WE INDIANS



MINOO MASANI

Illustrated by

R.K. Laxman

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PREFACE

The idea of this little book was conceived way back in the 1950s by Charles Moorehouse, the gifted illustrator of my earlier book *Our India*.

By that time I was under great pressure from friends and admirers of *Our India* to revise it. It was soon clear to me that *Our India* could not be revised for the simple reason that it was a dream we lost—a dream that India would be a land flowing with milk and honey once we rid ourselves of our foreign rulers.

Mr Hawkins, my publisher in Oxford University Press, and I therefore set about thinking of a companion volume to *Our India*. Starting with the name 'Our Way of Life' the proposed book ended up by being entitled *We Indians*. There were constant delays on my part in going ahead with the work, and finally in August 1963 I pleaded guilty and asked Mr Hawkins to forgive me if I abandoned the project owing to lack of time due to my preoccupation with political life as General Secretary of the Swatantra Party and as a Member of Parliament.

During the years when I was trying to produce

the book, I had asked my old friend, the late Mr V. B. Karnik, to be good enough to do a little research on my behalf and draft some material about ancient India, which he did. When I later decided to abandon the project, I authorized Mr Karnik to use the drafts he had prepared for me by way of articles or otherwise and I understand he did publish some articles on ancient India and our origins in some periodical.

Now at last this little book, the idea of which has been simmering in my mind for so many years, has become a reality. This gives me a sense of relief, of a promise kept.

I am happy that Mr R.K. Laxman, the eminent cartoonist, has kindly consented to prepare the cover and textual illustrations for this book.

M. R. Masani

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1

WHAT ARE LITTLE INDIANS MADE OF?

What are little boys made of?
What are little boys made of?
Snakes and snails, and puppy-dogs tails;
And that's what little boys are made of.

What are little girls made of?
What are little girls made of?
Sugar and spice and all that's nice
And that's what little girls are made of.

This little jingle comes to us from England and we are tempted to follow it up by asking 'And what are little Indians made of'?

A lot of things have gone into the making of the little Indian. They are to be found in different proportions in little Indians in different parts of the country. Without being too precise one can say that most of them have a little bit of the Caucasian, a tiny bit of the Scythian, something of the Mongoloid and a larger proportion of the Dravidian.

We Indians — Bengalis, Punjabis, Gujaratis, Marathas, Andhras, Tamilians ... what are we made of? Why are some of us like many Punjabis, tall and fair, and some of us like Tamilians, often short

and dark? Why is it that some of us have long heads and prominent noses and some broad heads and not over-prominent noses?

It is because we belong to various races or ethnic groups.



But first, what is this thing called 'race'? Let us turn to your dictionary. I hope you do that

whenever you are in doubt. You will find that race is described as a group of persons connected by common descent or stock. 'Ethnic' is the adjective pertaining to race.



So race is to be distinguished from nationality. A nation is a group of people living in a particular country or area who generally belong to many races. Race is a group of people of common stock

or origin who may be confined to one country or many countries. Race is thus an ethnic group; a nation is a political group. The two hardly ever coincide.

That is because throughout history people of different races have moved or intermarried. No race is therefore 'pure', nor is any nation. According to Julian Huxley, the great biologist, the only 'pure' races in existence now are the most primitive and backward people in the world, namely the aborgines of Australia and the Hottentots and bushmen of Africa. So let us be grateful that we are a nation with many racial origins mixed in different proportions.

So too, race is to be distinguished from language. Members of the same race may speak different languages or the same language may be shared by many races or nations.

It is important for us to remember this because there is often confusion between race and language. Thus, you may sometimes read about the Aryan race. There is no such thing. Aryan is a family of languages. Those who are referred to as the Aryan race are mostly of the Caucasian[1] race.

Perhaps the responsibility for this confusion can be traced to a famous German Orientalist, Dr Max Müller, who in his earlier writings blundered into this myth of an Aryan race. Later in life, however, Max Müller realized that he had made a serious

1 Originating from Caucasus, in the southern USSR.

mistake and himself wrote that he had declared again and again that when he talked of the Aryan race, he simply referred to those who spoke the Aryan language. Making fun of himself, he went on to say: 'When I speak of this, I commit myself to no anatomical characteristics ... To me an ethnologist[1] who speaks of Aryan race, Aryan blood, Aryan eyes and hair is as great a sinner as a linguist who speaks of a dolicocephalic[2] dictionary or a Brachycephalic[3] grammar.'

