

CHAPTER XII

HISTORY OF THE GANDHI CULT

MUCH water had flowed down the Ganges between the inception of the Montagu Bill and the time when the Montford scheme of Reforms was put into operation. In 1919, 1920 and 1921, India was overtaken by a new wave of passion subsequently known as the non-co-operation movement.

India has been fortunately, and, in some matters, unfortunately, the country where, since the earliest dawn of history, there has been more speculation and experiment in metaphysics, theocracy, theology, sociology, theories of government, and domestic and state politics, than probably anywhere else in the world. From the highest concepts of the godhead and the most abstruse speculations of the Upanishads, and the Brahma Sutras, to the lowest and the most disgraceful details and rites of the Tantras and idol-worship on the one hand, and from the government by an intellectual aristocracy to village panchayets and tribal communism on the other, there has hardly been any theory, or practice of religion, or sociology, or government, which has not been tried in one stage or other of the country's history. India offers a more picturesque and complete museum of such experiments than perhaps all the other countries of the world put together.

In this chapter we shall deal with a problem which is almost unique in the story of our race. What is known to-day in India as "the non-co-operation movement" is an attempt to materialize in politics the immense potentialities of soul-force. The soul, as a dynamic force, is no new discovery in the history of Indian metaphysics, or in the spiritual practices of the Vedantist; and the realization of

its powers as a *summum bonum* has been one of the highest ideals of Indian mankind since the first Rika (the hymns) of the earliest Veda were composed and sung in the lonely valleys of the Aryavarta more than five thousand years ago.

Like all other peoples in the world, Indian mankind could not long forswear its material instincts and interests, as it grew in number and came to inhabit congested villages ; and with the passage of time the spirituality of life was shunted off to a side-track. We read in a passage in the Mahabharata that Duryadhana exhorted his kith and kin not to yield an inch of ground to anybody without a mortal combat. That shows how far the spirit of materialism had inoculated the body politic of ancient India long before the birth of Christ. In the course of the natural development of our material interests, a state of things soon followed which found expression in a life of inaction and apathy—earthly, as well as spiritual—very much helped by the conditions of a tropical climate. Whatever soul-force the Indian Aryan or the Brahmin may have developed in pre-historic days faded away as soon as India ceased to be a self-contained country, and came into contact with Persians and Greeks, Scythians, Pathans, Moguls, and other nomadic tribes of Central Asia. The soul, as a power to reckon with, was soon relegated to the background, and the hearth and the home, the womenfolk, the cattle and the harvests began to engage the principal attention of the Indian cultivator and the artisan. When the commerce of the world began to draw Asia and Europe together into a closer contact, India entered into a new phase of her life, and her spiritual interests survived only in traditions, and more often than not, in mere empty rituals.

After a hiatus of nearly fifty centuries, Mr. Gandhi has awakened us to the idea, once again, that man does not live by bread alone, and has, after all, such a thing as a soul, and that this soul holds in its ineluctable grip the fortune and destiny of Man.

With that idea, Mr. Gandhi had started a new campaign

in India in 1919, by which he was anxious to fight all the evils of our domestic and social life and the troubles and distempers of the body politic. It is curious that Count Tolstoy, who succeeded in inoculating Mr. Gandhi with the virus of the new spirit, had himself failed to propagate successfully the doctrine of "passive resistance" in his own country, or in any part of the western world.

Mr. Gandhi made his first experiment with this new idea in South Africa, where, for nearly ten years in the early part of this century, he had most willing materials to help him in its development and fruition. The Indian and Asiatic population in Natal and Transvaal, as soon as they were awakened to the position of their helplessness and isolation in a new country and a new clime, found in "passive resistance" a great weapon and a panacea. They soon gathered and rallied under the banner of Mr. Gandhi, then a young lawyer practising in Johannesburg, and began to defy anti-Asiatic legislations with such spirit of sacrifice that President Kruger and his lieutenants found the Indian problem perhaps the greatest of their difficulties. One of the reasons why England went to war with the Boers was openly declared by Joseph Chamberlain, then the Colonial Secretary in the Government of the United Kingdom, to be the Indian grievance against President Kruger—a grievance which had been brought to a head by Mr. Gandhi's "passive resistance" movement. After the Boer War was concluded and South Africa had been pacified and consolidated into a self-governing Dominion of the British Empire by the courageous statesmanship of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, many of the Indian grievances in the new Union were redressed, though not completely removed. A mission from India, with the late Gopal Krishna Gokhale as the principal negotiator, and Sir Benjamin Robertson, "on behalf of the Government of India", had been sent to the South African Union to see in what way the hard conditions of Indian life could be mitigated, and, in consequence of that mission, some further steps were taken by the Union Government and General Smuts to reconcile the Indians to their position in the new

scheme of things (the Smuts-Gandhi Agreement of 1914).¹ As soon as a satisfactory understanding of this question was arrived at, Mr. Gandhi transferred his activities from South Africa to India, and settled down in a colony, founded by himself at Sabarmati, in the neighbourhood of Ahmedabad in the Bombay Presidency, a part of India to which he belongs by birth.

After a period of schooling under the late Gopal Krishna Gokhale, and after taking some time to mature his plans, Mr. Gandhi emerged into Indian public life as a mighty champion of the down-trodden ryot. In 1916 and 1917 he interested himself in some agrarian trouble in the Kaira district, and came into the limelight in connection with a similar trouble in a Bihar district later on. It is amusing to recall the fact that Mr. Gandhi accepted membership and worked on a committee, appointed by the Government, with Sir Frank Sly, the late Governor of the Central Provinces, as its president, to enquire and report into the grievances of the Champaran peasantry. This was the beginning of a new awakening of the cultivating classes of India—a new consciousness of their rights and privileges as human beings. And this new spirit did not take long to percolate down to all the cultivating and industrial classes of India. To-day there is perhaps as great an industrial unrest and ferment in India as exists in any part of the Western world.

Since his return to India nearly sixteen years ago from his prolonged South African campaign, Mr. Gandhi had freely given expression to the idea that he did not find India—with

¹ When Mr. Gokhale visited South Africa in 1912, he made a preliminary settlement that if the Union Government did its utmost to remove the humiliation of the Indians in South Africa, Indian statesmen, on their part, would seek to relieve any panic in the minds of the South African people, lest Natal should be overwhelmed by Indian emigrants. Mr. Gandhi, then leader of the South African Indians, agreed to this, and he and General Smuts, the Union Premier, did their best to give effect to this understanding, which was known as the Gandhi-Smuts Settlement of 1914. It included a pledge that if any Indian settler wished to return to India, accepting the Union Government's bonus, he might do so on forfeiture of domicile. During the War, this agreement was faithfully kept by the Union Government, and no pressure was put upon the Indians to return. But after the War, there was a change in the situation, and ultimately came the Asiatic Bill applying pressure to Indians to leave the country.

her multitudinous population and with all the acute differences of speech, religion, habits and methods of life that obtain there—a suitable place for the practice of “passive resistance” or of civil disobedience as a remedy for any widespread popular grievance. But, in 1919, when the Rowlatt Bill¹ was being hustled through the Indian Legislative Council against the united opposition of all sections of the people in India, and was passed through it only to show how autocratic the Government was and how defiant it could be, Mr. Gandhi found the opportunity of his life.

Soon after this bill got through the Legislature and received viceregal assent, Mr. Gandhi entered an emphatic protest against the drastic provisions of the act and the manner of its passage through the Council. It was widely felt, not only by the Indian community, but by a very large section of liberal Englishmen, that the Rowlatt Act was a measure of great iniquity. In ordinary circumstances, under the peculiar conditions of Indian life, and under the inspiration of all our previous traditions, an agitation against such a colossal blunder would have driven sedition underground, and would probably have led thousands of impatient idealists in India to follow the methods of Irish Sinn Fein or the communism of the Third International at Moscow. But, for the first time in the history of India, the redress of Indian grievances was now sought not by methods of secret revolt or armed resistance, but by means of a quite different and novel weapon. Mr. Gandhi decided, and decided with extraordinary force and precision, that a weak, helpless, and disorganized people, like the Indian, had no other alternative left to it but to resist the strength of the Anglo-Indian Government with a stubborn moral force. To pit moral or soul-force against physical strength—the organized strength of the Government established by law and maintained by a

¹ This is an Act which was passed in the old Indian Legislative Council, during the viceroyalty of Lord Chelmsford, in which the liberties of the people were placed in a certain measure at the mercy of the bureaucracy, the outstanding features being summary arrest and summary trial and hardly any appeals. The measure was placed in the Indian Statute Book for a temporary period of three years, and was never put into operation during its existence.

huge standing army—that was the procedure which Mr. Gandhi thought was the only way to meet the requirements of the Indian situation. This determination to measure the strength of two different forces was an extraordinary step, unprecedented not only in the annals of India, but in the whole history of the human race.

