are insufficient, and ventilation is not properly ensured in several mines. Again, in 1926, following on a crisis, about a thousand small and ill-equipped companies, unable to carry on the working of a mine on scientific lines, went bankrupt ; this led to serious unemployment, of which the larger undertakings that were still making heavy profits tried to take advantage to reduce salaries, although these did not exceed 25 or 26 rupees a month for a married couple.*

Consequently, after its Congress in 1926, the union turned to more militant action. In order to ensure a regular income, it decided to lay down that its members should pay a weekly contribution amounting to 1 pice, and it sent in the following demands : an eight-hour day below ground, the abolition of female labour, the regular payment of wages on the fixed date and the maintenance of the former scales of pay, and finally the compulsory creation in every mine of an emergency fund to be contributed in equal proportions by employees and employers and administered by a joint council on which representation should be equal.

The association realises that the carrying out of this programme will involve a struggle, and that " However modest our demands may be, it is too much to hope that the majority of employers will be prepared to accept them, unless an effective means of constraint be adopted," but it does not yet feel itself sufficiently strong to enter upon a struggle on a large scale, and prefers to proceed rather by discussion and conciliation.

* Adjar Coal gave a dividend of 17 per cent. in 1921, of 50 per cent. in 1923, 50 per cent. in 1924, 21 per cent. in 1926 ; Bandepur Coal, 30, 37, 38, and 45 per cent. ; Bengal Nagpur Railway, 65, 85, 90 per cent. ; Katras Jharriah, 150, 135, 100, 72 per cent.

A number of strikes have taken place, but they have been limited to particular mines. By means of skilful negotiation, the union has usually succeeded in obtaining satisfaction on fundamental points without being forced to resort to a general strike of all the workers of the basin. The Employees' Association now numbers nearly 3,000 members, and it is to be hoped that its recent progress may encourage it to adopt a more and more militant attitude.

The leadership of a labour movement by intellectuals who, however well intentioned they may be, always look at the life of the working classes from the outside, and in the light of their own political and social ideas, is always a danger to the unity of trade unionism. This is all the more true of a country shaken by violent national and political struggles, as is India at the present day, for there is a risk that it may lead to the formation of mutually antagonistic trade unions, separated by theoretical differences which bear little relation to the interests of the workers. This has in fact taken place at Calcutta and at Jamshedpur, where the trade unions have been used as tools in the racial struggles between the Indians and the English.

At Calcutta a certain number of unions, such as the Kankinara Labour Union, the Kanchrapara Railway Workers' Union, the Howrah Porters' Union, and the Bengal Paper Workers' Association, have been organised by a minor Indian employer attached to the Labour Party, Mr. Roy Chaudhuri, who has likewise been nominated by the British Government as the workers' representative in the Legislative Assembly of Bengal. He is extremely distrustful of the Indian bourgeoisie, has no intention of taking part in the national political movement, and would even be disposed to defend

British rule. The report of the Kanchrapara Railway Workers' Union to the Simon Commission forms a very concise criticism of the Trades Union Congress, which it accuses of being a political body. The union is opposed to the introduction of universal suffrage and to the carrying out of further political reforms, and justifies its attitude by saying that the protection of the Indian masses is the chief justification of British rule, and until the political leaders who pretend to speak in their name justify their claim by defending effectively the interests of the workers, the British Government is their sole protection. It is clear that we are here faced with a very artificial movement, organised by the British rulers themselves, and which they seek to use to sow dissension in the ranks of their adversaries.

Opposed to the phantom associations of Roy Chaudhuri there are likewise to be found at Calcutta a number of unions, particularly in connection with the railways (Liloah Workers' Union) and the jute industry, which have developed under the direct influence of the leaders of the Swarajist movement. The first to appear was the Gouripur Works Employees' Association, founded in 1920 in the course of a strike called to secure the dismissal of a Scotch foreman who had wounded an Indian workman with a knife. The strike was led by a woman, Mrs. Santosh Gupta, who succeeded in feeding and lodging the greater part of the strikers throughout the struggle. She was the first president of the union, another militant Swarajist, S. Chatterjee, carrying out the duties of secretary. For four years both made great efforts in the direction of propaganda and education, and succeeded in organising schools and co-operative shops, but after this they

devoted the whole of their time to the political movement and both resigned their offices. As, in the meantime, other associations had been formed in various factories, it was decided to amalgamate them, and it was thus that the Bengal Jute Workers' Association came to be formed in 1925. This body has since adopted a very militant attitude, and has been responsible for several successful strikes, but its efforts have been hampered by the fact that its leaders have also been among the most active and aggressive of the Nationalists, and have been compelled to disperse their activities in two different directions, sometimes even subordinating the purely economic activities of the trade unions to the necessities of the national struggle.

A somewhat similar situation is to be found in the great metal-working centre of Jamshedpur, where more than 50,000 workmen are employed in the Tata factories. A strike broke out in January, 1920, as a protest against low wages, bad treatment, and especially the terrible housing conditions in a city which had grown too fast, and where the population had increased more rapidly than the buildings. Following the strike the Labour Association, a trade union, was formed; the company recognised it, and undertook to provide a staff whose duty it should be to study, in close touch with the trade union, the means of improving the position of the workers. The association is run by a general council of eleven members elected by the workers, and who themselves nominate the three officials, the president, the vice-president, and the secretary. The latter were at the outset employees of the undertaking, but the company soon attempted by a judicious mingling of threats and offers of promotion to win over the workmen's leaders, and the

association had to reorganise itself, calling in the assistance of the intellectuals. The Rev. F. Andrews became president, and the only manual worker who retained his position was the secretary, the foreman Sethi. The latter, however, was soon dismissed from the factory, while the company, after refusing to listen to the suggestions of the Labour Association, broke off all relations with it. Against the wish of the association, a strike broke out in 1922, which failed miserably at the end of two months. The industry was barely emerging from the crisis of 1920, and economic conditions were scarcely favourable to a struggle already rendered very difficult by the fact that the company controls the whole city, and that in particular the water-supply is in its hands. The work had to be taken up afresh, with the association relegated to a back seat, and without any other guarantee than an undertaking on the part of the company to submit all disputes to an arbitration committee consisting of the Rev. F. Andrews and two great political leaders of modern India, C. R. Das and Motilal Nehru.

The association, nevertheless, succeeded in reconstituting itself and increasing its influence, and eventually re-established its position. In 1925, on the death of Das, Gandhi took his place on the arbitration committee, and succeeded in obtaining from the company the reinstatement of Sethi, followed by the resumption of relations with the Labour Association, the company even agreeing to deduct from the salaries of all the workmen the amount of the trade union subscription, coming to one half-day's pay per quarter. Thus, by the beginning of 1928, the association had succeeded without any fresh struggle in securing recognition, and in negotiating with the company on a footing

of equality. It then numbered more than 10,000 members, and had an income of more than 40,000 rupees. But a new conflict was soon to break out, the company having decided to carry out a scheme of reorganisation of its factories and to reduce its staff by 15 per cent. (more than 5,000 men).

The association protested and presented a scheme which would enable the total of employees to be gradually reduced solely through the effect of normal fluctuations of labour, without a single man being dismissed. Negotiations were proceeding when a man named Homi, a former assistant-manager of the company, who had some time before been dismissed by them, and who had succeeded in acquiring great influence over the workmen, organised a new trade union and promptly forced on a strike. This lasted from the 28th of July to the 13th of September, led in the first place by Homi and his group, Sethi's Labour Association engaging in the strike without sharing in its direction. Finally, as the situation was becoming disastrous for the workers with the approach of autumn, Homi himself called in a Swarajist politician, Subhas Bose, asking him to take charge of the negotiations. The latter came to Jamshedpur, accepted, in the absence of Andrews, then in Europe, the presidency of the Labour Association, and concluded an agreement on the following lines: A part of the strike pay was to be paid ; in addition, the company were to advance one month's salary to each workman, repaying themselves by deductions of 5 per cent. during the following months ; a sum of 1 million rupees was distributed among those whose wages were most inadequate ; all the workers were taken back except those who themselves wished to leave the company's

service. With regard to these, the company undertook to pay their rail fares home to their villages, and a bonus of one month's salary for each year of service. Finally, no new hands were to be taken on, and only if at the end of a year the reduction of 5,000 had not been automatically brought about (which did, in fact, occur) could recourse be had to dismissals. The agreement was thus a most honourable one for the workers, but Homi, after having called in Bose, quarrelled with him and conducted an unavailing campaign against the agreement, which was nevertheless ratified by an enormous majority. At the moment there are still at Jamshedpur two trade unions, the Labour Association, the number of whose members has fallen to 5,000 or 6,000, and Homi's union, whose membership it is difficult to estimate (probably 2,000 to 3,000). The former, with Subhas Bose as president, is evidently influenced by the Indian Nationalist movement, and this inclines it to conduct peaceful negotiations and even to make concessions when dealing with one of the rare firms whose capital is entirely Indian. Homi's group, on the other hand, is bitterly opposed to the Tatas, but the stormy incoherence of its demands has brought so little benefit to the workers, that one cannot at first sight dismiss the idea, many times expressed in my hearing, that Homi's attitude was inspired by English bankers, who were desirous of putting difficulties in the way of an Indian enterprise and of laying hands on its capital. Whatever may be the truth of these various allegations, it is certain that these conflicts of interest due to national questions have had the effect of disturbing and strangely weakening a labour movement which had formerly been united and full of promise.

Bombay is one of the cities where the labour movement has been, if not most active, at least most restless, and where industrial disturbances have been most numerous. A large number of strikes have occurred there since 1918, each leading to the formation of a trade union. But most of the latter have proved ephemeral, adherents flocking to them in times of trouble, but withdrawing and refusing to pay their subscriptions as soon as the struggle was over. Prior to 1925 the majority of them, with the exception perhaps of the Mill Workers' Union, which organised especially the skilled workers, mechanics, and fitters, numbered barely a few hundred members. Nevertheless, substantial benefits had been obtained, and salaries had been raised successively from 35 to 55 per cent. above the pre-war level, then in 1920 to 70 per cent. for time workers, and 80 per cent. for piece-workers. In 1925 the employers attempted a reduction of 15 per cent., but a general strike immediately broke out and led to the restoration of all the former salaries. The enthusiasm engendered by this victory, and the encouragement and financial aid derived from England and from Amsterdam, led most of the existing bodies to amalgamate, and a new organisation made its appearance, the Bombay Textile Workers' Union, which started with 6,000 members, and possessed a membership exceeding 10,000 in 1928, a figure which has now fallen to about 5,000. The trade union unit is the factory, with a factory committee which sends one delegate to the local council for every fifty members. The latter collects the subscriptions, which amount to a total of more than 12,000 rupees, and serves as a link between the masses and the managing committee. The latter is made up of representatives of

the three wards in the proportion of one delegate for every factory and for every 200 trade unionists. It comprises fifty members, and meets once a month to receive the report of the Executive Committee. The latter, numbering twelve members, is mainly composed of intellectuals, and its activities are directed by its president, Mr. N. Joshi, and its secretary, Mr. Bakhale.

At first the union was recognised in about 60 mills (a number which has since diminished by half), and it was the duty of the secretary to communicate to the managements the complaints of the workmen, after having satisfied himself that they were well-founded. In 1927, 215 complaints were so lodged, in 99 cases with success, 35 failed, 14 resulted in a compromise, and the remaining 67 were withdrawn by the complainants. Out of the 215 complaints, 61 had regard to arbitrary dismissals, and it is here that the work of the union encountered its chief obstacles, by reason of the complete absence of any rules governing the matter, a hiatus which left absolute power in the hands of the foreman. Some 20 cases related to refusals to re-engage workmen who had absented themselves with a verbal authorisation from their foreman. Here four-fifths of the complaints were satisfactorily settled. Sixty complaints had regard to deductions made from wages, and originated in thirty-one different mills, showing only too clearly that the evil is general. Sometimes it would be unjust fines, sometimes losses of arrears of salary, sometimes compulsory contributions, as in the Emperor Mills, where on January 16, 1927, at the same time as the rates were being reduced, the workers were obliged to subscribe to a wedding present for the director's son. In this matter the

union had only eighteen successes, and these often only after having taken legal proceedings. In most cases the affair dragged on for a long time, and in the face of the inertia displayed by the employer, the workman ended by withdrawing his complaint. In the case of the Emperor Mills a strike was finally decided upon, and after a struggle lasting a month ended in the winding-up of the concern.