The correct view is given expression to in a study made by the United Nations Educational, Social and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) which talks about 'the notoriously disastrous, muddled thinking about the Aryan race'. It quite rightly asserts that there never was an Aryan race, and goes on to refer to the existence in the second millennium before our era of people inhabiting the steppes of Turkestan and Central Russia using a common 'Indo-European' language and culture who overran a very wide area. Their tongue or language is the ancestor of Sanskrit, Ancient Greek, Latin and the languages spoken in Europe today. Many of those who spoke these Aryan languages belonged to the Caucasian race.

Contrary to Hitler and some others, race is not really of much importance. The UNESCO study claims that there is no single characteristic which

1 Scientist specializing in the study of races.
2 Having a long or narrow head.
3 Of a short, rounded skull.



can be selected as the criterion for the definition of race. It says that the present population of the world is more or less a hodgepodge, since a wide variety of racial types existed from pre-historic times onwards.

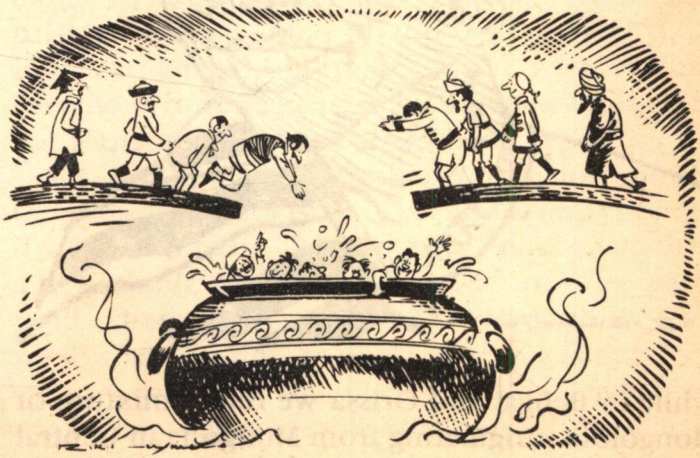
India is no exception to the general rule advanced by Julian Huxley that 'Historically all the great modern nations are known to be the result of emigrations of many tribes and many waves of immigration.' 'All great nations,' says Huxley, 'are melting pots of races.'

2

THE MELTING POT

In recent times, the United States in North America and Brazil in South America have been called 'the melting pot of races'. Our own melting pot in India goes back to time immemorial, as far back as human memory can take us. Since those times many people have come to India and found a hospitable home in this rich and fertile country. The result is that India today is populated by many types of people.

In the North, amongst the Punjabis, there may



be a very large percentage of Caucasian blood. As we move down towards the South we come across a larger and larger intermixture of Caucasian and Dravidian blood, ending with pure Dravidians in many parts of Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala. In the East and North-East we find, in Assam, Mizoram, Nagaland, Arunachal, Tripura and Sikkim, Mongoloid characteristics,



while in Bengal and Orissa we find a mixture of Mongoloid (originating from Mongolia in Central

Asia) and Dravidian characteristics. In the West again there is an intermixture of the Caucasian, the Scythian and the Dravidian characteristics varying from place to place.

Let us admit that none of us really knows very much of what actually happened in those distant times. There are various points of view or, if I may so call them, guesses about what actually happened. It would therefore be silly and cheeky for me to lay down the law on such a subject. What I have tried to do here is to accept a scenario or story which is more likely to have happened than anything else. In doing so, however, I am bound to over-simplify what must have been a very complicated process.

Strangely enough, one of the most interesting works on our ethnic origins is not written by an Indian, but by an Englishman, Sir Herbert Risley, entitled *The People of India*. This is not really surprising because some of the best research into Indian languages, antiquities and archaeology has been done by foreigners. In his book, Risley divides the Indian people into seven basic types.

The first of these, Turko-Iranian, are now mostly to be found in Pakistan. The other six types are (i) Indo-Caucasian: To be found in Punjab, Rajasthan and Kashmir. The Khattris and Jats of these parts typify them. They are tall, have long heads with narrow and prominent noses. They are fair and the eyes are dark in colour. (ii) Scytho-Dravidian: They are an inter-mixture of Scythians and Dravidians.