This was, then, the great illumination of the new Indian prophet, but Mr. Gandhi, for obvious reasons, did not, or could not, translate this new idea into practical politics all at once, or bring it into requisition in any practical shape for a long time. In the meantime he felt that something must be done, and, as a preparation for the campaign of “non-co-operation”, he began with an apparently simple programme of elementary discipline for the people of India.

With this end in view, he introduced the “Satyagraha” movement, as a disciplinary measure for the purpose of self-purification.¹ He started with the idea that serious evils had accumulated in Indian life as a result of our contact with Western civilization and materialism, and that we should try to purge these evils before we could forge forward towards self-realization and Swaraj.

Self-purification was, therefore, the first stage in Mr. Gandhi's programme, and a life of plain living and high thinking, of denial of pleasures and luxuries, of sacrifice of material interest, of an acceptance of truth (Satyagraha) at all costs, was enunciated as the basic principle of this new cult. Knowing the Indian people as he did, he insisted that at the background of all his teachings there should stand out in all our action and thought the great motive power of “ahimsa”—the absence of any spirit of hate and vindictiveness—a dogma which, under the inspiration of another great

¹ The Satyagraha pledge ran thus :—

‘ Being conscientiously of opinion that the Bills are unjust, subversive of the principle of liberty and justice, and destructive of the elementary rights of individuals, on which the safety of the community as a whole and the state itself is based, we solemnly affirm that in the event of these Bills becoming law and until they are withdrawn, we shall refuse civilly to obey these laws and such other laws as may be thought fit and further affirm that in this struggle we will faithfully follow truth and refrain from violence to life, person and property.’

Indian teacher had galvanized Indian mankind almost beyond recognition five centuries before Christ was born.

As the first demonstration of this new disciplinary propaganda, as well as a protest against the passage of the Rowlatt Act, Mr. Gandhi proclaimed April 6th, 1919, the second Sunday after the Rowlatt Act had received viceregal assent, as a day of general mourning and cessation of business. When April 6th came, it found India extraordinarily responsive and willing. All cities and towns and villages in India struck work on that day, and obeyed Mr. Gandhi in a manner which must have exceeded his wildest expectations; but unfortunately there was one drawback. Mr. Gandhi's wishes were carried out everywhere, but, in some places, in a spirit quite in conflict with the great doctrine of "ahimsa", or non-violence.

Law and order were defied at Delhi, and the police and the people came into sharp conflicts in many other places. What with agrarian troubles, scarcity, forcible recruitment of soldiers to supply man power to the Allies and Mr. Gandhi's externment¹, the Punjab was in a ferment and seething with discontent. Above all the story of the Rowlatt Act had been exaggerated by wicked wire-pullers and mischievous agitators. It was believed in some quarters that attempts were even made to tamper with the loyalty of the Indian Army. The emissaries of the Third International at Moscow and the agents of the Court of Kabul, with the red Bolshevik Programme in their pockets, were rushing about in all parts of these provinces to create trouble and discontent against British rule. The powder being dry, the exaggerated reports of the provisions of the Rowlatt Act acted as a lighted torch. Then occurred the atrocities of Amritsar and Jallianwallabagh, and the proclamation of martial law in Amritsar, Lahore, Gujranwalla and other places under the orders of Sir Michael O'Dwyer. Martial law has been described by an English political philosopher of considerable repute as only "a fine name for the negation of all law", and, under this cover, a

¹ Under orders of Sir Michael O'Dwyer, the then ruler of the Punjab, Mr. Gandhi was prohibited from entering that province.

real reign of terror was established in Amritsar and in Lahore by the late General Dyer and Lt.-Col. Frank Johnson respectively. Curfew orders were promulgated, flogging was administered, students were expelled from schools and colleges, and the famous crawling order was promulgated.

Chitta Ranjan Das at this stage threw himself into the eddying currents of Indian politics as one of the members of a non-official Committee appointed by the Congress to enquire into, and report on, the atrocities committed at these places, and on the administration of martial law which followed them. On this Committee, Chitta Ranjan and Mr. Gandhi came into personal contact for the first time, and established that intimate relation which remained the most outstanding alliance in contemporary Indian public life.

A few months after the massacre of Jallianwallabagh came the Treaty of Sèvres which infuriated Indian Mussalmans to white heat. Shortly afterwards, the leaders of the Khilafat movement, which aimed at seeing the temporal and spiritual powers of the " Caliph " (the Sultan of Turkey) restored to their pristine glory, joined hands with Mr. Gandhi, and truce was made between the two warring communities of India, the Hindus and the Moslems. This came as a great surprise to the Indian political and social world.

At this stage, Mr. Gandhi's movement began to languish as a " Satyagraha ", or a mere psychic, propaganda, and took the shape of an intensive political agitation.

The publication of the Congress Sub-Committee's Report on the Punjab Tragedy (of 1919), the minority Report of Lord Hunter's Committee of Enquiry, signed by Sir Chimanlal Setalvad of Bombay and Mr. Jagat Naryan of Lucknow, began to show the weaknesses and defects of British administration in India, and the extraordinary sympathy shown to Sir Michael O'Dwyer, and the purse of three lakhs of rupees presented to the late General Dyer by his friends and admirers as a reward for the massacre of Jallianwallah Bagh, exasperated Indian opinion beyond description. About the beginning of the year 1920, Mr. Gandhi began to

characterize the Government of India as "satanic", and wanted all people to keep their "hands off" such a Government. This was the beginning of the great agitation which is now generally known as the "non-co-operation" movement.

In September, 1920, a special session of the Indian National Congress met in Calcutta under the presidency of Lala Lajpat Rai, and gave its seal and sanction to Mr. Gandhi's new movement. Chitta Ranjan opposed the resolution, from the start, with a vehemence all his own. It is believed that on the acceptance of the non-co-operation resolution by the Congress, Chitta Ranjan and some of his Bengali friends were thinking of seceding from that body. But the wise and patriotic intervention of Aswini Kumar Dutt prevented them from committing this political *hari kari*. Students were advised by the Congress to withdraw from government aided schools and colleges, lawyers to abandon practice in the British courts, title-holders to give up their honours received from the Government, and intending candidates for the new elections for the reconstituted Councils to withdraw from the contest. In pursuance of this resolution of the Congress, the classrooms in most of the schools and colleges were emptied, and several lawyers in different provinces suspended their practice.

The rest of the story of the non-co-operation movement may be briefly summarized. While, in the Congress in Calcutta in September, 1920, Chitta Ranjan Das opposed Mr. Gandhi's idea of the initiation of the non-co-operation movement, three months after, at Nagpur, he entered into a secret pact with Mr. Gandhi (known as the Das-Gandhi pact) by which each promised the other freedom of propaganda in his own sphere, for the future. As soon as this pact was entered into, Chitta Ranjan became a complete convert to the non-co-operation idea, and came forward to move the resolution on the subject with great force and fervour, the entire Congress noticing this change as a great personal triumph of Mr. Gandhi. From this day forward Chitta Ranjan became one of the stoutest supporters of the new movement, and on his return to Calcutta from Nagpur, he

suspended his practice and renounced the habits of smoking and drinking, and free indulgence in modern luxuries and creature comforts to which unfortunately he had fallen a hopeless victim, and began to live the life of a political and spiritual ascetic.

In April, 1921, Lord Chelmsford retired from the viceroyalty and Lord Reading succeeded him. Mr. Gandhi did not proclaim any "hartal" or "strike" on the arrival of Lord Reading in India; on the contrary he treated him with some consideration and ceremony, as he had done, three months before, the Duke of Connaught, when he came out to inaugurate the reconstituted Councils of the Empire. His conduct in this matter was guided by the idea that it was his duty to make war against the system of government that obtains in this country, and not to attack or offer any insult to any person in particular. In the beginning of the month of May, Mr. Gandhi himself went to Simla and had several interviews with the new Viceroy, thus co-operating, for once, with the head of a Government which he had himself described a few months ago as "satanic", and from whose upas shadow he had advised all his countrymen to keep away.