If one examines these claims as a whole, one is struck by the smallness of their number (160 in a great commercial centre where the union then numbered 10,000 members), and by the relatively large number of complaints which were withdrawn. It certainly seems as if in face of the opposition of the employers the union sometimes failed to show the necessary energy and gave way too easily, instead of taking up the cudgels. Hence the discontent which grew rapidly in the ranks of the workers ; and at the end of 1917, when the employers were proposing to require their men to watch three looms instead of two, one of the members of the Executive Committee of the Bombay Textile Workers' Union, Jhalwala, seceded, and with the help of several young intellectuals among his Communist sympathisers, particularly Nimbkar and Dange, founded a new organisation, the Bombay Mill Workers' Union, which immediately launched a campaign for a general strike. Indeed this could not be long delayed. On April 16, 1920, the workmen downed tools spontaneously in the ten mills belonging to the firm of Currimbhoi Ibrahim, and by April 20 all the factories were closed ; 150,000 men were on strike, of whom at least 100,000 returned to their villages to help to get in the harvest. On the 18th, the Bombay Mill Workers' Union nominated a strike committee.

On the 19th the Textile Workers' Union did the same, and on May 2 a joint committee was established on which the two organisations were equally represented. The strike committee, immediately it had been set up, published a list of complaints. It demanded :

(1) That the wages which certain firms had begun to cut down should be maintained intact.

(2) The prohibition, wherever the hours worked were at the time below the legal maximum of ten hours, of any increase in the length of the working day without previous agreement with the workers.

(3) The equalisation of the rates of wages, coupled with the application in all the factories in Bombay of the principle of " Equal wages for equal work." The equalisation was to be effected by the employers' association in conjunction with the trade unions.

(4) The necessity of a month's notice on either side before leaving work or dismissing a workman.

(5) An increase in wages for workers earning less than 30 rupees a month.

(6) The admission of the untouchables into the weaving mills.

(7) That no workman should be required to watch three looms without previous consultation with the trade unions, and the fixing of new rates of wages by agreement with them.

(8) The drawing-up of uniform factory regulations for all the works, which should be prepared by the employers' association in consultation with the unions, and which should lay down precise rules as to modes of engaging and dismissing employees, the granting of leave of absence and holidays, the imposition of fines and deductions from wages.

The employers replied affirming in the first place

that the strike had not been desired by the workers, but had been forced on them by intimidation on the part of the extremists, against the will of the Textile Workers' Union. They denied that any deduction of wages had ever been attempted, and they saw no reason for increasing the pay of those whose salaries did not amount to 30 rupees. They were prepared to equalise wages throughout the city, and in so doing to raise the lowest scales of wages, but only on condition that they reduced at the same time by 8 to 10 per cent. the wages of the weavers, who were the best paid workers. They accepted the requirement of one month's notice when finally dismissing a workman, but they reserved the right to suspend work without notice in a workshop or part of a workshop in the event of repairs to the machinery or paucity of orders. They further stated that economic conditions rendered essential a reorganisation of the industry, an extension of the working day to the legal maximum of ten hours, the introduction of the three-loom system, and the dismissal of workers rendered superfluous by this measure. Finally, they demanded the establishment of stricter discipline, severely punishing absence from work, lateness or low production; a uniform discipline no doubt, but unified by the employers' association alone without any reference to the trade unions whose main object was to undermine the authority of the employer. Naturally, the workers protested energetically, and the exchange of notes went on until the beginning of October. At last, on the 4th of October an agreement was concluded. All the workers were reinstated, and all the questions raised were referred to an arbitration commission, whose recommendations each party agreed to consider as

binding. The report of the commission was published in April, 1929, and contains the following provisions :

(1) It introduces numerous improvements in the employers' scheme for a uniform set of factory regulations. The hours of work remain at the old level, $9\frac{1}{2}$ hours per day. A reasonable system of granting leave is set up, each worker receiving a ticket bearing a note of the time of commencement and the duration of his leave. Employees are to be engaged in the first place on trial for three months, and during this time may leave or be dismissed without notice. Thereafter a month's notice is required on either side. Wages must be paid every fortnight and only one week in arrear. In the event of work being interrupted in the workshops on account of repairs or paucity of orders, if the stoppage exceeds an hour the worker must be paid at least a half-day's salary. In addition work can be suspended without notice in exceptional circumstances, but such suspension must not last more than two days or wages must be paid.

(2) The regulations so laid down by the arbitration commission cannot be modified by any individual concern without previous authorisation from the employers' association, and a consultation with the various trade unions.

(3) With regard to wages, the committee consider that the weavers certainly receive an average salary of 48 rupees, amounting to an increase of 117 per cent. on that of 1914, whereas the cost of living has risen only 65 per cent., but that up to 1920 the rise in salaries was very slow in comparison with the rise in the cost of living, and that it is reasonable that the situation should now be reversed. Moreover, before the war the position of the wage-earners was particularly wretched

and there has since been a definite improvement in their standard of living. If in 1923 it was possible to effect a reduction of 20 per cent. in salaries at Ahmedabad, it was only because this followed closely on a very substantial increase which had not yet been translated into a general improvement in the standard of living. In Bombay it is too late to adopt the same measure, and any reduction would be followed by a fall in the standard of living of the workers. The committee's decision, therefore, is in favour of an equalisation of the wages paid for the same work in different concerns, but with the qualification that existing differences between the weavers and the other workers should continue.

(4) Further, the committee consider the introduction of the three-loom system necessary, subject, however, to the following reservations. The introduction must be gradual and must not be made simultaneously in all the factories. An organisation must be set up which would endeavour to secure employment elsewhere for workers, whose services could then be dispensed with. At the outset the available work must be divided equally among all the employees, and only after some months of experiment, if it appears to be quite impossible to find employment for the superfluous workers by a further increase in production, may these latter be dismissed. Workers dispensed with will receive an indemnity of from four to six weeks' wages, according to the length of their service in the factory. Finally, the workers must participate in the benefits derived from the new methods. The worker supervising three looms must receive 48 per cent. of the produce of the third loom; one who supervises four, 50 per cent. of the increased productivity due to the fourth.

The decision of the arbitration committee satisfies to some extent the demands of the workers, and, generally speaking, the history of the last strike, with the very concrete proposals put forward by the joint committee, and the genuine attempts to reorganise the industry in which it played its part without in any way abandoning its aggressive tactics, seem to indicate that working-class circles in Bombay are ripe for the emergence of a powerful and well-organised labour movement. The successful achievement of this end will depend on the degree of collaboration which can be secured between rival organisations.*

We have just considered the principal unions which we have had an opportunity of studying on the spot. Apart from the Labour Association of Jamshedpur with its 6,000 members, and the Miners' Union with 2,000, these are, above all, organisations of textile operatives, and they represent a total of 35,000 workers There are yet other associations, those of post office employees, telegraph operators, the personnel of the telephone service, and other groups of officials who number 50,000 members—above all the Railway Workers' Federation, which, with its twenty-five affiliated organisations, has more than 20,000 adherents. All told, India has 120 unions with 200,000 members (250,000 with the State officials). Moreover, 59 unions and 125,000 workers are affiliated to the Trades Union Congress, which seeks to co-ordinate the activity of the trades unions, and to give them a central organisation. This Congress was first set up in 1920 to protest

* This may be made easier by the tactless and provocative measures taken by the British Government, who in 1929 arrested and prosecuted for Communist propaganda the principal leaders of the Bombay Mill Workers' Union.

against the official nomination by the British Government of the workers' representatives at the Washington Conference without first consulting the interested organisations; 800 delegates met together, almost all of whom were either intellectuals or members of the middle classes, and one of the leaders of the Nationalist movement, Lala Lajpat Rai (an old man who was to meet his death in 1928 as a result of blows received from English policemen in the course of a public demonstration), was elected president. The complete predominance of intellectuals and the close bonds which linked it to the Nationalist movement have kept away from the Congress a certain number of workers' organisations, and in particular the unions of Ahmedabad. Nevertheless, since 1929, the Congress has become genuinely representative of the whole labour movement. Only trade unions can be members of it, paying an annual subscription of 10 rupees for groups of less than 1,000 members, of 20 rupees for those of 1,000 to 3,000 members, of 30 rupees for those of 3,000 to 5,000, and of 40 rupees for those with more than 5,000 members. The Executive Committee is composed of a president and secretary elected by the Congress, and of ten members nominated by the respective organisations in the ratio of one delegate for every 10 rupees subscribed. There are four provincial committees for the districts of Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, and the Central Provinces. Moreover, its leaders, the Rev. F. Andrews and Mr. N. Joshi, are specialists in labour questions.*

* At the last Congress (January, 1930) it seemed that the delegates of the Bombay Mill Workers' Union who were elected had obtained the majority through Communist influence. The Moderates, under Mr. N. Joshi, withdrew, and the unity of the Indian trade union movement appears to be seriously endangered.

To sum up we may conclude that :

(1) The Indian labour movement has so far been led by the intellectuals, lawyers, journalists, clergymen, engineers or politicians. The utterly illiterate workers are still too ignorant to be able to find within their own ranks the necessary leaders. They are thus obliged to address themselves to the middle classes, and to invite the idealists who sympathise with the wretched condition of the workers to inspire and lead them. This gives the Indian trade union movement that philanthropic quality which strikes the European visitor at first sight, but which is certainly inevitable in the present state of its evolution. Even when the leaders claim to be inspired by Communist ideals, it is always a question of the effort of a minority to improve the lot of the masses, not of spontaneous initiative on the part of the workers.

(2) Up to the present, the trade union movement has been extremely moderate. Its leaders adopt every method of conciliation and arbitration, and only have recourse to a strike as a last resort. Outside Bombay and Calcutta, where an extremist movement has recently begun to gain ground, even the most militant organisations have only sought so far to obtain immediate improvements without calling in question the principle of private property, and without adopting any views on the problems of the class struggle.

(3) The labour movement has long been, as a natural consequence of its direction by intellectuals, closely attached to the main political movement in favour of independence. To-day it appears to be gradually becoming more conscious of its own special interests, and while participating in the national struggle, it seems as if it must now begin to insist on its

autonomy and to act independently of the Nationalist bourgeoisie.

(4) Finally, and this is the most important of all, the trade union movement can exercise as yet but little influence on the industrial life of the country, for the Indian worker possesses no class-consciousness. The wage-earner in the factory has not been up till now, as he is in Europe, a craftsman ousted from his position and fallen into the ranks of the proletariat, but an agricultural labourer and peasant smallholder with no technical ability, for whom the entry into industry has brought with it a slight but definite improvement in his standard of living. The training of thousands of years has taught him to render unquestioning obedience, has made him disinclined to exert himself, has accustomed him to dependence on others, and has eventually destroyed in him all sense of human dignity. Convinced that his sufferings are the inevitable result of the law of Karma, he respects the hierarchy of castes and has no belief in his own individual importance. The exaggerated humility amounting even to servility and the slavish mental outlook of the Indian workman is peculiarly painful to the European visitor, who feels that too often the native expects everything not from struggle and hard work, but from the charity and kindness of his betters. To a great many, the union, far from being an association of equal wills and energies, is an external organisation, the Worshipful the Union, founded by some influential man who has been good enough to devote a little of his time to the poor and to defend their interests. Finally, the caste system has reduced morality to a simple rule of collective conduct, based on external discipline, and when it breaks down

it leaves a man without any compass to steer by. The trade union movement cannot hope to make substantial progress in India, or to become a truly labour movement in inspiration and control, nor can class-consciousness be inculcated until the minds of the workers have been opened to new moral ideas, such as the desire for social justice, the equality of all souls in the eyes of God and of men, and the infinite importance of each individual human being; and, moreover, until the old collective discipline has given place to a moral individualism which enables a man, while rejecting all external constraint, to control and govern himself so that he may render service to others. It is only in proportion as these new ideas of moral values have begun, under the influence of men like Gandhi and C. F. Andrews, to penetrate among the Indian masses, that the labour movement has taken shape. It is clear that upon them depends its subsequent progress and its ultimate success.

PART III

THE POLITICAL ASPECT

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WE have up till now been studying the rural and industrial problems of modern India ; there is another question which, in the minds of the people, is at present to the fore, and that is the political problem of national independence.