The Scythian element is more prominent in higher social groups and the Dravidian in the lower. They are medium-statured. (iii) Caucasian-Dravidian: This type is a result of intermixture in varying proportions between Indo-Caucasians and Dravidians. They are to be found generally in U.P., Rajputana and Bihar. The head is generally long with a tendency to medium. (iv) Mongolo-Dravidian: This type formed by the intermixture of Dravidians and Mongolians. They are to be found in Bengal, Orissa and Assam amongst Hindu Brahmins and Kayasthas, and amongst Bengali Muslims. (v) Mongoloid: They are distributed like a belt along the Himalayan region. They have broad heads, with fine noses which in some cases are broad. They have flat faces with a Mongoloid fold of the eye. (vi) Dravidians: They inhabit the southern part of India, Andhra, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Kerala and the southern portion of M.P. and Chota Nagpur. Their complexion is dark, eyes are dark, the stature is short and hair is plentiful with a tendency to curl.

In addition to these are the original pre-Dravidian inhabitants of India who are today called the 'aboriginals'.

This is how Sir Herbert Risley, who did a lot of work on the subject, saw things.

Did you know that you are 5000 years old? Of course you don't, but in a sense it is so. You and I are the result of 5000 years of history, of comings and goings to and from India. So, though you

yourself are young in years, you as an Indian child have something in your make-up which comes from all your ancestors. The scientist will tell you that it is through the genes that this interesting process takes place.

How does one cover our 5000 years of history in a few pages? You need to be a genius to do this and I am no genius, but I shall try. I shall no doubt have to leap like a kangaroo across a few centuries at a time. So don't be critical. The story I shall now tell is a simplified one of very complicated historical events.

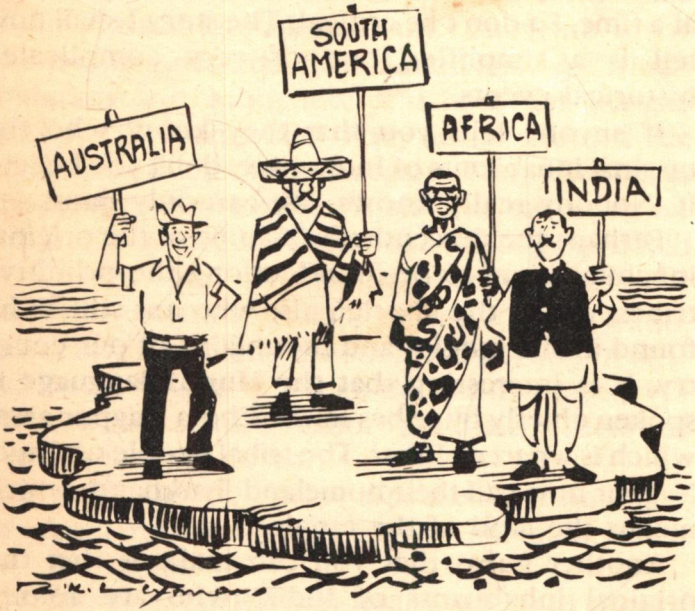
If anyone tells you that they know who the original inhabitants of India were, don't you believe it. Nobody really knows. We can only guess.

Perhaps the descendants of some of the original inhabitants are to be found among the primitive tribes, called the aboriginals, who are still to be found in the jungles and mountains of our country. It is interesting that the Munda language is spoken chiefly by tribes in the Chota Nagpur area, which is a part of Bihar. The tribal people of Chota Nagpur now call their homeland Jharkhand, which means the land of the jungles.

Another guess that you can make is that the original inhabitants of India, who are among *Homo sapiens*, as the human race is called in Latin, made their first appearance in south India.

It is likely that in those times India and Africa were connected by land. Some geologists talk of an Indo-African continent which has vanished, in

which India, Africa, Australia and possibly some parts of South America formed one land mass. This may explain how the Dravidians came to be in India, being in that case the direct descendants of the first primitive man. The tombs and circles made of large stones found in south India support this theory. Recent excavations in Raichur district have brought to light some more evidence which



shows that human societies existed in south India in the pre-historic age. It is, however, argued in some quarters that Africa and India had ceased to be linked by the time man came into being.