In the meantime the All-India Congress Committee had met at Bezwada (in the Andhra country of the Madras Presidency) and drafted a new programme to accelerate the "non-co-operation" movement. This programme was a cry for "men, money, and munitions", by which Mr. Gandhi and his friends meant the enlistment of ten million of members in the various Congress Committees in the country, the raising of the same number of rupees for the "Tilak Swarajya Fund"—started in memory of the late Bal Gangadhar Tilak for the establishment of Swaraj in India—and the introduction of twenty lakhs of spinning-wheels into the various homesteads of India. This new programme was drafted with a view to make India independent of British rule, British trade and commerce, and of British schemes of law and order. At the end of July, 1921, there was held another meeting of the All-India Congress Committee in Bombay, in which the boycott of foreign clothes was included as an additional and



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prominent item in the new movement, the idea being that India could be made independent of British goods and trade connection.

Following the resolutions of the Bezwada and Bombay meetings, an attempt was made by Chitta Ranjan Das to raise a large number of national volunteers in Bengal with the primary object of boycotting and replacing the sale of Manchester piece goods by Indian hand-woven *khaddar*. The activities of these young volunteers soon became a grave cause of anxiety to Clive Street, and the Government of Bengal took unusual measures to watch and check this new propaganda. Soon after this volunteering activity was attacked by an official notification that it was an illegal movement. In the autumn of 1921, several thousands of young men were clapped into prison all over Bengal for defying this order, and, early in December, Chitta Ranjan Das' wife and sister were arrested in a public street in Calcutta for hawking *khaddar*. Srimati Basanti Devi and her sister-in-law were, however, released as soon as they were arrested, but the fact that the government had not hesitated to touch such respectable ladies for such a paltry offence left the public mind boiling with indignation.

When the volunteering activity in Bengal reached its high water mark, and thousands of young men had courted the hospitality of His Majesty's prisons, Mr. Gandhi and Pundit Madan Mohan Malaviya entered into pourparlers with the new Viceroy for widening the basis of the Montagu constitution. The conversations proved sterile, and Congress work and propaganda in the country were again pushed actively.

But before the Bombay or the Bezwada programme could be put through on an efficient basis, the activity of the Congress was paralysed by a series of unfortunate and unforeseen riots at Chauri Chaura, Gorakhpur, Madras and Bombay. The working committee of the Congress met in a panic at a place called Bardoli, under the presidency of Mr. Gandhi, and adopted the following resolutions, pulling up Congress work throughout the country.

(1) The Working Committee deplors the inhuman conduct of the mob at Chauri Chaura, in having brutally murdered constables and wantonly burned the police thana, and tenders its sympathy to the families of the bereaved.

(2) In view of nature's repeated warnings, every time mass civil disobedience has been imminent, some popular violent outburst has taken place, indicating that the atmosphere in the country is not non-violent enough for mass civil disobedience, the latest instance being the tragic and terrible events at Chauri Chaura, near Gorakhpur, the Working Committee of the Congress resolves that mass civil disobedience contemplated at Bardoli and elsewhere be suspended and instructs the local Congress Committee forthwith to advise the cultivators to pay the land revenue and other taxes due to the Government and whose payment might have been suspended in anticipation of mass civil disobedience and instructs them to suspend every other preparatory activity of an offensive nature.

(3) The suspension of mass civil disobedience shall be continued till the atmosphere is so non-violent as to ensure non-repetition of popular atrocities such as at Gorakhpur, or hooliganism such as at Bombay and Madras respectively on the 17th November, 1921, and 13th January, 1922.

(4) In order to promote a peaceful atmosphere, the Working Committee advise till further instructions, all Congress organizations to stop activities specially designed to court arrest and imprisonment, save normal Congress activities including voluntary hartals wherever an absolutely peaceful atmosphere can be assured, and for that end all picketing shall be stopped, save for the bona fide and peaceful purpose of warning the visitors to liquor shops against the evils of drinking. Such picketing to be controlled by persons of known good character and specially selected by the Congress Committee concerned.

(5) The Working Committee advises, till further instructions, the stoppage of all volunteer processions and public meetings merely for the purpose of defiance of the notifications regarding such meetings. This, however, shall not interfere

with the private meetings of the Congress and other committees or public meetings which are required for the conduct of the normal activities of the Congress.

(6) Complaints having been brought to the notice of the Working Committee that ryots are not paying rents to the zemindars, the Working Committee advises Congress workers and organizations to inform the ryots that such withholding of rent is contrary to the resolutions of the Congress and that it is injurious to the best interests of the country.

(7) The Working Committee assures the zemindars that the Congress movement is in no way intended to attack their legal rights, and even that where the ryots have grievances the Committee desire that redress should be sought by mutual consultations and by the usual recourse to arbitrations.

(8) Complaints having been brought to the notice of the Working Committee that in the formation of volunteer corps great laxity prevails in the selection and that insistence is not laid on the full use of handspun and hand-woven *khaddar*, and on the full observance by Hindus of the rule as to the removal of untouchability, nor is care being taken to ascertain that the candidates believe fully in the observance of non-violence in intent, word and deed, in the terms of the Congress resolution, the Working Committee calls upon all Congress organizations to revise their lists and remove from them the names of all such volunteers as do not strictly conform to the requirements of the pledge.

(9) The Working Committee is of opinion that unless Congressmen carry out to the full the Congress constitution and the resolutions from time to time issued by the Working Committee, it is not possible to achieve its objects expeditiously or at all.

(10) Whereas the Gorakhpur tragedy is a powerful proof of the fact that the mass mind has not yet fully realized the necessity of non-violence as an integral, active, and chief part of mass civil disobedience, and whereas the reported indiscriminate acceptance of persons as volunteers in contravention of the Congress instructions betrays want of appreciation of a vital part of Satyagraha, and whereas in the

opinion of the Working Committee the delay in the attainment of the national aim is solely due to the weak and incomplete execution in practice of the constitution of the Congress, and with a view to perfecting the internal organization, the Working Committee advise all Congress organizations to be engaged in the following activities :

(1) To enlist at least one crore of members of the Congress. Note : (1) Since peace (non-violence and legitimacy), and truth are the essence of the Congress creed, no person should be enlisted who does not believe in non-violence, and truth as indispensable for the attainment of Swaraj. The creed of the Congress must therefore be carefully explained to each person who is appealed to to join the Congress. Note : (2) the workers should note that no one who does not pay the annual subscription can be regarded as a qualified Congress man. All the old members are therefore to be advised to register their names.

(2) To popularize the spinning wheel and organize the manufacture of handspun and hand-woven *khaddar*. Note : (1) To this end all workers and office-bearers should be dressed in *khaddar*, and it is recommended that with a view to encourage others they should themselves learn hand-spinning.

(3) To organize national schools. Note : No picketing of Government schools should be resorted to ; but reliance should be placed upon the superiority of national schools in all vital matters to command attendance.

° (4) To organize the depressed classes for a better life, to improve their social, mental and moral condition, to induce them to send their children to national schools, and to provide for them the ordinary facilities which other citizens enjoy. Note : whilst, therefore, where the prejudice against the untouchables is still strong in places, separate schools and separate wells must be maintained out of Congress funds, every effort

should be made to draw such children to national schools and to persuade the people to allow the untouchables to use the common wells.

(5) To organize the temperance campaign against the people addicted to the drink habit by house to house visits, and to rely more upon appeal to the drinker in his home than upon picketing.

(6) To organize village and town "panchayats" for the private settlement of all disputes, reliance being placed solely upon the force of public opinion and the truthfulness of "panchayat" decisions to ensure obedience to them. Note: In order to avoid even the appearance of coercion, no social boycott should be resorted to against those who will not obey the "panchayats'" decisions.

(7) In order to promote and emphasize unity among all classes and races and mutual good-will, the establishment of which is the aim of the movement of non-co-operation, to organize a social service department that will render help to all irrespective of differences of caste, creed, or nationality in times of illness or accident. Note: A non-co-operator whilst firmly adhering to his creed will deem it a privilege to render personal service in case of illness or accident to every person whether English or Indian.