National consciousness is of comparatively recent growth in India, and may fairly be considered a result of British dominion and European influences. For centuries, indeed, India was unacquainted with any other social organisation than the castes and village communities, and, differing in that respect from Greece and Rome, she has shown herself incapable of rising to the conception of a State ; her customs and juridical regulations have remained peculiar to certain districts and to particular social groups, and no uniform legal system has grown from them common to the whole country. This lack of uniformity and of cohesion explains to a great extent why the continent of India has, from the earliest times, repeatedly suffered invasion and foreign domination, and its entire political history amounts to little more than the record of the founding, the rise and the inevitable fall of powerful empires built up artificially by conquerors who were in a minority, whilst the village community remained intact and immutable.

At the end of the Middle Ages, however, an economic

and social transformation was preparing; important towns had arisen, village communities were beginning to weaken, international exchange was increasing, and a merchant class was little by little making its appearance. Already in the eighteenth century it wielded the hidden but real power, nominally held by the feudal monarchs or rajahs, who were enfeebled by their continual strife, and it aimed at the disintegration of the feudal Mohammedan Empire. This merchant class would probably have succeeded in gaining political power, and would have attempted to set up a unified National State, had not the British occupation suddenly interrupted India's natural evolution in the direction of a capitalist economic system.

After an initial period of depredation and lawless plundering by the East India Company, the British Government followed a clearly defined policy in the country; it aimed first at destroying Indian commerce and industry, which were capable of becoming dangerous rivals to British industry in its infancy; it sought to strengthen the feudal régime by winning the support of the rajahs, and by taking advantage of their financial difficulties to subject them to its own domination, leaving them but the shadow of their former power; and lastly, by the Permanent Settlement in Bengal, it re-established a class of Zamindars, drawn from the merchants and usurers who had lent their support to the British occupation. It hoped thus to bind Indian commercial capital to the soil and bring into existence a class of landowners similar to English landlords, who would personally supervise the management of their estates, ensure the agricultural progress of the country, and form the economic basis of foreign rule. The first period of British occupation,

till about 1840, is therefore marked by an effort to oppose India's evolution towards capitalism, to break down the rising middle class, and reorganise, or at all events maintain, the feudal régime ; under these conditions the growth of a national spirit evidently was an impossibility.

But very soon the situation was to change, and a national movement was to come into being under the influence of three great social changes.

In the first place, whereas up till the nineteenth century India had kept to a system of local economics, each village supplying its own needs, and exchange within the country remaining yet very undeveloped, England, in order to obtain the raw materials and food-stuffs necessary for her industry, was led to improve means of transport, to open up new roads, and later to build a complete railway system which provides regular communication between the principal large towns. From that time onwards the importance of the village communities has been definitely on the wane, and exchange has increased, while at the same time new towns have come into existence, particularly at ports. The economic unity of the Indian continent has thus for the first time become a reality, and with it has come genuine political unity, British administration exerting its influence over every part of the country and introducing uniform practices and regulations into the different districts.

Secondly, the development of national economics and the advent, as early as the second half of the nineteenth century, of modern industry, led of necessity to a reappearance of the merchant and industrial classes. The latter, whose growth was hampered by the general absence of freedom, and more

particularly by the British Government's policy with regard to customs duties and finance, a policy directly contrary to their interests, were before long to protest against the masterful character of this foreign rule, and to demand reforms at once political and economic.

In the third place, side by side with a commercial class, an intellectual class was soon to arise and take the lead in hastening political and social progress. We have seen (Part I, Ch. II) how the attempt to create a class of landowners, attached to British interests and capable of influencing Indian public opinion, had resulted in failure ; the Zamindars, far from working their land, showed no interest in cultivation, and, living in towns themselves, merely exacted from the peasant such excessive rent that special laws had to be passed to keep their demands in check. Thus they did not form the active, intellectual and influential class that England required to consolidate her rule, and the Bengal Permanent Settlement was not extended to other parts. After 1840, when the home-country had become more liberal-minded, British policy changed and sought support from the middle classes, in particular from the intelligentsia.

The chief instrument of this policy was Macaulay's educational reform, which by making the use of the English language compulsory in schools attempted to build up an Anglicised *élite* favourable to the foreign rule. Education for the masses was and still is very neglected, but secondary and higher educational institutions sprang up everywhere, and before long there appeared on the scene a class of intellectuals, trained in British habits of thought, who had in most

cases broken away from the religious and social traditions of Hinduism, and were nurtured on the philosophy of Spencer, Bentham, and Mill considerably more than on the Sacred Books. But these intellectuals, far from supporting British rule, were on the contrary to take the lead in the movement of protest, and this for two reasons.

First of all, they were soon confronted with grave material difficulties ; their European culture developed in them new needs and the desire for a higher standard of living ; their purely academic training closed to them all openings other than administrative posts or the liberal professions ; England, again, barred their access to the former. The intelligentsia was thus reduced to accepting ridiculous salaries and inferior posts, and as the number of the latter was comparatively small, unemployment soon assumed large proportions in the ranks of the liberal professions. This state of affairs naturally set the intellectual classes against England, and one of the first reforms demanded was just this very opening of the public services to Indians, so as to afford opportunities for careers to students leaving the university.

Moreover, exactly in the measure in which they assimilated British and European culture, the intellectuals were influenced by the ideas of liberty, equality, democracy and social justice, which form an integral part of Western civilisation ; as a matter of course they demanded that these ideas should be applied in their own country, and made a stand in favour of political and social reforms.

The combination of these two elements, the middle class and the intellectual, has given birth to the Indian Nationalist movement—rising capitalism has provided

the dynamic force, and the intellectuals have supplied the doctrine.

Not the least among the forces behind the national movement stands the religious reformation. While the greater part of the intellectuals were allowing themselves to be Anglicised and were giving up their traditional religious beliefs, a few others dreamed of blending the spiritual culture of East and West by introducing new ideas into Hinduism and by inclining the latter towards a deism sufficiently ill-defined to act as a link between the Vedas and the Gospel. Hence came into being the Bhramo Samaj, an organisation founded by one of the finest of Indian public characters of the early nineteenth century, Ram Mohan Roy. He was followed by two great disciples: Cham Sandra Sen, who even more distinctly than Roy was influenced by Western thought, and towards the end of his life very decidedly leaned towards Christianity; and Devendranath Tagore, the father of the poet, who upheld the ideal of blending cultures and of co-operation with the West, while yet remaining faithful to the main points of Hindu thought, although rejecting the monism of the orthodox tendency and asserting the individual's right to interpret the Vedas by the light of his own conscience. In its early form the religious renaissance was thus, like the political reformation, fully imbued with Western ideas, and set before itself an ideal of co-operation and not one of opposition.

The first evidence of the reform movement is the organisation in 1885 of the Indian National Congress by Banerjea and Dadhabai Naoroji. Before this date, only individual protests and efforts are to be found—for instance, Ram Mohan Roy's campaign in favour

of the freedom of the Press. Even the Indian Mutiny of 1857 cannot be considered a national movement; it was exactly the contrary—the last sign of life of the decadent feudal régime. The rajahs and the military castes made a stand against the unification of India and against the political and social reforms that were a menace to their privileges; they had no national ideal of patriotism, no sense of the unity of the Indian nation.

The Congress was organised at the outset with the approval and support of the British authorities; the Liberal party in England frequently sent a delegate, civil servants took part freely in its activities, and the first session in 1885 was held under the chairmanship of the Governor of Bombay. The Congress was at that time exclusively composed of members drawn from the middle class, particularly of intellectuals friendly to England who merely sought to introduce into their own country the representative and democratic institutions of the mother-country, and borrowed all their political ideas from the English middle class. Their demands included that the public services should be open to Indians, that elected members should be admitted to the legislative councils, a modification in the financial and in the tariff policy of the country, and social reforms intended to improve the lot of the masses, to raise the position of women and to weaken the caste system. To this end they were anxious to ensure the government's co-operation, and intended to have recourse only to legal and constitutional means, pursuing, to use the accepted term, a " loyal " opposition to the government. The fathers of the Indian national movement were therefore democrats rather than nationalists, and drew their

inspiration far more from British political ethics than from the teaching of their ancestors. This moderate form of opposition was uppermost throughout the end of the nineteenth century ; the members of Congress were few in number, but they formed a moral and intellectual *élite*, and their influence soon made itself felt in the whole country. Provincial and district conferences were held to nominate delegates to Congress ; a political Press made its appearance, written in different dialects, and at the same time the movement to hasten social reforms was making genuine progress, led by men such as Ranade and Gokhale. The latter organised the *Servants of India Society*, which has given in the past, and still gives to-day, the initiative to every undertaking in social questions.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, however, a profound change took place. The new Viceroy, Lord Curzon, an excellent administrator, but of a haughty and masterful disposition, was incapable of winning over the leaders of the national movement, and several of his measures, in particular the division of Bengal in 1907, aroused Indian public opinion to unanimous opposition. At the same moment, a Nationalist movement appeared for the first time, and the younger generations of intellectuals now began to draw their inspiration no longer from democratic Anglo-Saxon ethics, but from the religious traditions of their own country. Whilst the Bhramo Samaj had done its best to bring together Eastern and Western culture, the Arya Samaj, organised by Dyanand Saraswati, was hostile to every form of Western civilisation and preached a return to the Vedas, freed from the later idolatrous corruptions. The Arya Samaj opposed untouchability, the inferior position

of widows, purdah, the materialist interpretation of idol-worship; but it claimed to find in the sacred texts sufficient direction to face any problem; it fought bitterly, and often with some injustice, against the activity of Christian missionaries, whom it accused of trying to deprive Indians of national sentiment, and against Mohammedan propaganda, which it attacked with especial vigour in the North. By its aggressiveness, and the open struggle it has engaged upon against religions other than Hinduism, it has thus helped to embitter the antagonisms which at present set Mohammedan against Hindu, to the great detriment of the Indian national cause.

At the same period, the beginning of the twentieth century, the prophet Vivekananda, a disciple of the Hindu St. Francis of Assisi, Ramakrishna, whose life has been magnificently related by Romain Rolland, preached a revival and the deepening of religious feeling and organised the Ramakrishna Mission, which was to direct the religious fervour of its members towards action and social service. These two movements, the Arya Samaj and the Ramakrishna Mission, were, the former in an aggressive and rather destructive manner, the latter in a profoundly religious and constructive form, the expression of the new nationalist tendency. India ceased to look Westwards, in order to commune with herself and gain consciousness of her national values.

This deep-seated change found political expression when, among the leaders of Congress, the figure of Tilak came to the fore. This brilliant mathematician, trained by the spirit and in the methods of Arya Samaj, but even more faithful to the orthodox Hindu traditions, and more fiercely bigoted in his hatred

of all Western ideas, became very nearly the most influential leader of Congress after 1906. From the point of view of religion no less than from the economic and social standpoint, he was, in the exact sense of the word, a reactionary far more than he was progressive. Tilak attributed every evil in India to the one fact of British occupation, without realising the need for hastening the agricultural and industrial progress of his country; he uncompromisingly defended the most orthodox form of Hinduism, denounced a Bill forbidding the marriage of children under twelve years of age as sacrilegious and an attack on national culture, preached the worship of the goddess Kâli and the retention of caste distinctions, and, in a word, strove bitterly against liberalism in every shape. But to achieve this end, instead of confining himself to constitutional and parliamentary opposition, Tilak recommended the boycotting of British products, and, if necessary, armed rebellion. Boycotting, or "Swadeshi," was adopted by the Calcutta Congress as a means of protest against the division of Bengal, and it seemed for a time as if the extremists (the reactionaries) would gain the upper hand in the national movement.

This was avoided by a new Viceroy, Lord Morley, who, while acting energetically against the extremists before they could acquire any great influence in the country, and having Tilak condemned to six years' imprisonment, won the support of the moderate element by introducing certain political reforms in 1909. Henceforth central and provincial legislative councils were constituted, on which certain seats might be filled by elected members, and Indians were invited to form part of the executive cabinets of the

provincial governors, of the Viceroy and of the Secretary of State for India. After 1909, the extremist group was definitely broken up, and the moderate element, led by Gokhale, regained command in the National Congress. The period from 1907 to 1914 was, from that point onwards, marked by slow constructive work, and patient efforts to develop elementary education and to grant the provinces a measure of financial self-government.