It is a myth that it was the Caucasians who brought civilization to India when they came on the scene some 4000 years ago. The Caucasians were a race of wanderers or nomads who moved from place to place in search of pastures for their cattle. By the time they arrived in India, riding on horseback, there was an already well-established Dravidian civilization covering practically the whole of the country. The Dravidians were people who, long before the Caucasians burst into India, lived in settled communities, knew how to build houses and towns, and made their own ships which used to sail as far west as the Middle East. From the south they probably penetrated as far north as the Punjab, where the Caucasians met them face to face in the land of the five rivers which is now in Pakistan. There are references in the Vedas to people who could be none other than Dravidians. These were later pushed back by the Caucasians and driven back to the south.

How did this happen? It happened because not only were the Caucasians a somewhat virile people but they had the equivalent of what we now know as the tank. Their tank was the horse. The Dravidians fought on foot like modern infantry. So whenever the tanks and the footmen collided, the tanks were most likely to win, like Hitler's tanks or the Panzer Divisions of the German Army which occupied practically the whole of Europe for a while in the 1940s.

There are several theories about the origin of the

Dravidian people. Professor Gilbert Slater considers them a branch of the Mediterranean race. Another scholar, H. R. Hall, refers to other resemblance between the Dravidian and Ancient Sumerian types who lived in the Middle East. The Sumerian was, according to Hall, rather like the southern Hindu of the Deccan Plateau. Whether the Dravidians went to the Middle East and became Sumerians or the Sumerians came to India and became Dravidians is still a matter of controversy.

There are some who regard the pre-historic Druids of Great Britain as the Dravids of India. That may or may not be true. But there is a tribe in Baluchistan which, even to this day, speak a Dravidian language known as Brahui. That indicates that the Dravidians had at one time penetrated at least as far north as Baluchistan.

The Dravidians could not be exterminated. They



were too numerous and too well-versed in social organization and in the arts and crafts. There were many things the Caucasians had to learn from them. So, eventually, the two settled down to co-exist. Each influenced the other and both merged together into one people.

The discoveries at Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa have brought to light another civilization which had also reached a high-water mark before the Caucasians invaded India. It is clear from these discoveries that a highly civilized people lived on the banks of the Indus 5000 years ago. Sir John Marshall has established that Sind and the Punjab during the third millennium BC had a highly developed city life. The presence in many houses of wells and bathrooms as well as drainage systems point to a social condition at least equal to that to be found in Sumer and superior to the conditions that existed in Babylonia and Egypt.

Who these people were is still a riddle, for they have left no trace in later history. Some have suggested that they derived their culture from the Sumerians, while others hold the view that the Sumerians borrowed it from them. In any case, they had commercial, religious and artistic connections with Sumeria and Babylonia. They survived for a period of about 3000 years and, though their civilization was destroyed and blotted out, they must have remained to become a part of the people we know today as the Indian people.

The Caucasians came to India about 4000 years

ago—that is, near about 2000 BC. They were a virile people, strong and tall and fair in complexion. They came in hordes, one after the other and, as more and more of them came, the earlier settlers pushed further East and settled on the fertile plains of the Ganges and Jamuna. They were not mere conquerors. They came to settle down and live in India.

There is much controversy regarding the original home of the Caucasians. On the basis of some astronomical data, Lokmanya Tilak had placed it in the Arctic region. Later researchers place it in the Caspian region among the foothills of the Caucasian mountains. There is little doubt, however, that those who came to India and those who went to Persia and Europe belonged to the same stock. The kinship between those various groups is established by similarities in language, in custom and in the gods worshipped by them.

In the course of centuries, the Caucasians spread all over northern and eastern India. Later they also spread to southern India. In the course of this expansion they came across many settled communities, many of which they absorbed amongst themselves and gave the status of 'Arya'. There was thus an interchange of ideas, of customs, of social institutions and also an intermixture of blood.

Some communities were conquered by the Caucasians and made into slaves. Some communities were so different in their customs and institutions that they could not be absorbed and were

therefore regarded as outcastes or as being outside the pale of society. The slaves and the outcastes of those days form many of the untouchable castes of modern India. Some were pushed back into the hills and the jungles and are the primitive tribes of today.