(8) To continue the Tilak Memorial Swaraj Fund and to call upon every Congressman or Congress sympathiser to pay at least one hundredth part of his annual income for the year 1921. Every province to send every month 25 per cent of its income from the Tilak Memorial Swaraj Fund to the All-India Congress Committee.

Soon after the above resolution was passed at Bardoli, Mr. Gandhi and his lieutenants found the entire non-co-operation movement tottering on its last legs. Mr. Gandhi clearly saw the mischief that the Bardoli resolution

was causing throughout Congress circles all over the country, and a very large and important part of it was recanted at a meeting of the All-India Congress Committee held in Delhi a few weeks later. When Mr. Gandhi assented to the virtual scrapping of the Bardoli resolution, it was feared in some quarters that the limit of official tolerance of a seditious propaganda had been reached, and he was put under arrest in March, 1922, on a charge of sedition. A few days later, he himself pleaded guilty to the charge, and was sentenced to six years' simple imprisonment.

With the incarceration of Mr. Gandhi early in 1922, the non-co-operation movement practically collapsed in all branches. We have noticed the failure of the boycott of the schools and the courts immediately after he was put into prison, and during the last few months of his prison life at Poona a section of his followers, under the leadership of Chitta Ranjan Das, had gone back upon his idea of the boycott of the Councils and had invaded the new provincial and the central Legislatures in large numbers in the general election of 1923.

When Mr. Gandhi retired to Juhu on medical advice for the restoration of his health after his operation and release, he found that the helm of the Congress craft was no longer in his hands and that a new steersman had taken his place. In 1924, Mr. Gandhi entered into a pact with Chitta Ranjan Das in Calcutta, surrendering his political conscience to the great Bengali leader. Next year, after Chitta Ranjan's death, he surrendered to the All-India Congress Committee his favourite yarn franchise (*khaddar* subscription) for members of the Congress, and after the Cawnpore Congress was over in the last week of the year (1925), he finally announced his decision to withdraw from politics altogether for one year.

In the above pages, we have just given a running account of the inception of, and the principal events in, the non-co-operation movement in India, and we shall now discuss some of the outstanding features and implications of the movement. When "Satyagraha" was started as a purificatory movement, it made little appeal to the Indian

people, but when " ahimsa " ceased to operate as its dominant feature, it at once captured the popular imagination and soon developed into a mass movement. The Punjab tragedies of 1919 furnished the necessary fuel for this fierce racial fire. Later on, the humiliation imposed on Turkey by the Allied Powers over the Treaty of Sèvres was made the occasion by Indian Mussalmans of a bitter crusade against England for her part in the Treaty. A movement that evidently could not thrive and flourish on " ahimsa " began to spread like a prairie fire as soon as it took the form of an intensive political propaganda, and reached a climax when the Prince of Wales arrived in India in November, 1921.

The above points to two morals: one is that no mass movement is possible, which is not based on the elemental passions of mankind. And the second is, that of love and hate, hate is certainly the stronger and the dominant passion in the human heart.

Though Mr. Gandhi's movement has failed to provide for the reconstruction of Indian life, it would be inaccurate to describe it as wholly sterile, or as mere froth and bubble upon waters lashed to fury by a political storm. Politically, it has given a great stimulus to national renaissance, having for the first time brought together the classes and the masses, the Hindus and Mussalmans, into one line of common political thought. That must be considered an outstanding gain, so long as man regards nationalism and patriotism as a great point in social progress. As an anti-British movement, it has achieved much greater success than even its wildest advocates had ever expected. It succeeded in bringing British authority into contempt for a time, and in temporarily damaging British prestige and dignity, from the capital of the Empire to the tiniest villages in the remote interior.

Let us take the Gandhi programme item by item, and see how far each item has succeeded in realizing Mr. Gandhi's dreams. The Hindu-Mahomedan alliance was the boldest experiment in the Gandhi campaign—bold in its idealism and bold in its conception—but it was evidently a scheme which counted results before they were apparent. Since the dawn

of history, nothing has caused greater strife and discord between man and man than religion, or, in the more expressive language of Thomas Carlyle, "religiosity". Nothing has been a more fruitful source of bloodshed and carnage in the history of this world than the efforts and anxiety of the human soul to seek salvation and immortality in some particular way and through some particular rituals. Nothing has retarded the progress of the human race so effectively and so successfully as the evolution, or the fanaticism, of "faith". The struggles between Heathenism and Christianity in early Rome, the feuds between Buddhism and Hinduism in India about the sixth and seventh century A.D., and the wars of the Crusades at a later date—which brought Europe and the Near East into a welter of international carnage—are the most outstanding illustrations of our point. The fact is that nothing stirs the human passions so violently as one's own "faith", which always fights shy of "reason". In an atmosphere where the reign of reason has not been established "faith" will always mean blind prejudice and remain the source or the fountain spring of action and interaction of exclusive dogmas.

In European countries, where the reign of reason has supplanted the reign of faith, society is no longer disturbed by religious differences. Yet, in Europe, the difference between Roman Catholicism and the Greek Church, and between Protestantism and the creed of the Vatican, is still potent to stir now and again the worst human passions. In Western Europe, the Emerald Isle still remains a sad example of what havoc religious differences may yet create in our day. Turning to the East and to our own country we find that, in spite of many synthetic factors—such as common laws, common administration and a general community of interest—it has been found impossible to weld the different peoples of India into a homogeneous nationality. In 1919, Mr. Gandhi, like the great Akbar, took upon himself the task of materializing the dream of a common federation of man in this land, "to hush for ever the menacing poison of intolerant priests, those cobras ever setting up their hoods". At one

time, it looked as if Mr. Gandhi was within an ace of success in establishing his social millennium, and like Akbar's dream he would be able

“ Stone by stone to raise a sacred fane,
A temple, neither Pagod, Mosque nor Church,
But loftier, simpler, always open door'd
To every breath from heaven.”

But this dream remains as unrealized to-day as ever, few people having come to worship at this new tabernacle. Hindus might join hands with Moslems to find a big stick to beat the English with, and sink, for the time being, the differences of their ideals and temperament, but the fact has been conveniently forgotten by large classes of our people that politics cannot permanently cover such fundamental differences.

If large numbers of Roman Catholics and Protestants of different nationalities are living side by side in harmony in the United States, in Canada and in Switzerland, they have only succeeded in doing so by rounding off their religious prejudices and developing a common secular culture. In India, a common culture is unthinkable with nearly ninety per cent of the population steeped in absolute ignorance, divided by more than a hundred different languages and a thousand castes and all drawing their intellectual nourishment from intolerant dogmas preached by fanatical pundits and mad mullahs. The Moplah, the Bhagalpore, and the Chauri Chaura riots of 1921, and later the Multan and Amritsar riots, together with the acute differences that have recently arisen between the Hindus and the Mahomedans over the “Suddhi” and the Sangathan movements¹ in the United Provinces and the Punjab and the bitterness and feuds generated between them over the question of Hindu processional music before mosques in Calcutta and other

¹ These are organizations started by Swami Shraddananda (Lala Munshi Ram) to bring back into the fold of Hinduism certain classes of converts to Islam who were originally Hindus, and to consolidate the ties and bonds of Hindus all over the country. This great Hindu social reformer was assassinated in his home at Delhi by a Mahomedan by the name of Abdul Rashid in December, 1926.

parts of Bengal have revealed the fact that our differences are too deep to be easily overcome.

When all the various aspects of this complicated national question is considered, one is bound to admit that neither the processional music of the Hindu nor the political ambition of the Mahomedans is the real or the root cause of the rupture of the Hindu-Mahomedan understanding. These have only been used as covers or pretexts, while the principal causes of antagonism between them lie deep down in the blood of each of these warring communities. Three years ago, the abduction of Hindu women by fanatical Mahomedans became so prevalent in rural Bengal that the Hindus found it necessary to organize a Women's Protection League to prevent crimes of this nature in remote districts of the province.

Only on the basis of a common secular culture can a nationality be built up in these days—either in the East or in the West. This development must be real, genuine, and sincere, and no camouflage or bluff can be expected to solve such an outstanding national issue. Chitta Ranjan devoted the greater part of his later life to the formation of a Hindu-Moslem alliance based on practical politics rather than on the idealism of Mr. Gandhi.