When the war broke out, the national movement was powerful and well-organised; the National Congress stood for practically the whole of Hindu middle-class opinion, and the recently formed Muslim League protected the interests and ideas of the Mohammedan intellectual *élite*. The progressive industrialisation of India had increased the power of industrial and commercial men; great captains of industry like Tata had appeared on the scene, and their power was such that it was no longer possible for the British Government to ignore their demands. The intellectuals, too, had increased in number and in influence, and the whole world admired the scientific discoveries of, let us say, Bose, the poetic genius of Tagore (who was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1913), the spiritual power of Gandhi, whose epic adventures in South Africa had marked him as the worthy successor and disciple of Gokhale, who had died shortly before. But on the other hand, in 1914 the movement still left unaffected the peasant and artisan masses, who remained apathetic and indifferent. These masses only entered the struggle in 1920, largely under Gandhi's personal influence.

Directly war was declared, Congress decided to suspend all political activity and to help England with

all its might in the contest. Gandhi launched a recruiting campaign, and in 1916 he set forth his attitude in the following words :

" The future of our freedom is at this moment at stake in France ; the advice I give the country now is to fight unconditionally and to the death by the side of England ; and then, when victory has been won, to engage on a campaign of agitation and to fight anew to the death to secure the reforms we desire." India therefore gave herself up whole-heartedly to the struggle, granting without discussion the financial and military aid that was asked of her. England then realised that her obligation and her interest alike required an expression of gratitude. The Viceroy, Lord Harding, remained in close co-operation with Congress ; in 1917, after the Mesopotamian disaster, Mr. Montagu, Minister of Munitions, declared : " The present government of India is too wooden, too iron, too antediluvian to be any use for the modern purposes we have in view " ; and in 1917, the Lloyd George Cabinet, in which Montagu had become Secretary for India, defined its attitude as follows :

" The policy of His Majesty's Government, with which the Government of India are in complete accord, is that of the increasing association of Indians in every branch of the administration, and the gradual development of self-governing institutions, with a view to the progressive realisation of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire."

Montagu immediately left on a visit of enquiry to India, and met the principal leaders of the national movement, among others Gokhale's successor at the head of the *Servants of India Society*, Srinivasa Sastri.

Sir S. Sinha was made a member of the Imperial War Cabinet in 1918 and raised to the Peerage, and later appointed Under-Secretary of State for India, and a delegate to the League of Nations. But in his attempts at conciliation Montagu encountered the obstinate resistance of the colonial bureaucracy, the Civil Service, which had learnt nothing from the war and still kept its thirst for autocratic domination. The Civil Service was little by little to destroy all the work the Secretary of State had accomplished, and give rise to the very serious disturbances which marked the period immediately following the war.

Let us recall what the position was in 1919.

In the first place, the industrialisation of India, already begun at the end of the nineteenth century, had made rapid strides during the conflict. Cut off from England by submarine warfare, India had been forced to become self-supporting, and to meet unaided the cost of the expedition to Mesopotamia. Her textile industry had grown apace, mineral production had increased ; her metal industry in particular had made enormous strides, and India was presently to be recognised by the League of Nations as one of the eight great industrial Powers of the world. Contractors had piled up profits, and the Indian middle class emerged from the war considerably strengthened, ready to assert itself in the political and social sphere, and firmly intending to secure the liberty it required to allow of its free development.

Again, the war had seriously shaken England's prestige. It has become a commonplace nowadays to note that one of the chief consequences of our fratricidal strife has been to destroy completely, in

the whole of the Far East, the respect and awed admiration which Europeans had previously been able to inspire. A country like India, which has spirituality at heart above all else, must necessarily have suffered the most complete disillusionment. The intellectual classes, though consenting to support England in her struggle, refused to be carried away by the warlike enthusiasm that at that time fired the whole of Europe. On the contrary, they saw in this unhealthy excitement, even more than in the massacre itself, proof of the ruin of a civilisation that was purely scientific and material, that had boasted of bringing happiness to men, and did not even render them capable of governing their passions. This in itself strengthened the Nationalist movement, for the finest of the Indians concluded that they had nothing further to learn from Europe—that the case was, indeed, reversed, and that it was for them to restore to the Western world the sense of spiritual values which it had lost.

Thirdly, the mass of the people were for the first time reached by national propaganda. The rise in the cost of living had largely increased poverty among peasants and workmen ; as far back as 1918, strikes had broken out and trades union organisations had been founded. In the same year, the influenza epidemic was accompanied by a shortage of foodstuffs which caused risings in several parts ; the example of the Russian revolution had accentuated the thirst for independence ; a few peasants from villages in the North, who had belonged to the Indian corps that fought on the Western front, told their fellow-countrymen enthusiastic tales of the comfort and freedom enjoyed by the French peasant. Last but not least, Gandhi was beginning his propaganda for a return

to the spinning-wheel, and by providing, as he did, the wretched peasant with subsidiary work, he succeeded in exercising ever-increasing influence on the masses.

The appointment of Montagu in charge of the India Office, the Cabinet's pronouncement in 1917, and the visit to India of the Secretary of State, had raised great hopes, and the leaders of the Indian National Congress expected thoroughgoing measures of reform that should give India a democratic government and prepare for the introduction of Home Rule in the near future.

Consequently, the publication of the Montagu-Chelmsford report in 1918 caused deep disappointment. The achievement of Home Rule was relegated to a distant period and the report merely recommended, under the term Dyarchy, that Indians should play a certain part in public affairs.*

* In establishing the Dyarchy, England sought to satisfy, in a limited measure, the Indian demand for self-government; but this attempt was scarcely a bold one. Out of 310 million inhabitants, seven million only received the vote; one-third of the members of the assemblies were nominated and not elected; and considering these assemblies too untrained and inexperienced to assume the normal functions of a Parliament, England made a curious distinction: the *reserved* services (police, irrigation, penal justice, etc.) are in the hands of "executive councillors" responsible to the Governor alone, and the Legislative Assembly has but a consultative voice on these questions; on the other hand, the *transferred* services (education, agriculture, hygiene, anti-famine measures, civil law, and co-operation) are entrusted to ministers reponsible to the Assembly, and the latter has power to take binding decisions with regard to these matters. Naturally, there can be no such thing as joint responsibility of ministers, since some depend on the Governor and the others on the Assembly; each is therefore responsible only for the administration of his own department.

This distinction being made, the important question proved to be the allocation of funds as between national finance and provincial finance on the one hand, and between the reserved and transferred services on the other. India had long continued under a centralised financial régime, and it was only in 1870 that Lord Mayo had granted the

In spite of disappointment, Indian opinion was inclined in part to accept the report as a basis for discussion, introducing necessary amendments, and at a special session of the national committee of Congress, held at Bombay in August 1918, it was decided

provinces a fixed sum to cover their normal expenditure. The Morley reforms of 1909 showed a tendency towards a measure of financial autonomy for the provinces ; their expenditure and revenue continued to appear in the Government of India budget, but the revenue obtained from certain taxes was directly made over to them, and in the case of other taxes they had the right to levy additional sums of so much in the rupee. The 1919 reform at last granted the provinces real financial autonomy, and a commission was appointed to undertake the division of revenue. The decision finally arrived at was the following : income tax was allocated to the Central Government, as well as customs and excise and registration duties ; revenue from irrigation on the other hand, from fines and the land-tax, belonged to the provinces. Agricultural districts thus stood to gain by this new distribution of funds, while industrial districts and the Central Government lost by it. To equalise matters, the commission decided that, over a period of transition which came to an end in 1928, the provinces should hand over a yearly decreasing sum contributed in the following proportions : Bengal 19 per cent., the United Provinces 18 per cent., Madras 17 per cent., Bombay 13 per cent., Bihar and Orissa 10 per cent., Punjab 9 per cent., the Central Provinces 6 per cent., Burma 5·5 per cent., Assam 2·5 per cent.

Out of the sums to which the provinces were thus entitled, the Governor every year fixed, for each of the two groups of reserved and transferred services, a maximum of expenditure which they may not exceed ; below this maximum, the executive councillors' budget forecast of expenditure is approved by the Government, the ministers' by the Assembly. It will be seen that the financial powers of the Assembly are very restricted and that the ministers play only a very secondary part, obliged as they are to keep below a maximum in administering their department, and powerless to influence the Government's general policy. It must be added that certain expenses are compulsorily inserted in the provincial budgets, viz. interest on sums borrowed from the Central Government, interest on the cost of irrigation, and the sums necessary to open a fund to combat famine.

Apart from these points, the 1919 reforms tried to reconstruct communal life by resurrecting the former village panchayats, and by creating municipalities, and, in the country, district boards. These bodies have been constituted in the face of the greatest difficulties by reason of the Indian peasant's ignorance, and the absence of any higher class resident in the country who could take the lead. In spite of this, in 1927, 767 municipalities were to be found in India and 3,735 district boards, comprising a total membership of 43,000, of which 70 per cent. were elected and 30 per cent. nominated.

to accept the report, while declaring it " inadequate and insufficient " ; but the regular Congress, held in December 1918, rejected the reading of the report by a majority.

Difficulties were to multiply during the year 1919. At the beginning of the negotiations for peace it looked for a time as if Turkey was to be entirely wiped off the face of Europe. This threat considerably upset the Mohammedan population, for whom the presence of the Caliph at Constantinople had a religious value as a symbol of the unity of Islam. Mohammedan circles in India at once became hostile to England, whom they accused of attacking one of the foundations of their faith. Moreover, at the very moment when the British Government was trying, by partial reforms, to conciliate the moderate element, the Civil Service succeeded in having the Rowlatt Act promulgated, which proclaimed martial law in Bengal and punished most severely every act of sedition and conspiracy. Indian opinion unanimously rose against this law ; meetings of protest were held all over the country and served as a pretext for repressive measures, in particular for the terrible Amritsar massacres, when Sir Michael O'Dwyer's and Brigadier-General Dyer's troops attacked without provocation a meeting of two thousand men, women and children, and killed several hundreds. The Amritsar episode definitely destroyed all possibility of understanding between England and India, and marked the beginning of the revolt in the form that Gandhi was to give it, non-violent non-co-operation.

Although non-co-operation has been the subject of much writing and discussion, the necessary distinction does not seem to have been made between its two

different aspects, which imply very distinct attitudes of mind, that of the prophet and that of the citizen. True, the confusion is readily understandable, for, practically speaking, in Gandhi's personal activity, in South Africa as in India, these two attitudes have always been indissolubly connected ; but one may ask if this very combination of two dissimilar elements is not at the bottom of the want of understanding that Gandhi has met with, even in the case of his closest followers, and if it does not partially explain the events of 1922.

Firstly, non-co-operation and non-violence may be an absolute, moral assertion on the part of the individual. One or more men refuse to perform an act which they consider contrary to the dictates of their conscience and the fundamental rights of a human being ; a believer revolts against a law which violates his religious faith ; a conscientious objector declares that he cannot take part in a war ; Indians in South Africa refuse to let their finger-prints be taken, a measure which, in the circumstances in which it had been passed, was of a humiliating and degrading character, and pour in their thousands into the forbidden territory ; and Gandhi in 1919, in defiance of the Rowlatt Act, holds illegal meeting after illegal meeting and harangues crowds up till the time of his first arrest. In each of these cases, we have before us a disinterested action, gratuitous, made irrespective of any end in view ; the man is not seeking to put one form of pressure on another ; he does not even hope to obtain the suppression of the measure he condemns. The thought of the success or the failure of his actions does not matter to him ; he has no intention of succeeding, of attaining a particular object, but merely declares himself unable,

whatever may be the consequence, to perform an act contrary to his conscience. That is a strictly individual action, it is the voice crying in the wilderness, the voice of a man who has risen above the political and social battle to affirm the existence of an absolute, eternal moral value.

The attitude will be very different when the thought of success begins to play a part; this second type of action is no longer disinterested, nor that of the lonely prophet; it is a civic action, seeking to attain a definite end. The man now plunges full into society, knit together as it is, into the very heart of the battle; he faces concrete problems affecting the rest of his fellows, and conceives of non-co-operation on the same footing as violence or political bargaining, as *a means* of achieving a well-defined political or social ideal.

At this point, moreover, two conceptions are possible, according to whether success is expected from the opponent's conversion, or from the power of coercion inherent in moral force.