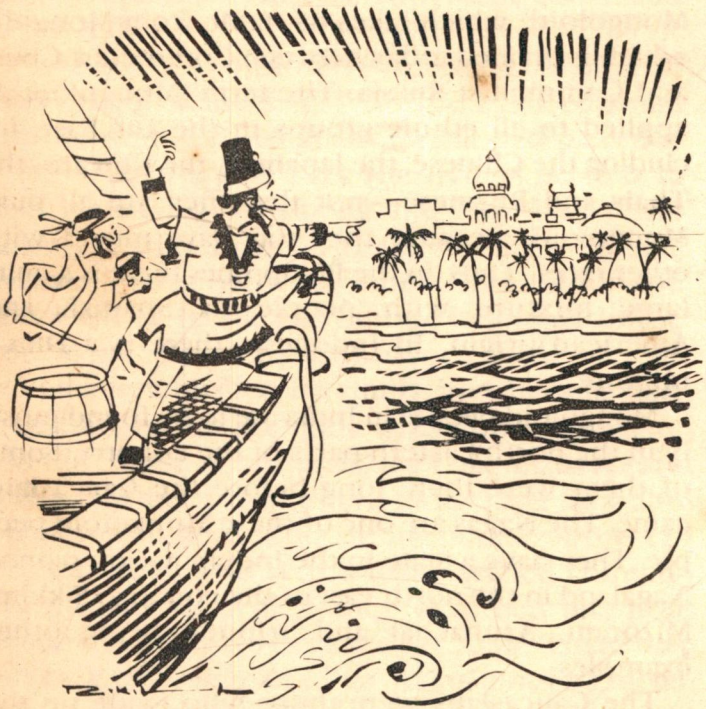
The third largest element in our make-up is the Mongoloid, which takes its name from Mongolia which is divided today between Communist China and Communist Russia. The term 'Mongoloid' is applied to all ethnic groups in the Far East, including the Chinese, the Japanese, the Koreans, the Thais and Burmese—not that they are all pure Mongoloids because they too have mixed with other races. Thus, in the Philippines there is a quite large mixture with people of Spanish and American origin. In Indonesia there is a Dutch mixture.

Mongoloid people in India are to be found mostly in the north-eastern parts of the country. Some of them were there long before the Caucasians came. The Nagas are one of these Mongoloid people. They have a State in the Indian nation named Nagaland in the north-east of the country; Sikkim, Mizoram, Arunachal and Tripura, being other examples.

The Caucasians were those who made up the majority of the arrivals in India in ancient times. Many had heard of the abundant rivers and the rich plains of India. Many were attracted by her riches and came as conquerors to plunder it, but ended

by settling down as inhabitants. When Alexander the Great came to India in the fourth century BC, Greek colonies had been established on the banks of the Kabul river.

Later, the Scythians[1] came and then the Huns[2] in the fifth century. They overran large parts of



1 A member of a nomadic Indo-European people who settled in Scythia, an ancient region of S.E. Europe and Asia.
2 Members of a nomadic Asian people who invaded Europe in the fourth and fifth centuries.

western and northern India. But they were not mere conquerors. They stayed to establish their kingdoms, some of which have acquired an honoured place in the history of India. They became as much a part of the people as the 'Aryans' and the 'Dravidians'. There were intermarriages between them and the others, and those intermarriages have contributed a distinct ethnic group to modern Indian society. There are numerous people on the long west coast who show a distinct sign of intermingling of races. Indians used to go over the seas for purposes of trade and adventure. Similarly, people from Persia, Arabia, Mesopotamia and the countries around the Mediterranean sea used to visit the western coast. Many of them must have settled down and are today an indistinguishable part of the Indian people.

There are some small sections of the Indian people who are not covered by these three major parts of our stock. For instance, there are the Jews who are in India called Bene-Israel. They are to be found mostly in Kerala, the Konkan and Maharashtra.

Later came Parsis and Iranis, Zoroastrians by religion, who fled from Iran (or Persia as it was then known) when the Arabs conquered the country and gave them the choice of 'Islam or the sword'. Many of the Iranians accepted conversion to Islam and are citizens of Iran today. Some who refused to accept Islam and remained Zoroastrians were persecuted by the Iranian Government till

World War II. A small group jumped into boats and drifted across the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Sea to the coast of Gujarat where they landed and were given asylum. Since most of the refugees were men and the number of women, alas, not considerable,



one must assume that the survival of the Parsi community till this day is due to there being a great deal of mixture between the Parsi immigrants and local women.