As in the case of the Hindu-Mahomedan problem, so also in the case of the solution of the educational problem of India, Mr. Gandhi miscalculated the signs of the times and built his hopes on very slender materials. In his enthusiasm for his new-fangled scheme of national education, he completely overlooked the conditions of present-day Indian life and the requirements of the Indian people. In his campaign on behalf of "national education", he had secured the unstinted and loyal co-operation of Chitta Ranjan, and, between them they not only succeeded in raising a large sum of money, but also in establishing hundreds of these schools throughout the province. These schools got into fashion with the people for a few months, and at one time Ashutosh Mookerjee, the then Vice-Chancellor of the Calcutta University, became extremely nervous over the future of the great educational institution at College Square. The University

classes and most of the schools and colleges in Calcutta and outside were being deserted, even scholarship holders abandoning their stipends. A large number of brilliant students who had joined the University affiliated schools and colleges as teachers and professors would have nothing more to do with them, and got themselves attached to the staff of the new national schools without any consideration or payment. Hardly a year had gone round when the people awakened to their mistake and the national schools were deserted as hastily as they had been established twelve months before. The point is, that the older schools and colleges catered for the profession and the material occupations of Indian life, while the national schools held out no prospects before their Indian students. As soon as the people awoke to this situation, the spirit of idealism had to yield to the exigencies of practical politics, and the propaganda of national education vanished into thin air.

One of the most noticeable features of Bengali life during the non-co-operation agitation was the failure, unlike the other great movements of the world, of the Gandhi cult to make any impression on Bengali arts, science, music and letters. While the Partition days fostered renaissance in arts and letters, the spirit of the non-co-operation times failed to give to any Bengali any new thoughts, ideals or inspiration. Excepting Rabindra Nath Tagore and Sarat Chandra Chatterjee, who had already come to occupy very distinguished places in the world of letters before the Gandhi cult came into vogue, no writer came into prominence in the period under review. During this time, however, a large number of books were published by ex-members of revolutionary societies, recanting their old pet theories of a short cut to Swaraj. Upendra Nath Bandopadhaya's *Story of an Exile*, Barindra Kumar Ghose and Ullasker Dutt's reminiscences and impressions of prison life, Bhupendra Nath Dutt's *Unpublished Political History of India*, Nalim Kishore Guha's *Story of the Revolutionary Movement in Bengal*, and Sachindra Nath Sanyal's *My Prison Life*, are some of the most interesting literary products of the period. In this

connection may be mentioned Sarat Chandra Chatterjee's *Pather Dabi*, the *Right of Way*, a book which describes the revolutionary mind of Bengal in a wonderfully faithful manner. This is the only book in Bengali of which the first edition of three thousand copies was sold before it could reach the booksellers' hands, and, within a month of its publication, was being sold in the market at double its original price. It may be noted here that the theme of Sarat Chandra's book is the very antithesis of the Gandhi spirit, and in consequence it was proscribed a few months later by the local government.

In consequence of the high hopes built by the people on Mr. Gandhi's propaganda for the attainment of Swaraj, commerce, trade and industries were also equally neglected in Bengal. In this respect there was a striking contrast with the years of the Partition Agitation (the first Boycott Agitation in Bengal) from 1906 to 1910. In those days two jute mills, a few cotton mills, a tobacco factory and hundreds of small factories were established by Indian enterprise and capital. The local credit societies all received a great stimulus, and in many districts they were reorganized and reinforced with new men and money. The Bengal National Bank, which had to be closed only a few months ago,¹ was established in 1907 and came to the rescue of many struggling infant industries. The Hindusthan Insurance Society and a National Insurance Company took away from the European firms at that time a large amount of insurance business, and the cry everywhere was for more investment in Indian industries and more patronage to indigenous production. During the non-co-operation agitation, all the material forces of a modern civilization were practically forgotten and neglected till a period of great industrial boom (1919-1921) was succeeded by a period of ever increasing economic depression. During this period the only industry that the people took very kindly to, and were insistentlly urged by leader after leader to follow, through good report and evil, was the pursuit of the *charka* (the spinning wheel). At one time the

¹ Compulsorily liquidated by order of the High Court at Calcutta in August, 1927.

hope was largely entertained that the pursuit of the *charka* would automatically usher in a period of Swaraj in this country. With the incarceration of Mr. Gandhi, in March, 1922, the *charka* movement received a great set-back and these whilom symbols of Indian independence and prosperity were relegated to the scrap-heap.

Chitta Ranjan had never pinned his faith to the cult of the *charka*, and this led to the formation of the Swarajya Party in 1922, to carry on the non-co-operation campaign more effectively from within the Councils.

Socially, the most important item in the Gandhi cult is the elevation of the position of Indian women. As a principle of social and domestic conduct, orthodox and conservative families—which constitute over seventy-five per cent of the Indian population—have generally accepted this principle of life. Many respectable Indian ladies are coming out of the *purdah* and are anxious to take a hand in the public movements of their country. Even the love for jewellery and for fine clothes has given way in most Bengali homes to a life of plain living and public service. Not only are women presiding over provincial conferences, heading political processions, and addressing vast audiences from the rostrum of the Indian National Congress, but some of them have been admitted into the municipal corporations of many cities and are sharing responsibility for their civic administration. Recently, in Bengal, Madras, the Punjab and in Bombay, and in the Indian States of Travancore, Cochin and Jhalawar, they have been conceded the franchise for the Council elections. Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, the most gifted daughter of Bengal, presided over the session of the Indian National Congress held in Cawnpore (December, 1925) and a woman occupies the position of the Deputy President of the Legislative Council of Madras to-day.¹

¹ Yet in spite of the stimulus given by the Gandhi movement to the cause of women's education and emancipation no woman of Bengal has to-day a place in the local Legislative Council, in the University of Dacca, in the Corporation of Calcutta and in the municipal and district Boards anywhere in the province. At the last election of councillors for the Calcutta Corporation held in March, 1927, ladies contested two seats but unfortunately both were defeated.

As for removing the stigma of untouchability from the "panchama" and the depressed classes, Mr. Gandhi's campaign cannot be considered very successful, and nowhere does the condition of these submerged classes appear to have been appreciably alleviated. Though Mr. Gandhi never lacked courage to wound communal susceptibilities, he has been wise enough not to attack the citadels of the Indian caste-system or the debasing influences of idolatry, or the system of early marriages, or enforced widowhood—customs which have atrophied and paralysed the life of the nation for centuries. The majority of Indian mankind still refuse to make any considerable advance in social ideas and conventions, though progress along these lines cannot be said to have been quite negligible.

Caste and idolatry Mr. Gandhi has certainly abstained from attacking in an open fight, but no student of contemporary social economy can deny that he has considerably undermined their influence by elevating the condition of the depressed classes—and by removing their untouchability, by the greater currency of inter-caste dining, by lifting the purdah to a very large extent, by trying to bring Hindus and Moslems together on one platform of common understanding, by urging on the necessity and wisdom of manual labour for all classes of people, and by putting his foot down on the slaughter of animals before Hindu gods. .

And there are one or two matters, at any rate, in which Mr. Gandhi seems to have attained remarkable and unique success. Long before the arrival of Mr. "Pussyfoot" Johnson in India, Mr. Gandhi had practically succeeded in making large portions of India "dry". Excepting among Indians returned from England and other foreign countries and wage-earning factory operatives and certain classes of hill-men, drinking spirituous liquors is considered now almost as a crime against morality and social purity.

The ideal of plain living appeals to Indian mankind more probably than any other nation in the world; yet the Indian masses refuse to be moved by Mahatma Gandhi's earnest

appeals to their sentiments to give up foreign articles in their possession, to abandon the luxuries they can afford to pay for, and to direct all their time and attention to the realization of their spiritual and political ideals by the intensive cultivation of the *charka* and soul-force. It is true that the masses are elevated to a higher plane of life, not by the slow process of individual development and culture, but only when their imaginations are caught at a psychological moment. In spite of all this, there can be no doubt of the fact that Mahatma Gandhi has lighted for our people the beacon-fire on the mountain-top which will lead us onward, stage by stage, to the Promised Land.

When all has been said, one is bound to acknowledge the fact that Mahatma Gandhi has restored to India her lost "soul", and that he has set her face towards the light. It is not in quest of material happiness or in the achievements of applied science that India must find her destiny. It is in the assertion of the superiority of the spirit over the flesh, of the mind over matter, that she must find her ultimate salvation. If India to-day has not risen to the height of Mahatma Gandhi's demands, she has, at any rate, awakened to their wisdom and necessity. The vision of the dream has now obsessed India, and it is only a question of time for her to realize it.