One may consider in the first place that a non-violent struggle, combining with an irreconcilable opposition to unjust institutions an unshakeable love of the adversary, will at last move the latter and induce him to change his attitude. Such, indeed, seems to have been, for a time, at all events, Gandhi's idea, for he repeatedly asserted his "unlimited faith in the goodness of human nature," and his belief that "man, allowed to act according to his conscience alone and without any coercion, will necessarily work for the good of the community." He has been, and perhaps is still, convinced that when the day comes for the British to find themselves face to face with a resolute

determination of the Indian people to win their freedom even at the cost of their lives, they will be unable to resist being moved by such a spirit of sacrifice, and will admit the justice of their claims. One may remain sceptical as to assertions of this kind, which presuppose far too optimistic a conception of human nature, and fail to take into account the economic and social determinism that brings pressure to bear on men's actions. They do, nevertheless, contain a grain of truth. Non-violence may succeed in arousing the opponent's conscience and changing his attitude if two circumstances are present together; on the one hand, if the non-co-operation will not endanger the very existence or the fundamental privileges of a higher class (or race), but will be content with attacking a minor measure taken by this class; on the other, if this measure (*e.g.* the Rowlatt Act, the inferior position of Indians in South Africa, the sentencing of Dreyfus, or the present French Bill against autonomist propaganda) is contrary to fundamental moral rules admitted by the higher class itself. In other words, the opponent's conversion is possible when non-violence contrives to make him think over certain problems and realise that one or other of his particular actions is contrary to his own moral aspirations.* It is not attainable, as a mass phenomenon, when on a given point the opponents have no moral convictions in common,† or when the existence or the

* Thus viewed, non-co-operation will be far more effective if directed against a British Labour Government than against a Conservative Government, because of the large number of moral beliefs held in common by Socialism and the Indian independence movement.

† The question of war is one of those in which the refusal to kill, after having been for a long time but the evidence of a "prophetic" attitude, is beginning to have civic value as well. With the new course Europe is following, the refusal to take part in a war will no

fundamental privileges of a higher class or race are at stake.

If one does not believe in the natural goodness of man, non-violence is yet defensible, not as a means of converting an adversary, but as a peculiarly efficacious method of coercion. Non-co-operation is then no more than the strategy of warfare of a type which, given certain economic and political circumstances, is considered preferable to other types. That, to all appearances, is Gandhi's interpretation at the moment, and it is in this form, at all events, that non-co-operation has been accepted and practised by the mass of his followers. It is undeniable that if thousands of men unite and declare themselves ready to go to all lengths of suffering and endurance to ensure the triumph of their ideal, no power on earth can overcome them. Non-co-operation, joined to the determination to fight to the finish, is, of all methods of warfare, the most effective. But of those who practise it it demands a spirit of consecration, self-denial and sacrifice which it is hard to expect from a whole nation. The temptation will always arise, when unity seems unattainable, or the masses are not ready for sacrifice, to grow impatient of half-measures and resort to violence which appears in the light of a short cut. *The degree to which violence is used in a social struggle is the exact measure of the lack of preparation and of revolutionary faith among the masses*, but when one considers the weakness of human nature it is easy to forecast that violence will always make its appearance at some stage or other of a movement of mass revolt.

longer constitute the same danger for the existence of the capitalist middle class, and as the idea of peace gains ground, it is gradually establishing those beliefs which must to some extent at all events be generally accepted if non-co-operation is to be effective.

From the day when non-co-operation ceased to be the testimony borne by a few individuals to the dictates of their conscience, and became a form of civic action, a certain degree of violence was inevitable ; and one might say that as far back as 1919 the tragedy of Chauri Chaura was already anticipated in Gandhi's first appeal in favour of mass non-co-operation.

After the Amritsar massacre all collaboration with England became impossible. A large proportion of the political leaders of the National Congress no doubt remained in favour of constitutional and parliamentary opposition, and spoke of nominating candidates for the newly constituted Legislative Assemblies, but Indian public opinion was outraged, and would tolerate no compromise. Gandhi's programme of non-co-operation possessed the merit of directing the public's energy into a definite channel and of offering a mode of action which was in harmony with the traditions and temperament of India, and capable of stirring the enthusiasm of the masses.

A special Congress, held at Bombay in July 1919, declared, contrary to the views expressed by the majority of the political leaders, in favour of boycotting the political assemblies and of severing all relations with the British Government. Indian patriots were to leave aside their decorations and British titles, refuse all government posts, withdraw their children from the public schools, wear nothing but khaddar (cloth spun and woven at home), collect their foreign materials and those of their friends and neighbours and make bonfires of them, and, lastly, refuse to take any part in the Legislative Assemblies. At the same time Gandhi brought forward a whole programme of social reforms ; a campaign against alcohol, the

removal of barriers between the castes, the abolition of untouchability, an effort to raise the position of women, and the return to the spinning-wheel considered as the means of furnishing the hapless peasant with a supplementary income. In Gandhi's view the revolutionary programme was to be carried out along two lines; on the one hand open war against the British Government, on the other the internal reform of Indian society in order to fit it for liberty and self-government.

If Gandhi dominated the special Congress at Bombay, his authority was complete at the Nagpur Congress, held in December 1920, as well as at that held at Ahmedabad in 1921, when the non-co-operation programme was definitely adopted and Gandhi received full powers to open the struggle and prepare a general movement of civil disobedience, which was to lead up gradually through minor measures to a general refusal to pay taxes.

For a moment it seemed as if the movement which was turning all India against foreign rule were irresistible and England's position seriously impaired. By dint of inserting in his propaganda protests against the Rowlatt Act, the Amritsar massacre, and the attempts to suppress the Caliphate and expel the Turks from Constantinople, Gandhi succeeded in associating for the time being in a common cause Hindus and Moslems who had been divided up till then, and have been ever since, by an unconquerable feud. And, perhaps more important still, the working classes and peasantry were for the first time drawn into the battle. The national movement, as we have seen, had been up to the war a middle-class movement, voicing the interests of a rising capitalist class

and the convictions of an intellectual *élite* who were hostile to European culture. It could maintain this character so long as it remained within the bounds of peaceful negotiations and parliamentary action, but as soon as it embarked on direct action, especially in a non-violent form, the support of the workmen and peasants became indispensable. The former were easy to enlist, for since 1918 they had showed signs of awakening to the need for the economic conflict, and Gandhi and his disciples had been among the earliest organisers of trades unions. The peasants were won by the gospel of the return to the spinning-wheel, which afforded them a promise of supplementary work, and the ideal of a Swaraj (autonomy) in which they would have no land-tax to pay to a foreign ruler. But it was the religious faith and spiritual personality of Gandhi which stirred the masses, who saw in him a fresh incarnation of the Divinity.

As a result, from 1920 to 1921, the movement of non-co-operation spread gradually throughout the whole country, winning the enthusiastic support of the masses. Government officials abandoned their posts, the schools and English universities were deserted, young volunteers closed spirit-merchants' shops by force and went from house to house demanding foreign materials to burn, the laws which sanctioned the crushed condition of the untouchables were successively abolished, and in a few years there were a larger number of fundamental changes and more social progress took place in India than in the fifty years preceding. The singularly inopportune visit of the Prince of Wales was the signal for the outbreak of *hartals* (general strikes) throughout the country, and the Prince was greeted in his progress by nothing

but dead towns where the traffic was suspended, the roads and shops deserted, and all the inhabitants shut within their dwellings.

The national movement was then at the summit of its power, and it seemed as if the moment had come for the decisive battle to be fought by the proclamation of civil disobedience and the refusal to pay taxes. It was at this moment that two events occurred which in a few months brought the whole movement to a sudden standstill and allowed England to reaffirm her position, which had been seriously threatened.

It was impossible in so extensive a movement of revolt to maintain the masses, and particularly the peasants, who are little accustomed to discipline, in a perpetual attitude of non-violence. No doubt Gandhi's order was complied with on the whole, and thousands of men allowed themselves to be ill-treated, imprisoned, and sometimes massacred by British troops without the faintest attempt at resistance ; but on the other hand, disturbances broke out on several occasions, and, in spite of Gandhi's exhortations, shops were looted, usurers roughly handled, police officers attacked, and finally the Chauri Chaura tragedy occurred, when the rabble attacked a police station, set it on fire and cut to pieces the majority of the British police. That certainly was a blameworthy but an exceptional outburst, and on the whole the movement remained true to the ideal of non-violence. We have seen that from the day when non-co-operation ceases to be an individual testimony, and becomes a means of collective action, such accidental acts of violence are very nearly unavoidable. Gandhi, while emphatically condemning the Chauri Chaura episode, might have continued the struggle and have given the order

to refuse payment of taxes ; by an act admirable for its courage and its humility, he preferred to declare himself personally responsible for the blood that had been spilt, to call upon the whole of India to join with him in fasting and repentance. Then declaring that his people were not yet ready for liberty and its conquest by non-violence, he decided on the suspension of non-co-operation.

This would not have been enough, and prodigious as was the Mahatma's influence on the masses, it is unlikely that his decision would have sufficed to arrest a movement that was beginning to get beyond his control, had not a second factor at the same moment contributed to breaking down the revolt. This was the increasing mistrust, and before long the determined opposition of the whole of the Indian middle class to this interference by the masses, which directly threatened its interests. We have seen that passive disobedience was to culminate in a general refusal to pay taxes ; now the Indian peasant is quite incapable of distinguishing between taxes paid to the State and rent paid to the landlord, and for him, Swaraj was a golden age in which he would keep the entire produce of his work, and would at once avoid the threefold deductions made by the State, the usurer and the landlord. Similarly, industrial wage-earners hoped for better working conditions and more freedom. The year 1922 is the one in which the break became clearly visible between the popular element that had entirely given itself up to the national cause, and the bourgeois element, terrified, like the wizard's apprentice, at the forces it had itself set in motion. And it is interesting to note that the executive committee of Congress, at its meeting at Bardoli in

February 1922, which confirmed Gandhi's decision to cease non-co-operation, felt the need to reassure the landlords, and introduced into the resolution that was passed the following clause: Clause 5, "The executive committee requests the Congress speakers and propagandists to inform peasants that the refusal to pay rent to the Zamindars is contrary to the resolutions of Congress and injurious to national interest; it assures the Zamindars that the national movement in no sense intends to criticise their right to rent, and it is of the opinion that in cases where peasants have complaints to make the question should be submitted to arbitration."

The movement of non-co-operation was therefore interrupted, less because of the Chauri Chaura disturbances and Gandhi's decision than because of the cleavage that appeared actually within the Nationalist movement, between the masses of the people, and the middle class anxious to keep its privileges. The result was a temporary but marked collapse of the movement. England, after seeing her authority gravely endangered, soon regained confidence; Gandhi was arrested and condemned to five years' imprisonment, and on August 2nd, 1922, Mr. Lloyd George declared to the British Parliament: "Britain will in no circumstances relinquish her responsibility for India. That is a cardinal principle, not merely of the present government, but . . . with any government that could command the confidence of the people of this country."

Gandhi's successor at the head of the Nationalist movement, C. R. Das, attempted to keep the different social classes united, and recommended both the trades union and co-operative organisation of the labouring and peasant masses, and

revolutionary methods in Parliament—the entry into Legislative Assemblies on purpose to cause obstruction and prevent their working. England, he thought, would thus be forced, either to effect fresh reforms, or to rend the veil of parliamentary methods under which, since 1919, she had tried to hide her autocracy. At the outset, Das met with opposition from all the younger generation, which remained faithful to Gandhi's tactics, refused any compromise in the matter of reforms, and aimed at a return to non-co-operation as soon as circumstances should permit it. These younger members having obtained a majority at the Gaya Congress in December 1922, the minority formed itself into a " Swarajist party," to spread the idea of revolutionary parliamentary methods throughout the country ; it made rapid progress, and a special Congress that met at Delhi on September 25, 1923, gave a slight majority to those who approved of entering the Assemblies.

At the November elections of 1923 which followed, three political groups were to meet face to face. The Liberals, representing a small number of important manufacturers and financiers, had, from the outset, accepted the reforms, although they declared them inadequate, and for nearly three years past they had dominated the meetings. They had held the highest administrative posts, and had allied themselves with the government in its fight against the non-co-operators. In 1923 they had lost their hold on public opinion. The Swarajist party, although it constituted but a fraction of Congress, could, after September, rely on the support of the greater portion of the Nationalist movement and speak with Gandhi's authority. It represented the mass of the Hindu

middle and lower classes. Lastly, a third group, the Independent party, consisted of individuals, Moslem Nationalists who did not wish to support a Hindu Congress, or large landowners who were sufficiently influential in their own provinces to be able to stand without a party label. Practically speaking, they were to ally themselves to the Swarajist party's movements, though acting with greater moderation, and pursuing at times in their own provinces personal and interested aims.