Perhaps the next minority to come into India were the Christians. It was not so recent because it is believed that the Christian Apostle St. Thomas came to India quite early. His grave is to be found near Madras. There are some doubting Thomases,

however, who hold the view that there were two Thomases who have got mixed up!

The Christians managed to convert a certain number of people to their faith, mostly on the west coast and in south India. It was not till the British conquered India, however, that Christianity became a major religion of this country.

Last but not the least among the people who entered India were the Muslims. The Muslim invasions began in the tenth century and continued up to the seventeenth century. Muslims of different racial origins and nationalities came, e. g. the Pathans or the Afghans, Turks, Mongols, the Persians, the Arabs. Some came as conquerors and departed after collecting as much loot as they could. Others came to settle down and to establish kingdoms.

A number of Muslim kingdoms were established during these centuries in many parts of India. Many of these kingdoms won the loyalty and affection of all Indians, not excluding the Hindus who constituted the overwhelming majority of the people. Some Muslim monarchs, notably Akbar, made heroic efforts to bring the two communities, the Hindus and the Muslims, together but the efforts did not succeed.

These Muslim invasions in the North were anticipated in point of time by Muslim traders called Moplas who settled on the southern coast, notably in Calicut, and other Arab traders who came to the ports of Gujarat and settled there.

3

OUR RELIGIONS

'In no other country is religion so powerful and important as in India', writes Will Durant in his *Story of Civilization*.

Hinduism has always been, of course, the religion of the vast majority of people in India but it has undergone many changes through the centuries.

To start with, the religion of the Caucasians in Vedic times was primarily a religion of nature worship. It is 'the most natural of natural religions', wrote Max Müller.

The Vedic Hindus worshipped the sun, the moon, wind, fire, the sky, lightning, the rain and the dawn. Each of these manifestations of nature came to be identified with God. To these gods the Vedic Hindus prayed to help them with the cultivation of crops, the growth of the family, the prosperity of the community and the destruction of their enemies. Rishis composed and sang hymns in their praise. These hymns are collected in the four Vedas which are the most sacred documents of the ancient Hindus.

Some hymns in the Vedas are of great literary

merit. They express in beautiful terms the amazement of primitive man at the regular recurrence of certain natural phenomena. They gave expression to a deep yearning to discover the secret of these occurrences. In some of these hymns, seers sought to grasp the principle of unity behind the wide diversity seen in actual life. Out of these hymns developed, in time to come, the philosophy of the Upanishads.

The Vedic hymns dealt generally with the every-



day life of the Caucasians. They invoked the blessings of God on their various adventures, both peaceful and warlike. Various gods were approached with diverse requests. Appropriate offerings were made to each god to keep him pleased. These offerings were made as sacrifices, which in time became a distinctive peculiarity of ancient Hindu society.

As time passed, religious rites and sacrifices became the main feature of religion. Different kinds of sacrifice had to be organized in order to achieve different ends. No departures or deviations were tolerated from the hundreds of rules that were established.

A special class or group of men emerged who were well-versed in these rules. That class was the class of the Brahmins. They achieved a prominent position in society as a result of being masters in the interpretation of religious rites and sacrifices.

Buddhism and Jainism came into existence as a protest against this religion based on sacrifices and the caste system. Both of them developed in the sixth century before Christ and for some time they developed on parallel lines.

The founder of Buddhism was Gautama Buddha. He was born around 503 BC in the Republican state of the Sakyas situated at the foot of the Himalayas.

Buddhism was essentially an ethical religion. It did not talk of God or of Heaven and Hell. It urged a selfless and good life. The eightfold way that



the Buddha suggested to his disciples was:

> Right views, Right intentions, Right speech, Right action, Right living, Right effort, Right mindfulness, Right communication.

In a way some of the Buddhist teachings anticipated those of Jesus Christ. For instance, one of his teachings was that righteous men overcame

anger by kindness, evil by good — 'Never in the world does hatred cease by hatred; hatred ceases by love. Go into all lands and preach this Gospel. Tell them that the poor and the lowly, the rich and the poor are all one and all castes unite in this religion as do the rivers in the sea.'