The aim of Mahatma Gandhi is good, and the presentation of his idea of soul-force to a war-distracted and capitalistic society is his greatest service to the modern world. But to reach his objective other means will have to be found than those that he has laid down for his people. The discovery of a new way to his goal will be the task before the new world for many a century to come, and, when it is discovered, human society will achieve its millenium.

CHAPTER XIII

REFORMS AND AFTER

It is now a little over six years since the Montford Reform Scheme was brought into full operation, and the Provincial and Imperial Councils were reconstituted on the basis of the Government of India Act of 1919. In ordinary circumstances this period would not allow full scope for the realization of the objects which this Act had in view. But India has been galvanized with new ideas and has covered the track of centuries in these few years in such a way that the Reforms have already been weighed in the balance and found wanting.

With the outbreak of the European War, India entered on a new phase of political aspiration. She now modified in a very large measure her older demands for Swaraj, and like most other countries in the world, threw her older ideals into the melting pot. The ungrudging contribution in men and money to the last War by certain classes of people, naturally led many to expect not only the complete fulfilment of the policy laid down in Queen Victoria's Proclamation, but also a great advance in the attainment of political individuality. The enunciation by President Wilson of the principle of "self-determination" in the government of nations and countries had also added a new zest and kindled in New India an ambition for a complete scheme of self-government. In the circumstances, the Montagu Act fell flat and was looked upon more as a halting measure of reform than as a real and substantial measure of responsible self-government.

About ten years ago, bitterness against England had reached such a pitch that all British and Allied repulses on the various fronts of the War were made the occasion for great rejoicing, among certain classes of people. With the defeat of Germany, Austria, and Turkey in 1918, came a great disillusionment to the people of India, who were not

awakened to the fact that England still remained the greatest power on earth, and that it would not be possible to bring the British Government in India to its knees as easily as had been expected, and, in some quarters, hoped for.

But before the people of India could readjust relations with their British rulers, and modify their demands for a full-blooded responsible government, Mr. Gandhi interposed with a new programme and a new scheme to carry his people to their ultimate destiny. While some of the extreme Nationalist leaders of nearly twenty years ago would have rejoiced to find sedition working underground, Mr. Gandhi now gave political thought a new direction, and opened a new campaign of opposition. Instead of physical force or any other known means of popular resistance, he depended on the moral resources of the nation for a straight and open fight against the Government imposed upon us by British diplomacy and feat of arms. Material and vested interests and the traditions and habits of generations were, however, so deeply rooted that no amount of ethical teaching or fervid eloquence could tear the people away from them. While one section of the people developed a revolutionary mentality, another section was caught by the lure of the Gandhi movement. One result of this changed outlook was the emergence of a class of public men and thinkers who perforce reconciled themselves to working the Montford Reforms for whatever they were worth.

The boycott of the Councils in the first general election of 1920 therefore proved neither effective nor sterile. Many courageous and independent men seeking election at once withdrew their candidature at the desire of Mr. Gandhi, and left the field open to a small minority of placemen, title-hunters, and aspirants to office in the new order of things. With this group weak-kneed landlords, indifferent lawyers and taluqdars, mealy-mouthed bankers and merchants threw in their lot, with a handful of Liberals of the old school who still clung to and pinned their faith on *ap-ki-wasti* principles of self-aggrandisement. The result was that an extraordinary medley of people was returned to all the Councils of the

Indian Empire, including those at Delhi and Simla, with a view to giving the new reforms a trial.

The Central Legislature, as we have already noticed was not much altered by the Montagu Act, excepting that it was divided into two Houses and the strength and powers of the bi-cameral legislature at Delhi and Simla came to be widened by some of its provisions and a large number of items in the Imperial budget were placed under its control. In Delhi and Simla the non-official majority in the Assembly came to possess a large share of control over bills, resolutions, and the Budget. But beyond that the Legislature had no power or responsibility, as the Central Government lay beyond the scope of the Montford Reforms.

Though the Indian Legislative Assembly was like the provincial Councils constituted in a very unsatisfactory manner, and lacked the presence of the advanced Nationalists, it must be said to its credit that it made a great effort, and succeeded in a very large measure, in giving effect to some of the principal aspirations of the people. The Press Acts of 1908 and 1910, which had been a sword of Damocles to the newspapers of India, were both repealed by the Central Legislature in 1922, and some of the repressive laws, piled on the Statute Book from 1905 to 1920, were taken out of it the following year, on the recommendations of a strong Committee over which Dr. (now Sir) Tej Bahadur Sapru presided as the Law Member.

Among other notable achievements of the newly constituted Assembly was the adoption of a policy of discriminating protection for nascent and struggling Indian industries, as recommended by the Fiscal Commission, and of the nationalization, or what is known as the State management, of the principal railways of the country, even against the recommendation of the Indian Industrial Commission and the Acworth Committee. The Fiscal Commission, among other things, had recommended the appointment of a Tariff Board to examine what industries needed any protection or bounty, and how best to offer it. Agreeably to this recommendation a Tariff Board was

appointed in 1922, with Sir George Rainey, Sir P. P. Ginwalla and Prof. V. G. Kalé as members, and the question of giving some amount of protective bounty to the steel industry was referred to it. This Board, after a very searching enquiry, recommended a bounty, and the government, having accepted the proposal, embodied the recommendation in an official bill which was passed by the Assembly in 1924.

The re-constituted Assembly also turned down all proposals for imperial preference and reciprocity, and even went to the extent of accepting a resolution for some measure of retaliation against the South African Union for its iniquitous treatment of Indian settlers within its territories.¹

The Racial Distinctions Bill, which sought to put an end to the exclusive claims which Europeans in India had enjoyed for more than a century, to the detriment of the interests of justice, was passed by the Central Legislature in its winter session of 1923. This Act was essentially a piece of compromise legislation, intended to level up the Indian to the special position of the European before the eyes of the law, while it also reduced or abolished some of the latter's privileges. Under the new law first-class Indian Magistrates have been empowered to try Europeans, and *vice versa*, and District and Session Judges have been placed in a position to sentence an European offender even to capital punishment. In a jury case involving racial considerations, the accused can now claim a majority of his own countrymen on the jury, and an appeal lies to the High Court. Provisions have been added by which the right of Habeas Corpus is extended to all persons, including Indians.

In the first few years, the Assembly made an honest attempt to broaden the basis of the constitution, both by a structural change in the Act of 1919, and by the establishment of parliamentary conventions, and though this attempt was impeded by party differences again and again, a very liberal interpretation was put on many of the important provisions

¹ At this time there was pending in the South African Union Legislature, a measure entitled the Class Areas Bill which was intended to segregate Indians in particular locations within the Union territories. This Bill was latterly dropped on the change of Government in the Union.

of the Act, until the popular will came into sharp conflict with executive authorities.

The efforts of the Central Legislature to widen the new constitution were checked as soon as a new Secretary of State for India and a new Viceroy had been installed firmly in their offices. Mr. Montagu, failing to receive Mr. Lloyd George's nomination for the Indian viceroyalty,¹ as the successor of Lord Chelmsford, sent out to India an ex-Lord Chief Justice of England, in the hope and confidence that he would prove the best pilot to guide the new craft of the Indian State through the uncharted waters during the transitional period of the Reforms. Lord Reading certainly proved a very cautious pilot, but none too brave or wise. In 1922, he had before him the unique privilege of filling up vacancies in the governorships of Burma, Assam, Bihar and the United Provinces. To none of these, however, did he think it wise or just to appoint an Indian gentleman, as his predecessor, Lord Chelmsford, had done to Bihar and Orissa.

This reluctance of the new Viceroy to continue the policy of his predecessor was naturally interpreted by the people of India as a return to the policy of the old bureaucratic die-hards.² Lord Peel, who had succeeded Mr. Montagu as the Secretary of State for India, early in 1922, threw cold water over Indian hopes by his famous despatch of November, 1922, on the Assembly's demand for a further constitutional advance. These two gestures left no doubt in the people's mind that the new scheme of reforms indicated no real change of heart in our rulers, and this feeling received unmistakable corroboration when the duty on salt was doubled in the

¹ At one time Mr. Montagu was anxious to come out to India as the Viceroy to work out on the spot his own scheme of Reforms, and, at the instance of some of his Indian friends, an attempt was made to approach the British Premier with that object in view. Unfortunately the *Times* got scent of this news before the Premier could be approached, and in a leading article strongly opposed it, nipping the idea in the bud.