In the elections the Swarajist party gained a majority in the Central Provinces. It already held half the constituencies in the Bombay Presidency and in Bengal ; everywhere else, though in the minority, it yet came a close second, except in Madras, where most of the seats were won by the independent non-Brahman group. In the National Assembly the Swarajist party obtained rather more than half the vacant seats filled by election (50 out of 96, 46 other members being nominated by the government).

Immediately after this success, the party began wherever it could to put into practice its policy of obstruction. In the Central Provinces, where it held a majority, all the government's propositions were systematically rejected, and the minister's salaries fixed at 2 rupees per year. The executive was forced to suspend the sitting of the Assembly and to take over once more the direct administration of the services which had been transferred. In most of the provinces, however, and in the National Assemblies, a policy of this kind was made difficult by the fact that the Swarajist party could only obtain a majority by associating with the Independent group, which was hostile to all systematic obstruction. In the National

Assembly the Swarajist party was in a minority (50 out of a total of 140) although it held over half the seats open to election. But it formed a compact and well-disciplined group, and soon rallied others around it so that a new body—the Nationalist party—was formed, uniting Swarajists and Independents, and forming 73 members out of 140 into one group. It demanded immediate and positive reforms from England, threatening in case of refusal to resort to systematic obstruction. The Swarajist party had been obliged to modify its uncompromisingly revolutionary attitude in the Assembly in order to obtain a majority ; obstruction was now no more than a vague menace, and could only be resorted to if 75 per cent. of the members of the Nationalist party decided in favour of it. The rigid revolutionary attitude had in reality been abandoned, and the Swarajist party was already tending to accept the Legislative Assemblies in which it had to play the part of a parliamentary Opposition. Gandhi, who came out of prison just then (February 1924), sensed the danger ; he declared his adherence to the programme of non-co-operation, and denounced all participation in the Legislative Assemblies. At the meeting of the executive committee of Congress at Ahmedabad on June 27, 1924, he brought forward a series of resolutions the object of which was to dissociate the Congress from the Swarajist party. He was particularly anxious to lay on each member of Congress the obligation of spinning a minimum of 2,000 yards of cotton per month, and affirmed that it behoved those who were opposed to the boycott of the Legislative Assemblies to resign from the executive committee. This time, although the masses remained at his back, Gandhi found himself obliged to face the

opposition of the entire middle class, of the political leaders and the majority of the intellectuals. Seeing that his policy would lead to scission, he accepted a compromise and his resolutions were all passed in principle though without any sanction being attached to them. The opposition between the respective positions taken up by Gandhi and the Swarajists was no less clearly marked and fresh difficulties would have been inevitable if, on October 24th, the British Government had not passed the Bengal Ordinance Act, which authorised the summary arrest and trial by special tribunal of any person belonging to an organisation pursuing criminal ends. On the application of this law several members of the Bengal Swarajist party were arrested and sentenced, an event which drew indignant protests from all political circles, including the Liberals. The need for an understanding was beginning to be keenly felt, and at the Belgaum Conference, presided over by Gandhi in December 1924, an agreement was reached between the Swarajists and the Non-Co-operators. The principles of non-co-operation were proclaimed afresh, and a new appeal was launched in favour of the return to the spinning-wheel. The necessity for organising the masses was especially stressed, and only persons carrying on some manual work (in most cases spinning the 2,000 yards of cotton per month) were given the right to vote at Congress. The Swarajists, however, were authorised to represent the Congress in the legislative bodies, on condition of adhering to their policy of systematic obstruction. When this decision came into force at the beginning of 1925 the Bengal Swarajists, who had gained the majority, thanks to the support of some independent Moslems, rejected all the propositions of

the executive and obliged it to suspend the Assembly and to take over again the services which had been transferred.

At the moment, however, when the Non-Co-operators were accepting, in a spirit of conciliation, the revolutionary parliamentary programme, it was being abandoned by a large number of the Swarajists. In the National Assembly, as we have seen, the Nationalist party had threatened to resort to systematic obstruction if further reforms were not granted. To this ultimatum England replied in 1925 by a categorical refusal, declaring that in 1929 (after the reforms had been tested for ten years) an enquiry would be conducted into their application, and that then, only, could further changes be considered. There was nothing for it but to put the threat into practice. On the 8th of March the Swarajists left the Legislative Assembly in a body, and its President recognised that the Assembly had completely lost its representative character. But the other members of the Nationalist party did not follow this example, and very shortly some of the Swarajists themselves changed their attitude. In October 1925, the United Provinces leader, who had until then been at the head of the campaign for obstruction, suddenly accepted the post of executive councillor. At the same moment, two leaders in the Bombay Presidency, Moonje and Jayakar, decided to co-operate with the government. A number of others joined them, and these "Responsive Co-operators" united with a few Liberals of the left wing and a few Independents to create a new Nationalist party, distinct this time from the Swarajists and the Independents, and having for its object "to obtain autonomy and a responsible government for India, having

recourse to all peaceful and legal measures in the pursuit of this aim."

At the elections of 1926 the Swarajists lost a certain number of seats to the Responsive Co-operators, who gained a majority chiefly in the Bombay Presidency. In the other provinces the Swarajists were more or less successful in maintaining their position, and even obtained the majority in Madras by reason of the break-up of the non-Brahman party. But at the National Assembly the number of their representatives fell to below 40, and they came out of this election definitely weakened. The Congress of which they had become the political mouthpiece also suffered, and it is certain that since 1926 it no longer represents as in 1921 the quasi-unanimity of Indian opinion. Liberals, Nationalists, Independents and Moslems had formed groups alongside of it, and this dispersion of effort has rendered the policy of systematic obstruction utterly ineffectual and it has finally had to be abandoned. Already in the autumn session of 1926, when the Responsive Co-operators were accepting ministerial posts, the Swarajists were returning to take part in the deliberations of the Assembly ; since then they have been little more than an opposition party, certainly irreconcilable and regularly rejecting the budget, but still acting within the limits of parliamentary procedure. The death of Das, in the summer of 1926, had, moreover, robbed the party of its most energetic leader, the only one who had attempted to combine political action with the work of organising the masses. Since 1926, the majority in Congress appears to have lost contact with the people, and the Swarajist party has relegated its programme of organisation among workmen and peasants to the

background in order to devote itself above all to its parliamentary activities.

After non-co-operation had been abandoned, and systematic obstruction had ended in failure, the majority in the Indian Nationalist movement consented to resort to a third method—that of parliamentary opposition. This has been practised for three years, and considering the paucity of the results obtained, it can also be said to have proved ineffectual in practice. This failure demonstrates clearly how inadequate are the 1919 reforms to introduce even a vestige of parliamentary life into India, for no tactical error can be imputed to the Indian political leaders. The Swarajist party, under the guidance of Das's successor, the Pandit Motilal Nehru, formed a strongly organised and remarkably well-disciplined parliamentary group. It very soon allied itself with the Nationalist party (which finally by its participation restored reality to the Congress) and these two groups, which constitute the immense majority of the Indian members of Parliament, have worked in the closest co-operation, showing a remarkable unity both in their activities and in voting. None the less, if the National Assembly has sometimes hindered the activities of the executive, it has never yet succeeded in winning the day on any vital problem. The government has almost invariably achieved a majority of a few votes, a majority due to the nominated members who constitute one-third of the Assembly, the representatives of the creoles and the half-castes, and a few Moslem and Liberal members. When a majority cannot be obtained in this way, the executive may always declare the question urgent, in which case the Viceroy can himself decide the matter by decree.

The limitations thus set to parliamentary action, and the impossibility of the Indian representatives taking any decision for themselves, have been clearly apparent in the discussions regarding customs duties and financial reform.

As we have seen, throughout the nineteenth century England multiplied the internal duties in India, while the customs duties were kept strictly to a minimum ; and this in order to handicap the expansion of the national industry and preserve the markets which were valuable for Manchester products. Before the war customs duties were regarded purely as revenue and had no protectionist object whatsoever. The economic expansion of India during and since the war has showed the inevitability of the movement towards industrialisation, which England has since sought to direct by herself financing Indian undertakings. The problem of protection thus arose quite naturally. In 1921 a Board of Enquiry was set up to investigate the economic situation of the chief industries, and state whether or not they should be protected by duties. The Board having decided in favour of protection, a law was passed in 1923 introducing a general increase in customs duties for a period of three years. In September 1926, the Board advised a further increase for metal products. The government refused, preferring to grant the metal industries a subsidy of 20 rupees per ton on 70 per cent. of their ingots of steel. In 1927, on account of the heavy financial burden this subsidy represented, it was decided to increase the customs duties, but here there was a clash between two policies. The Nationalists declared in favour of complete protection, and demanded a general increase on all steel, whatever its

country of origin; the government proposed a differential tariff, imposing very heavy duties on Continental products while maintaining the former duty for English steel. In spite of opposition on the part of all the national parties, differential duties, reaffirming the privileges of British industry, were passed by a small majority in 1927.

A fresh dispute was to arise a few months later regarding financial reform. The government's plan, which followed in its main lines the report of the Hilton Young Commission, sought to stabilise the rupee no longer in relation to the £ but in relation to gold. It provided for the establishment of an Indian Mint, laying upon it statutory obligations to maintain the rupee at a fixed relation to gold, par being at the rate of 1 rupee to 1*s.* 6*d.* This proposition allowed India in future to have a financial policy independent of London, and in its main lines it had been favourably received in Indian circles. But the rate of 1*s.* 6*d.* fixed by the government was everywhere considered too high, and this policy of revaluation was violently attacked on the score of opening the Indian market to imports from England, and blocking the way to the exportation of native goods. Although the chief Liberal leaders united for the occasion with the Swarajist and Nationalist groups to demand stabilisation at 1*s.* 4*d.*, the government plan was nevertheless carried by a small majority.

Thus, in the two greatest issues of the year 1927, Indian opinion as expressed by the very large majority of the members elected failed to triumph, and already at the end of 1927, after only one year's experience, the parliamentary opposition proved ineffectual. This fresh defeat, following on that of systematic obstruc-

tion, appeared fully to justify Gandhi and the partisans of non-co-operation. Since his release from prison Gandhi had withdrawn to his Sabarmati Ashram and seemed to have lost interest in political activities; but he had never lost his prestige and his influence very shortly made itself felt once more to a marked degree. The younger element, irritated by the absence of positive results, were inclined to take up an attitude of radical opposition, some even going so far as insurrection; the working-class masses were organising themselves independently of Congress, and fell at times under the influence of extremist leaders inspired by Communist ideas. At the very beginning of 1928 a reawakening of the spirit of revolt was to be felt. It was at this moment that the appointment of the Simon Commission came to unite the various elements of the opposition in a common protest and strengthen in a very marked degree the position of the non-co-operators.

The 1919 Act had provided for the appointment, after the measures of reform should have been in operation ten years, of a commission to enquire into the results obtained and make recommendations regarding the new statute to be granted to India. From the moment of the 1923 elections the Swarajist party had demanded the immediate appointment of this commission and in 1924 the Assembly had adopted a resolution to this effect. The government replied by the appointment of a Commission of Enquiry to consider the modifications of minor points which might be introduced into the framework of the 1919 law. The greater number of the members of the commission confined themselves to requesting the appointment of financial advisers to assist each minister

in the preparation of his budget, the fixing of ministers' salaries at three-fifths at least of those of the executive councillors, the transference of the forestry and workers' dwellings departments, and, lastly, of joint meetings of ministers and executive councillors. The minority, on the contrary, demanded the immediate abolition of the Dyarchy and it was the minority's report which was carried at the Assembly by 72 votes to 45. The government took no account of this fact, and shortly afterwards the Swarajist party withdrew from the Assembly.

In November 1927, the Viceroy, Lord Irwin, announced at long last the nomination of a Commission of Enquiry to prepare for 1930 the new constitution for India ; but this was exclusively a British parliamentary commission, on which there was not a single Indian representative. Public opinion in Indian circles regarded this exclusion in the light of an insult, and all parties rose in a body against the Simon Commission. The revolt was not conducted with equal vigour in every group. The Responsive Co-operators and the Liberals declared themselves unable to co-operate with the commission unless the latter consented to conduct its enquiry in collaboration with an Indian committee sitting concurrently and which would submit a separate report to the National Assembly to be transmitted to the British Parliament. The Moslems were divided—the majority being hostile to the commission, the remainder (those from the Punjab) consenting to co-operate with it, while vigorously condemning the choice of its members. This last-mentioned attitude was also that of some of the Liberals, the untouchables, and the non-Brahmans of Madras. As for the National Congress of December

1927, which for the first time in history was presided over by a Mohammedan, Dr. Ansari, it declared in favour of boycotting the commission, and decided that the Swarajist party would thenceforth take no further share in the sittings of the Assembly, except to vote against the budget or any law contrary to the interests of the country.