Buddhism spread like wild-fire throughout India. This process was helped through its adoption by Emperor Ashoka of the Maurya Dynasty. Ashoka abandoned the path of military glory and dedicated himself to the spread of religious tolerance, kindness and charity. For the noise of the war drum was substituted the gentle sound of music.

The rock edicts bear testimony to Ashoka's work. He adopted the *dharma chakra*, or the wheel of justice, as the symbol of religion.

Ashoka was not satisfied with propagating Buddhism only in India. He sent emissaries west, south and east to preach this religion. In the west they went to Syria, Egypt and Greece. In the south they went to Sri Lanka and in the east they went as far as Korea, China and Japan, as also to the islands of Java, Sumatra and Bali. The countries of the east and south were won over to Buddhism and the religion flourished there even after it ceased to be a vital force in India.

Some reports have come down to us about the conditions during those early days of Buddhism. Ambassador Megasthenes of the Greek kingdom of Syria had been to the court of Chandragupta in

Pataliputra which we now know as Patna. He was amazed to find a civilization which was in every way equal to the civilization of his own country. He was particularly impressed by the absence of slavery. According to Will Durant, in *Our Oriental Heritage*, 'they lived happily being simple in their manners and frugal. They never drank wine except at sacrifices . . . The simplicity of their laws and their contracts is provided by the fact that they seldom go to law . . . Truth and virtue they hold alike in esteem.'

Another historian, Havell, also wrote about the way Pataliputra was governed. 'Pataliputra in the 4th century BC seems to be a thoroughly well-organized city and administered according to the best principles of social science.' What is true about Pataliputra was probably equally true about the other capital cities.

Buddhism held sway over India for about a thousand years. It contributed immensely to the enrichment of life, art and literature. It found powerful champions in kings and emperors and general acceptance among the large mass of the people.

In the process it lost its original simplicity and the vitality of an ethical religion. It became burdened with a number of dogmas. Buddha was himself converted into a god and a number of subordinate gods and goddesses were created to give him a proper setting. Myths were woven around his life. A monastic order of Bhikus grew which, in later times, degenerated into a class of priests. It was

not difficult for Brahminism to stage a come-back and gradually overcome Buddhism.

The other protestant faith that emerged was Jainism. It was established by Mahavira, who was born a few years before Gautama Buddha. Jainism prospered for some centuries in certain parts of the country. It then declined, just like Buddhism, but it left a permanent impress on Indian society.

Jainism professed a general attitude of indifference towards life and its pleasures. The great philosopher of Brahminism, Shankaracharya, gave that attitude of indifference a philosophical foundation through the doctrine of Maya. The Jains also left an impression on the food habits of the people. The widespread vegetarianism of the Indian people has been greatly influenced by Jain teaching.

The revival of Hinduism took place during the fifth and sixth centuries under the rule of the Guptas. Two of the Guptas—Samudra Gupta and Vikramaditya—extended their rule over a large part of the country.

This was a glorious chapter in our history. A number of travellers who visited India have left a record of gorgeous palaces, good roads, orderly administration and a prosperous and contented people. One of these travellers from China, Hüan Tsang wrote: 'The inhabitants were well off and there were families with great wealth. Fruit and flowers were abundant . . . People had a refined appearance and dressed in glossy silk attire.' The Italian, Nicola Conti, described the banks of the

Ganges lined with one prosperous city after another, each well-designed, rich in gardens and orchards, commerce and industry.

The credit for the re-establishment of Hinduism on the ruins of Buddhism and Jainism belongs to Shankaracharya. He was a Namboodiri Brahmin from Malabar, born in AD 788. He travelled all over the country and gathered supporters wherever he went.

Brahminism adopted the clever strategy of adding the Buddha to its pantheon of deities. He was given a highly honoured place as an incarnation of the great God Vishnu. It has been said in a humorous vein that Buddhism was killed by Brahminism's brotherly embrace.

In order to consolidate their victory and to ensure that there would be no fresh protests or challenges to their supremacy, the Brahmins evolved a rigid social order based on caste. The Manu Smriti and the Yagnavalkya Smriti laid down a strict code of conduct which could be transgressed only on pain of losing caste.

Hindu society of today was born during those days. Gods and goddesses of the Vedic and pre-Vedic period were collected in the Hindu pantheon. To them were added Gautama Buddha and other gods and goddesses.