² The same story was repeated early this year when vacancies occurred in the governorships of Assam, Burma and the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh. Lord Irwin, the present Viceroy, instead of offering any of these exalted offices to any Indian gentlemen, had all of them filled up by European officials, again showing that the angle of vision had not undergone any radical change.

Budget of 1922-23, with the Viceroy's certificate, with a view to meet a deficit of the year. The Indian people still hoped for better times to come, but these hopes were dashed when Lord Reading reshuffled the portfolios of the various members of his Cabinet in April, 1923, and placed no very important department in charge of any of the Indian Members; finance, railways, the control of the Civil Services, and commerce all being placed in charge of their European colleagues. Another opportunity offered itself to the Viceroy of proving the sincerity of the professed change of heart in our rulers. When Lord Reading went to England on leave in the summer of 1925, to confer with Lord Birkenhead on the Indian situation, Lord Lytton was appointed as his successor and Sir John Kerr was brought from Assam to act as Governor of Bengal in Lord Lytton's place. Usually in such cases, the senior member of the Executive Council is appointed to act for the Governor. But unfortunately in this case the claims of the Senior Member, Sir Abdur Rahim, were completely overlooked, as he happened to be an Indian gentleman. This showed unmistakably which way the wind blew.

With the changed attitude of the Viceroy, and with Anglo-Indian die-hardism reasserting its strength in the governance of the Empire, the weaknesses of the administration came prominently before the public eye. The cost of the civil administration had been greatly increased by the reforms; the cost of the military administration had gone up from twenty-five per cent of the total revenues of India before the War to nearly forty per cent after it. On the whole, the Imperial expenditure had mounted so high that, between the years 1919-23, the Government had to meet a deficit of over ninety crores of rupees¹ and to do so taxes were increased all round, burden after burden being piled on the poor taxpayer's shoulders. Mr. Montagu's policy in this

¹ The following deficits were shown in the Imperial Budget from 1919-23:

| | | | | | |
|---------|----|----|----|-----|---------|
| 1919-20 | .. | .. | .. | 23½ | crores. |
| 1920-21 | .. | .. | .. | 26 | .. |
| 1921-22 | .. | .. | .. | 27½ | .. |
| 1922-23 | .. | .. | .. | 15 | .. |

matter was a sad contrast to the rigid financial economy exercised by John Morley in similar circumstances between 1906-09.

The staggering increase in the military expenditure of the country which had reached in 1921-22 the sum of nearly seventy crores of rupees, gave the Indians a peep into the mind of their alien rulers, and into the dangers of a super-imposed foreign government. When India was denuded of the greater portion of her troops for the various theatres of the war, no attempt was made by our rulers to create a large number of battalions and regiments out of the people of this country for the purpose of keeping internal and domestic peace and garrisoning the frontiers. This unwillingness to depend on the valour of Indians for the defence of India was due principally to a policy of mistrust and apprehension, and received further corroboration when Commander-in-Chief after Commander-in-Chief resisted with all his might and force all her proposals for the creation of new territorial or auxiliary forces for a second line of defence or for the establishment of an Indian Sandhurst. In her halcyon days, Rome committed the same mistake, and paid a penalty which has not been overlooked by great historians.

Discussing the institution in Gaul of representative councils after the withdrawal of the legions from Britain, Gibbon wrote: "If such an institution, which gave the people an interest in their own Government, had been universally established by Trajan and the Antonines, the needs of public wisdom and virtue might have been cherished and propagated in the Empire of Rome. The privileges of the subject would have secured the throne of the monarch; the abuses of an arbitrary administration might have been prevented in some degree or corrected by the interposition of these representative assemblies; and the country would have been defended against a foreign enemy by the arms of natives and freemen. Under the mild and generous influence of liberty the Roman Empire might have remained immortal."

If the defence of a country and a country so poor, so helpless, so insanitary and ignorant as India requires forty per cent of its revenues for the Army alone, what hope can she cherish of getting into line with the other civilized nations of the world in all departments of national well-being? What a pity that Lord Reading's government did not realize the wisdom of John Morley's famous dictum that "in a poor country like India economy is as much an element of defence as guns and forts".

The top-heavy Indian administration, in spite of the fact that Lord Reading succeeded in balancing the Imperial Budget after four years of very heavy deficits, has now been discovered to be a menace to the country, and all who realize the condition of the Indian people are alarmed at the situation. Lord Inchcape's Retrenchment Committee, which reported early in 1924, was able to suggest many cuts, including a sum of nearly twenty crores of rupees on military expenditure, but even with their recommendations and the Government's best efforts to give effect to some of them, the public expenditure of India remains disproportionately high in comparison with some of the most advanced states in Asia and Europe.

We have so far directed our attention to the position of the Central Government which still remains impervious to the new spirit, but it is in the provinces where the sincerity of the Montford Reforms has been very carefully tested and challenged. By the Act of 1919, a system of dual government has been established in the provinces under the name of dyarchy. By this system some of the departments of the State have been "reserved" for administration by members of the Executive Council, while the other departments have been "transferred" to the control of the legislatures which have been entrusted to administer them through Ministers appointed by the Crown, but paid and controlled by the Councils.¹

¹ In Bengal, Education, Sanitation, Industries and Local Self-Government, were the principal departments which have been transferred to the portfolios of Ministers, while Law, Police, Justice and the Services have been "reserved".

As soon as the new system was put into operation it broke down, particularly in Bengal. In the provinces the police expenditure bulks more largely than the expenditure on education and sanitation. The Police Budget can be voted on by the Council, but, being included in a "reserved" portfolio, and the Governor having been endowed with emergency powers, he can, by a certificate, restore all such demands for grants under this head as fail to receive the assent of the Council. Lord Ronaldshay on two occasions and Lord Lytton thrice, exercised this prerogative of restoring such grants lost in the Council. If, as in the United Provinces, the department of Police had been put in the portfolio of an Indian Member of the Executive Council, perhaps the new experiment might have been taken more kindly by the people of Bengal. But unfortunately in Bengal as in most other Indian provinces, the police service and administration has been placed in charge of a European Member of the Executive Council, thus indicating the want of confidence of the provincial satraps in their Indian colleagues and the unwillingness of the bureaucracy to part with real power. The impression has thus been created in the public mind that the "reforms" have hardly succeeded in changing, as it was suspected that they were never intended to change, the character of the administration or the hearts of the rulers.

Two points brought out the defects of dyarchy in prominent relief at this time. A large number of Civil Servants began to cut at the root of this new experiment by showing an intentional discourtesy and disrespect to the Indian Ministers placed at the head of certain departments of the administration under the new Act. They resented having to carry out the wishes and decrees of Indian Ministers, and also having lost the powers of initiative in the transferred departments. They were unwilling to work as subordinate officers of an Indian legislature. The open revolt of the Civil Service and its extreme reluctance to work out the Reforms in a spirit of frank co-operation with the provincial legislatures became so pronounced a feature of the situation, that nearly a fifth of its European cadre had resigned and retired from

the Service on proportionate pension before the new experiment has been well planted in the soil. Among those who remained some had shown their attitude to the Indian Ministers by violating ordinary rules of discipline and courtesy.¹

The second matter on which people began to lose faith in dyarchy was the unwillingness of Governors to take the Indian Ministers into their confidence in the disposal of serious and grave administrative questions and in the initiation of new policies. The joint deliberation of such questions in a united Cabinet, broadly recommended in the report of the Joint Parliamentary Committee which considered Mr. Montagu's Bill of 1919, hardly ever materialized in any province and was honoured more in the breach than in the observance. In Bengal, when there were grave riots at Chandpur² and on occasions when new repressive measures

¹ Owing to acute difference and friction with some of the permanent officials of the Superior Services, two Ministers in the United Provinces, one in the Punjab, and one in Bihar found themselves compelled to resign their offices before the expiry of their term.