When, on February 3rd, 1928, the Simon Commission landed at Bombay it was greeted by a *hartal*, though the latter was considerably less effective than that declared in 1921 by Gandhi on the occasion of the visit of the Prince of Wales, most of the Moslems, in particular, taking no share. From the day of his arrival (February 2nd) Simon proposed to the Legislative Assemblies of every province that they should each appoint seven members to accompany the commission on its enquiry in the region, and lay their recommendations before it. In the same way, a hearing was to be given to delegates from the National Assembly, but simply for the purpose of obtaining information, and though their recommendations were to be annexed to the commission's report they were to remain subordinate to the latter. The National Assembly rejected these propositions, and carried by 68 votes to 62 a resolution put forward by Lala Lajpat Rai (who met his death a few months later from blows dealt by the British police in a manifestation against the commission), declining all co-operation with a commission of enquiry in which Indians did not sit on a basis of equality with the British delegates.

During the years 1928 and 1929 political activity was almost entirely withdrawn from the National Assembly, and the attention of the public was concentrated on the battle waged between the National

Congress and the Simon Commission. The Congress held at Madras in December 1928 declared that the final aim of the Nationalist movement was the independence of India. It reiterated the boycott of the Simon Commission, and finally itself appointed another commission under the direction of Motilal Nehru, the Swarajist leader, and appealed to all the Indian political leaders to collaborate. The duty of this commission was to elaborate the scheme of a constitution for India and to submit it the following year to a convention of all parties. This latter was held at Calcutta in December 1929; over 30,000 delegates crowded the marquee where the assembly was held representing the National Congress, the Swarajist, Nationalist, and Independent parties, as well as a few Liberals and Moslems. As in 1921, a body was formed capable of speaking for a very large proportion of public opinion. The report presented by the Nehru Commission was the subject of heated discussion, first on the executive committee of the convention, later at the convention itself. It offered the scheme of a constitution based on the models of Australia and South Africa, and consequently accepted Dominion status, entailing the presence of an English governor, invested with the right of veto, to control all the Provincial Assemblies and the National Assembly.

An important section of the Assembly, especially the younger element, led by Subhas Bose and Jahawarlal Nehru, the son of the president of the commission, expressed disapproval of the report and demanded complete independence.

At last, after fearing at one moment that the convention of all parties would be obliged to dissolve

without arriving at any decision, Gandhi succeeded in persuading it to accept a compromise. The Nehru report was adopted, but the convention recognised the right of the partisans of independence to continue their propaganda. Further, an ultimatum was sent to England, requiring her to grant Dominion status before December 31, 1929, in default of which complete independence would be proclaimed, and the movement of non-co-operation, carried to the point of civil disobedience, would once more be set on foot.

The situation remained disturbed throughout the year 1929. The Simon Commission was everywhere boycotted; in the various towns which it visited it was received by hartals and hostile manifestations. Foreseeing more serious trouble the government brought two Bills before the National Assembly—the Public Safety Bill and the Trades Disputes Bill, one authorising the deportation without trial of political adversaries, the other prohibiting sympathetic strikes and unions of Civil Servants, and introducing compulsory arbitration in disputes affecting the public services. While these schemes were under consideration by the National Assembly, in the spring of 1929, a bomb was thrown at the government benches, and the Viceroy immediately promulgated the two statutes by decree without parliamentary sanction. At the end of March 1929, 31 trades union leaders and Swarajists were incriminated in a Communist plot, and Indian public opinion was stirred to violent indignation by the injustice of the accusation (out of 31 persons accused only 10, roughly, had Communist leanings; the others were merely patriots) as well as by the harsh treatment meted out to the victims of the charge.

At the moment it is impossible to foretell with

any degree of accuracy the political future of India. It would, however, be advisable to review in conclusion the chief difficulties which the Nationalist movement is encountering, the solutions it claims to bring to the question, and to indicate in outline the most probable course of events in India in the near future.

There are three main difficulties which the Indian national movement encounters in the course of its revolutionary activities. These are due to the Princes, the Moslems, and the internal disputes within the Nationalist movement itself.

English occupation does not extend over the whole Indian continent. Besides British India, there are pseudo-autonomous states, of which some are merely tiny principalities, while others, such as Mysore, Hyderabad, Baroda, Travancore and Cochin, cover an area equal to that of some of the Central Europe States. In these territories the ancient princes or rajahs have been preserved, England being content merely to limit their authority. An English President is appointed to their court, who must be consulted on all matters of importance. Further, he serves as arbitrator in cases of dispute between the prince and the people, he governs the State during the rajah's minority, and in certain cases of bad administration, or barefaced exploitation of the people, the President has the power to depose the rajah and transfer his office to one of his relatives, after reducing his financial affairs to order. The autonomous States cover about one-third of the continent. A few, such as Mysore, Baroda, Travancore and Cochin are amongst the most advanced and the best administered portions of the country. They possess a parliament and have gone much further than British India in the path of demo-

cratic reform. On the other hand, the majority of the smaller rajahs are still absolute monarchs, and care little for the grievances of their subjects. It is understandable that the majority of the princes should be hostile to the national movement, and should tend rather to support England. They declare especially that they are bound by no treaties except with the Crown, and refuse to allow any other authority to intrude on their domains than that of the King-Emperor.

The Nehru report attempted to take the grievances of the princes into account. It takes the view that the judicial relations established by the treaties bind the rajahs not to the King of England in person but to the British Government. The Indian Parliament could, therefore, replace the Crown, and exercise its right of control over the princes while recognising the autonomy of their States. The rajahs would continue, therefore, under the new constitution; they would simply be required to introduce the parliamentary régime into their States, and would belong on the same footing as the provinces of British India to a Federation of Indian States, on the governing body of which they would be represented. The Nehru report seems likely to be accepted as to its main principles by the more enlightened princes such as the majority of the rajahs in the peninsula, many of whom already participate in the Nationalist movement. On the other hand, most of the petty princes in the North will not bring themselves to accept new ideas and will probably support the British Government.

A second and far more serious difficulty arises from the attitude of the Mohammedans. They are fairly numerous in India, and their numbers are

increasing (22·6 per cent. in 1881, 23·2 per cent. in 1901, 23·4 per cent. in 1911, 24 per cent. in 1921). They are for the most part concentrated in the North, as will be seen from the following statistics showing the distribution of the population in the various provinces according to the two great religions.

	Mohammedans Per cent.	*Hindus Per cent.*
North-West Frontier	91	7
Baluchistan	87	11
Punjab	55	43
Bengal	53	43
Assam	28	54
Bombay Presidency	19	77
United Provinces	14	85
Bihar and Orissa	10	82
Madras	6	88
Central Provinces	4	84
Burma	3	88

There has been from all time antagonism and opposition between Mohammedans and Hindus—an antagonism which arises from religious, political and economic causes. From the religious point of view, the Moslems, strict monotheists as they are, and believers in a God of spirit and of truth, feel the profoundest contempt for the Hindu masses, who adore a large number of divinities of every variety, including bulls, monkeys and other sacred animals, and who prostrate themselves before idols. For a Mohammedan, idolatry is the worst form of sacrilege, and their fanatical zeal often drives them to smash idols or to hinder the Hindu religious ceremonies by a thousand petty vexations.

On the other hand, as we have seen, Hinduism implies a respect for, and even the adoration of all

forms of life, since Brahma is to be found in every object of the world. The belief in the transmigration of souls has brought in its train the practice of vegetarianism, and this nation of farmers has been led to formulate and express its sense of communion with all nature in the cult of its food-giver, the peasant's only means of toil—the cow. When the Mohammedans publicly slaughter an ox or a cow according to their rites the Hindus regard it as an outrage and a challenge to their most cherished convictions.

Side by side with the religious opposition, there is the political and economic hostility to be taken into account. The Moslems invaded the Indo-Gangetic plain in the early Middle Ages, and for several centuries the Mogul Empire set the seal on their domination over all India. A small minority at first, they converted a large number of Hindu castes by force, especially in the Punjab and in Bengal, and thus swelled their ranks till they represented the larger part of the population in these two provinces. Their social customs, and in particular purdah, spread throughout the North of India. To-day, on the contrary, the Moslems feel themselves placed in an inferior position. Whether as great Zamindars, the relics of the ancient military aristocracy, or as cultivators on a small scale whose methods are particularly out of date, they represent an economic stage that is outgrown, and they find it hard to compete with the supple mind and the more original thought of the Hindus, who have no difficulty in supplanting them in public administrative offices and are their masters in economic life. Even in the districts where they are in the majority they are intellectually and economically an inferior class, and it is not without a certain measure of fear that they

view the birth of an autonomous India, in which they would be in danger of oppression by a Hindu majority.

This fear has grown during recent years through the aggressiveness of the Hindus, who have organised powerful religious and social movements in the North, such as the Arya Samaj, and, more recently, the Maha Sabha, which preaches the return to the Vedas, condemns the departures from them which orthodox Hindus had made and the custom of purdah, and seeks to develop the Hindi language and strengthen the Hindu communities in opposition to the other social groups. One section of the Maha Sabha, the Shruddi movement, has, in fact, specialised lately in the reconversion of communities which had previously turned to Mohammedanism or Christianity; and as it also insists on physical training for its members the Moslems have apparently some reason to fear that the Shruddi may carry out their conversions by force, as they themselves did in the time of their domination.

These various religious and political causes have contributed to set the Hindu and Moslem communities one against the other. In 1920, thanks, no doubt, to the close friendship which existed between the two chief Mohammedan leaders, the Ali brothers, and himself, and thanks also to his own decision to make a decided stand in favour of the Caliphate, Gandhi succeeded in winning over the Moslem masses and achieved for a time the unity of the Indian people. But since non-co-operation has been abandoned dissension has broken out again, and has, in fact, been aggravated by the 1919 reforms which, in providing separate electoral colleges for the various religious groups, with a guarantee of a certain number of seats,

have only served to strengthen ill-feeling, or at least to bring it more fully to light.*

* At the present moment outbreaks occur once a month at least throughout the whole country, and under any pretext. In 1924, an anti-Islamic pamphlet having been published at Kohat, the entire Moslem population rose in revolt; 155 persons were killed, several thousands wounded and all the Hindus had to leave the town. In June 1926 the Hindus walked in procession with a band round a mosque. A street battle ensued, involving 16 killed and 90 wounded. On June 26 a horse gave a kick in the middle of a bazaar in Delhi. The crowd imagined it had heard a revolver shot and Hindus and Moslems flew at each other's throats. The result was 3 killed and 600 wounded. During the whole year, in the Bombay Presidency, the Punjab, and the United Provinces alone, there were 40 street battles, entailing 299 killed and 2,600 wounded. On December 23 of the same year a Moslem fanatic assassinated Swami Scharannanda, the leader of the Shruddi movement. On July 8, 1927, disturbances broke out at Multan in the Punjab with 13 killed and 100 wounded. At Nagpur, in September, a Moslem procession leading a cow to the slaughter-house was the cause of a fight involving 19 killed and 1,223 wounded. The situation was further aggravated by the agitation of a Hindu writer, Rasha Rasul, who published a pamphlet entitled *The Merry Prophet*, containing accusations as false as they were offensive to the memory of Mahommed. The writer was prosecuted, and this was the occasion for fresh difficulties. In the first instance he was condemned, then acquitted on appeal, then a Moslem journalist and, later, several Hindu writers who had criticised the decisions of the tribunals in no unmeasured terms were all in turn found guilty of contempt of court. As a result disputes raged almost continuously, and the government was finally obliged to pass an Act in the National Assembly enabling it to inflict severe penalties for "any insult to the religion of a subject of His Majesty." In October 1927 a committee of Congress called a Unity Conference, which was attended in person by the principal leaders of Congress, the Ali brothers and Dr. Ansari on the Moslem side, and the missionary, C. F. Andrews. After a lengthy series of discussions the conference decided to condemn all conversion by force, and even conversion by means of persuasion in the case of persons under eighteen years of age; and all complaints in this respect were to be brought before an arbitration committee appointed by the conference. Moreover, "Hindus," the conference decided, "are free to hold processions accompanied by music while passing a mosque, but they must not stop nor make any special demonstration in the neighbourhood of the mosque. Similarly, the Moslems have the right to slaughter cows, but not in the street, nor in the vicinity of a temple, nor in the sight of Hindus." These decisions were excellent; unhappily, the two strongest religious organisations, the Muslim League and the Maha Sabha, not having officially taken part in the conference, they did not consider themselves bound by its decisions, which consequently remained a dead letter. Throughout 1928 and 1929 quarrels and street fighting continued.