² The Chandpur riots occurred out of long standing grievances of the coolies (labourers) in the tea-gardens of Assam. Indentured labour obtained throughout Assam before the system was abolished early this century by the humanitarian efforts of one of its Chief Commissioners, Sir Henry Cotton. With the abolition of indentured labour, the condition of the Assam coolies improved legally no doubt, but not socially or economically. Till the day of the riots referred to, the poor coolie remained under the heel and at the mercy of his white employer. Early in May, 1921, the coolies of many tea-gardens in Assam went on strike and left the tea-gardens in large numbers for Karimgunge, a Sub-divisional headquarters in the district of Sylhet.

The people of the locality, out of sympathy for their condition, looked after their food and shelter and were making arrangements for their repatriation. But the railway authorities refused to issue tickets to them, with the idea that they would be compelled to return to the gardens. But they refused to submit to this coercion and preferred to starve rather than go back to the fields of their labour where they would have to earn their daily bread with tears of blood again. Later on, the railway authorities removed the ban against them, and the coolies came in large numbers to Chandpur, where an epidemic of cholera broke out among them.

The Congress Committee, in the meantime, was making arrangements for their relief and repatriation, and under the plea of keeping law and order a large number of these coolies were mercilessly assaulted by Gurkha soldiers on the midnight of May 20th. The result was a conflagration which sent Bengal into white heat. At this stage Chitta Ranjan went to Chandpur personally and supervised, so far as he could, the relief of their distress and their repatriation, the government looking upon the matter all the time with callous indifference.

were enforced, the Indian Ministers of the Crown were hardly ever consulted. In Bengal during the height of the non-co-operative movement, when hundreds of young students were arrested under the Criminal Law Amendment Act, and even when Srimati Basanti Devi (C. R. Das's wife) and some of her women compatriots were arrested in Calcutta in December, 1921, for hawking *khaddar*, the Indian Ministers were kept in complete ignorance of these official designs.

The most pungent matter which troubled the Bengali mind in 1923, was, however, the attitude of Sir Surendra Nath Banerjea, a Minister of the Crown, towards important public questions, and of Sir Pravas Chandra Mitter, another Minister, in relation to the University of Calcutta and higher education in Bengal. During the years of his office as Minister, Sir Surendra Nath had gone back on the dearest principles of his earlier public life and almost uniformly supported the bureaucracy, of which he was once the greatest enemy and unsparing critic. Before taking office this leader of the people had "for well nigh half a century assailed the heavens with the thunders of his splendid oratory in indignation at the burning wrongs of his people". In these three years the intoxicating fumes of power and authority had made a complete wreck of this erstwhile tribune of the people. Under the spell of office, he supported the white rulers in flouting public opinion all along the line and in suppressing the popular will and popular aspirations in all crucial questions. During this period, Sir Surendra Nath had stoutly resisted the reduction of the salaries of Ministers in Bengal, a point on which Indian opinion was very keen, had without discrimination gone into the lobby with the Government in all important divisions in the Council, had callously treated the great disaster which overwhelmed the people of Northern Bengal in September, 1922, by an unprecedented flood, had imposed a fee on poor outdoor patients who visited the public hospitals and dispensaries maintained by the money of the taxpayer, and, above all, he acted most unpatriotically, merely to save his office, by incorporating an unwarranted

provision for communal representation in his Calcutta Municipal Act of 1923.

And as for Sir Pravas Chandra Mitter, he had already submitted two bills to the Government of India, for its sanction, both drafted over the head of and without the knowledge of the Senate of the University of Calcutta and intended to departmentalize it and destroy its autonomy and academic freedom, sometimes on the plea of finance, and sometimes on the plea of setting right the defects of the constitution of its Senate and Syndicate.

The next most important handicap under which dyarchy started in the provinces was that the Ministers in charge of nation-building departments were not entrusted with more money than the bureaucrats had themselves spent on those departments when they held undivided sway before the Reforms. People had frequently asked: if our Ministers have no more money, without additional taxation or loans, to spend on education and sanitation than the old Government, and if the Ministers are powerless to protect the people from executive highhandedness and wrong doing and from the regulation *lathis* of the police, what is the good of the new scheme? It brings us no relief, takes us no further on the road of self-government, gives us no more security of life and property and only adds to our burdens. If dyarchy only means new taxes and new loans, and more money spent on the bureaucracy and the police, we were better left alone. The Reforms therefore showed clever window dressing, with hardly any new stock or any structural changes.

While a volume of undisputed evidence was gathered on the defects of dyarchy and the other main provisions of the Montagu Act, Chitta Ranjan Das and the Government of India looked at them from two absolutely different points of view. Chitta Ranjan made it the work of his life to end the Reforms, while the Government wanted to mend them. With this aim in view, a Committee was appointed by the Government in August, 1924, to examine carefully the defects of the Montagu constitution and to make recommendations with a view to rectify, if necessary, any administrative

imperfections in the light of the evidence produced before it. Sir Alexander Muddiman, Home Member, presided over it, and the Committee included three Europeans, the Indian Law Member of the time, Sir Mian Mohamed Shafi and five non-official Indians. The Indian Members excepting the Maharaja of Burdwan, who joined the official group, constituted the minority of the Committee and consisted of Sir Sivaswamy Iyer, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Dr. Paranjpye and Mr. E. A. Jinnan. The minority of the Committee submitted a strong and separate report, in which they held that no improvement of the situation was possible without a structural alteration of the constitution itself. But they were precluded from considering this position by the terms of reference of this Committee. In some matters they agreed with the majority and they both recommended that the control of the Secretary of State on matters affecting purely Indian interests should be relaxed ; that joint deliberation between the two halves of the Provincial Governments should be definitely enjoined and enforced by a change in the devolution rules ; that the Ministers' salaries should be fixed by statute at a minimum of three-fifths of the salary of an Executive Councillor ; that the Finance Minister of any provincial government should not be placed in charge of any main spending department, and that Members and Ministers should be given enhanced powers of reappropriation. Among other recommendations of the minority were included such proposals as the abolition of the official block in the Councils, the formulation of a definite scheme of Indianization of the Army, and the limitation of the certification powers of the Governor-General.

Thus far went the report of the Muddiman committee, but Chitta Ranjan on the other hand wanted no patchwork reforms but the abolition of the entire scheme of dyarchy, the corner-stone on which the Government of India Act is based, in order that the entire onus of misgovernment might be fixed upon the bureaucracy alone. To do this, his path was clear. He had only to go to the Council with a large following, offer a continuous and consistent opposition to the

Government, and obstruct all official measures and appropriations, right or wrong.

If the object of the Nationalists was to attain complete self-government in a short time, they could not have committed a greater blunder than by boycotting the Councils in the elections of 1920. In their anxiety to offer an effective obstruction to the Government and to clog the wheels of the existing administration, the non-co-operating Nationalists proved rather short-sighted. They mortgaged the future of India to achieve a temporary and histrionic effect. If they had taken advantage of their presence in the Councils, in 1921, as they did afterwards in the elections of 1923, the leaders of the new movement would have forced the pace of responsible government to their heart's desire from the very beginning of the reconstituted Councils. But their absence from the first Council under the new constitution did incalculable harm in the cause of Indian progress, and did not allow the people to get a glimpse of the defects of dyarchy in good time.

Chitta Ranjan was the first lieutenant of Mr. Gandhi to see the error of his chief's ways, and the effects of a very heavy draught of somnolent reaction to which the Indian nation had been subjected during the last three years. He made up his mind if not actually to go back upon Mr. Gandhi's programme, at least, as he was quite sure now that it would lead them nowhere, to enter the Councils with a large number of followers and offer an effective opposition to the bureaucracy from within the Council.

If a successful revolution was unthinkable, if physical resistance did not enter into practical politics, if the voluntary abandonment or withdrawal of the rule of the British was mere moon-shine, if a consistent life of detachment and renunciation could not get us a place in the sun, then the only possible way in which India could be put on the road to Swaraj was by pursuing a policy of consistent and persistent obstruction of all measures initiated by the existing bureaucracy and thereby forcing the pace of the Reforms.

And this was in short the ideal which inspired Chitta

Ranjan Das to wage a relentless war against dyarchy from his vantage ground within the Council, and establish the Swaraj Party. Chitta Ranjan gauged the situation correctly by taking a lesson out of the pages of modern Irish history and pursuing a policy first initiated at St. Stephen's by Charles Stewart Parnell, before and after the Phoenix Park murders in Dublin.