From the political point of view the question is no nearer a solution. Although they are in the minority, the Moslems demand not only the judicial, social and religious guarantees common to all minorities, but they expect a certain number of seats to be reserved for them in the Legislative Assemblies in excess of those to which their electoral strength entitles them (30 per cent. in the National Assembly, although they constitute only 24 per cent. of the population ; and 60 per cent. in the Punjab and in Bengal where they represent 54 per cent. and 55 per cent. respectively). The 1919 reforms have met their demands to some extent by founding special electoral colleges for each religious community, but it is the very fact of connecting the opposition between one religion and another with the business of elections which has been one of the chief causes of the development of the sectarian spirit, and of the present difficulties. The Hindus are consequently in favour of universal suffrage with one single college and no guarantee of a minimum number of seats. Since 1923, repeated discussions on the subject have been held without any agreement being reached. Finally, in December 1928, the Nehru report made the following proposals, which have been adopted by the convention of all parties.

(1) The separation of Sind from the Bombay Presidency, and the introduction of the reforms in the North-West Frontier, which would enable the Moslems to be in the majority in four provinces out of ten.

(2) The abolition of separate electoral colleges, and the suppression of all guarantees of seats in the Punjab and Bengal where the Moslems are in the majority. A careful study of the population of these

provinces shows, in fact, that in the Punjab the Moslems have an enormous majority in fifteen districts, corresponding to 47 per cent. of the seats, while their majority is somewhat lower in three districts representing 10 per cent. of the seats. The Hindus and the Sikhs head the list in six districts with 30 per cent. of the seats, and three districts with 13 per cent. of the seats are about equally divided. If universal suffrage is introduced, therefore, the Moslems are practically certain to obtain at least 57 per cent. of the seats, and an uncertain proportion of the 13 per cent., that is to say, roughly 60 to 65 per cent. Similarly in Bengal, the distribution of the population in the different districts ensures them a certain minimum of 55 per cent. of the seats, and a probable 60 per cent. They have therefore absolutely nothing to fear from the intellectual and economic superiority of the Hindus, and would be better advised to respect law and order.

(3) On the other hand, for the provinces where the Moslems are in the minority and for the National Assembly, the Nehru report consents to a certain number of seats being reserved for Mussulman representatives, but only in strict proportion to their numbers, so that they would be entitled only to one-quarter of the seats in the National Assembly, and no longer 30 per cent. Further, the guarantee is accorded only for a transitional period of ten years, and is applicable also to the Hindu minorities of Baluchistan and Sind.

The report has been adopted by the great majority of the Hindus, and an important section of the Mohammedans. A large number of the latter, however, and in particular the Ali brothers, continue to demand the 30 per cent. guarantee for the National Assembly and the 60 per cent. for Bengal and the Punjab. The

Maha Sabha, on the other hand, has protested against the 25 per cent. guarantee in the National Assembly and the separation of Sind.

The antagonism between Hindus and Moslems is not the only one to divide the national movement. In the first place, other small religious bodies exist, the Buddhist, Christian and Sikh, who have an equal right to be protected. The Buddhists, who are concentrated chiefly in Burma amidst a tolerant Hindu majority, seem to have no oppression to fear; the Christians have decided to demand nothing beyond the guarantees granted to minorities by the Nehru report so as not to weaken the national movement further; but the Sikhs, who are congregated mainly in the Punjab, where they are in the minority in every district, and are faced by a Moslem majority that readily shows its intolerance, also exact a guarantee of a minimum number of seats in the legislature. Moreover, within Hinduism itself, in spite of recent reforms, dissension still exists between the various castes. The recently emancipated untouchables have not yet fully realised their position, and a number of them are inclined to make common cause with England through hatred of the Brahman oppression. The non-Brahmans are in the same case, and in the province of Madras they have formed into a powerful party which ruled the Legislative Assembly of the province for some years, and pursued a policy of somewhat clumsy attempts to annoy its adversaries which ensured the success of the Swarajist party at the ensuing elections.

Generally speaking, all the hostility between the religious and social communities which was latent in the national movement has been aggravated and

brought to light by the reforms of 1919. Each group, seeing that a fraction of power was placed within its reach, has sought to take full possession of it, and the various castes have fought bitterly for seats at elections or administrative posts, each seeking to assert its supremacy over the other communities. It may be said that the most obvious result of the 1919 reforms has been to sow dissension in the ranks of the Nationalist party, to set its members one against another and weaken its power of action.

But the gravest division of all is incontestably that arising from the class differences which came to light in 1922, and which have since become increasingly marked. There are, in reality, two very distinct tendencies in the national movement.

The landed proprietors, the captains of industry and the majority of the political leaders see in the Swaraj only a movement of political reform. They are convinced that the day England grants autonomy to India her worst difficulties will be solved, and they do not attach sufficient importance to economic and social problems. In their anxiety to preserve their own privileges they make no effort to encourage the trades union or co-operative movements. Quite on the contrary, they are suspicious of any intervention by the masses in the struggle, foreseeing the social consequences which could not fail to result. Whatever may be the verbal pronouncements of its leaders, it is certain that this upper-middle class will never really join issue with England, and will necessarily confine itself to constitutional opposition. That is why it condemns independence, which can only be won by a conflict, and is content to demand Home Rule, which can be obtained by a cunning mixture of

threats of insurrection and shrewd political negotiations. The Liberals and Independents, many members of the Nationalist party and a large number of the Swarajist leaders of the older generation are also tending in the same direction, and it is their point of view which triumphed in the publication of the Nehru report.

Side by side with these is the so-called extremist section, consisting of organisations of young men and a few groups of workmen who are beginning to make themselves heard. (At the Calcutta Congress, on January 2, 1929, a crowd of 25,000 workmen invaded the marquee where the meeting was in progress in order to state its claims. It required the personal intervention of Gandhi to persuade them to withdraw and allow the Congress to continue its deliberations.) For them the Swaraj represents a transformation that is not merely political but social. Their social ideal is, incidentally, somewhat vague ; if some among them have a certain sympathy for Communism, the greater number could better be defined as idealist and Utopian Socialists in the language of 1848. Their aim is to improve the lot of the workers, to organise and above all to emancipate the peasants by abolishing at one blow the three forms of exploitation represented by the State, the money-lender and the landowner. Their sympathies, therefore, are with the extremist ideal of complete independence, which can only be achieved by the intervention of the working-class and peasant masses. Nor do all of them associate non-violence with the doctrine of non-co-operation, of which all are firm partisans. This section contains a few of Gandhi's disciples, workmen, and the mass of the youth movement directed by Jahawarlal Nehru.

At the National Congress which was held at Lahore at the close of 1929, this last tendency appeared to have won the day. The hostility between rival religions declared itself as strongly as in the past, but as England had not replied to the ultimatum presented by the preceding congress, Hindus, Moslems and Sikhs alike adopted by a large majority Gandhi's resolution proclaiming the independence of India. The members of the Congress received orders to resign from all Legislative Assemblies and the executive committee of Congress received full powers to prepare a campaign of non-co-operation which was to culminate at a suitable moment in a movement of civil disobedience and a refusal to pay taxes.

In attempting now to indicate the probable course of India's evolution during the next years we will confine ourselves to two observations.

Despite the declarations of the Lahore Congress, it seems likely even now that England may yet succeed in calming the present disturbances without recognising the complete independence of India. Congress does not represent the whole of India, and even the declaration of independence is not the work of the entire congress at Lahore, but only of the extremist faction and of Gandhi's disciples. It would even seem as if by omitting to state definitely in his resolution at what moment the decisive struggle and the movement of civil disobedience should begin, Gandhi had wished to preserve the possibility of further negotiations and leave the door open for a better understanding. Moreover, great as the influence of Gandhi's personality may be, India does not seem ready at the moment to enter upon a struggle and launch successfully a general movement of non-co-operation. Congress in its

present form (and Gandhi's proposals of reorganisation were rejected at Lahore) is too chaotic, too much split up into hostile factions to be capable of undertaking a struggle of the kind. The antagonism between Hindus, Moslems and Sikhs is far from being smoothed away; the question of the princes has barely been considered; the workers' movement is not disposed to conform on all points to the dictates of Congress; the Liberal parties, Independents, members of the Nationalist party, and a large number even of the Swarajists are already showing hesitation in resigning from the Legislative Assemblies which, however, in their present form stand condemned by past experience. Finally, a fresh consequence of the reforms of 1919, which is of the utmost importance, must be taken into account. In the provinces a class has grown up of small capitalists, landed proprietors or heads of medium-sized industrial firms, who have no English education and speak only their local dialect. They do not attend, or at least do not speak at the National Congress when the discussions are held in English or in Hindi, but they play a most important part in the Provincial Assemblies, and are at times the real leaders of opinion in their region. They have not usually the culture or the knowledge of the leaders of Congress or of the Swarajist party, and their first attempts in local administration have not always been of the happiest, but they constitute in embryo a native lower-middle class with some local standing which, while remaining ardently patriotic, represents, nevertheless, a moderate and conservative element. These local magnates will probably join with the Liberals, Independents, and the greater part of the Nationalist party to avoid a rupture, and open peaceful negotiations with England.

Despite the absence of the Swarajists it seems, therefore, as if the conference shortly to be called by the Viceroy to discuss the future status of India will be sufficiently representative of Indian opinion for its decisions to be really valuable and effective. If, therefore, England makes no mistake, takes no measures of repression against the extremist elements, and proceeds rapidly with the negotiations to introduce Home Rule into India, it is probable that calm will be restored and that India will remain an integral part of the British Empire. There is every likelihood that this will be the case, for England has the good fortune to possess in India at the moment the very man best fitted to solve such weighty problems. Lord Irwin is respected and admired in all circles, and has shown himself capable, even after an attempt has been made on his life, of maintaining an impersonal view of the case, and perfect self-command. Similarly, in the mother country, no government could be more suited than the Labour Party now in power to understand the aspirations of the Indian people and do justice to their claims. It is therefore in the highest degree probable that India will very shortly be a Dominion within the British Empire. The native middle class will come into power and prepare the way gradually for a democratic system of government.* Slight improvements will be introduced in the situation of the peasant and the workman, without, however, realising any fundamental change. One must wait for the influence of the Indian bourgeoisie to increase, as the small and medium-sized national

* I say gradually because, at the moment, with a population 80 per cent. illiterate, the Government of India, even with a semblance of universal suffrage, will only be the government of a negligible minority.

industries progress at the expense of the large industry financed by the foreigner. It will then, on its own side, endeavour to shake off as far as possible the domination of British finance.

On the other hand, should England rouse public opinion unanimously against her by clumsy measures of repression such as the Rowlatt Bill of 1921, or the Bengal Ordinance Act of 1924, the Communist prosecutions of last year, or by displaying bad will in the matter of Home Rule,* the non-co-operation movement may break out as in 1921. In spite of the present discord, if England gives the impression that she is hesitating to make the necessary sacrifices, Gandhi will certainly achieve unity for a time and hurl his country into the battle. Once the masses have risen, he runs the risk, as in 1922, of being overwhelmed. The Indian revolution, if it takes place, will no doubt be principally non-violent, and achieve its object by the refusal to pay taxes and a general strike. But disturbances and sporadic acts of violence will inevitably occur in places, sufficiently, perhaps, to oblige Gandhi to give up the direction of the struggle. At all events, a swaraj thus won from England would lead to the complete independence of India, and would be accompanied by an agricultural revolution, the peasants' first act being to assert their liberty by driving the money-lender and the landlord from the village. The experiment of a Socialist government might then be tried, the Swarajist party

* The question is undeniably urgent. At its last meeting in February 1930 the executive committee of Congress has just bestowed full power on Gandhi to launch the movement of non-co-operation. If she wishes to avoid serious consequences, England should take the necessary measures and grant Home Rule with as little delay as possible (within a few months, at latest before the end of the year).

exercising the power with the support of the peasantry and the working class, nationalising the great foreign industries, and striving to develop the co-operative organisations in agriculture. The same problem would then arise as in the case of Russia. Is it possible in a country which is barely emerging from the stage in which the economic unit was a small locality, to achieve instantaneously a socialistic society? The experience of Russia seems decidedly to answer, No.

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