The Hinduism that thus developed was an amalgam of many a creed and many a belief. Its adherents could worship any deity of their choice and hold any opinion that they liked. There was

an amazing catholicity of outlook and a marvellous spirit of tolerance. Religious persecution was unknown.

There were, however, certain matters which were obligatory. The Hindu must accept the sanctity of the Vedas. This was to a large extent a mere formality. More important was his acceptance of the caste system and the supremacy of the Brahmins. This converted Hinduism into a rigid social system with a hierarchy of caste. Every Hindu had his fixed place in society, determined by the accident of birth. There was no escape for the Hindu from this system.

Later in history, new protestant movements developed. The most important of them was Sikhism. It developed in the fourteenth century as an attempt to rid Hinduism of its idol worship and to bring Hindus and Muslims together. The Sikhs revered their Gurus and their writings. They did not observe the caste system.

Another protestant movement was led by Basava in the south. It was he who established the sect of Lingayats to be found in large numbers in Karnataka. They too did not believe in the caste system.

In recent times there were certain other groups which emerged in an effort at modernizing Hinduism. These were the Brahmo Samaj in Bengal, the Prarthana Samaj in Bombay and the Arya Samaj of Swami Dayananda in North India.

Hinduism apart, some other major religions have

come into India. The first of these is Islam and even today, after the partition of India, our country has a population of some eighty million Muslims. They are India's biggest minority. Since Islam is a religion that was born outside India and its tenets are reasonably well-known, we need not examine them in any detail.

Christianity, which had come in earlier, got more importance as a religion during the period of British rule.

Still smaller groups are the Parsis and the Jews who were accepted in India and have lived in a friendly and cordial atmosphere.

4

OUR PHILOSOPHY

India may be a land of religion, but it is even more famous for the philosophical thought it has developed through the centuries.

The germs of philosophy are to be found in the hymns of the Rig Veda. Though the Vedas invoke many deities, those who approached them were aware that they were but many names of the same universal God who stood behind them and controlled the world. There was much speculation regarding the nature and qualities of that God and it was suggested that that God was without shape and form and qualities.

The philosophy of the Upanishads has attracted world-wide attention. The German philosopher Schopenhauer has written: 'In the whole world there is no study so beneficial and so elevating as that of the *Upanishads*. It has been the solace of my life, it will be the solace of my death.'

These Upanishads are discourses given by a preceptor to his pupils who used to sit around him at his feet and learn from him through a system of questions and answers, very similar to the method used by Socrates in ancient Greece. The

very name Upanishad is derived from the practice of pupils sitting around the preceptor.

The Upanishads were composed during the period 800 BC to 500 BC. They number 108. They do not lay down any particular system of philosophy. They express the opinions of the wise men of those days on various philosophical problems put to them by their pupils.

The Upanishads are an attempt at solving the riddle of the universe. What is the universe? What



does it consist of? Is there any unity behind the diversity that one sees around us? What is man and what is his place in the universe? What is death and what happens after death? Is it possible to conquer death and attain immortality? What is God? Can one know him? What is the ultimate good and how does one realize it? These are among the questions posed by the seers in the Upanishads and answered boldly. The answers that the seers gave exhibit an acuteness of intellect, depth of vision and maturity of thought which have few equals in the history of the world.

The main idea that emerges from the Upanishads is that there is plenty of unity behind all the diversity one sees. That unity is the *Brahman* which is present in all things, living and otherwise. The *Brahman* manifests itself in each human-being as the soul which is indestructible and unchangeable. *Brahman* and the *Atman*, or the soul, are identical. The realization of this identity is the highest form of wisdom. The ultimate good lies in the attainment of that wisdom, which can be attained through meditation and contemplation.

Worldly wealth is nothing before the transcendant happiness that descends upon a man who realizes the unity between the *Atman* and the *Brahman*.

The Upanishads influenced Indian philosophic thought in the centuries that followed.

There were also certain other philosophical beliefs. The most important of these was the belief



in the doctrine of *Karma* and the transmigration of the soul. The soul is immortal and flits from one body to another. Man was born high or low, depending on the good or bad actions committed by him in an earlier life. The good or bad actions committed in one life would be rewarded or punished in the next life. The succession of births and deaths is a perpetual cycle. The ultimate salvation lies in getting a release or *Moksha* from that cycle.

Idol worship was another feature that developed. Most men worshipped a particular idol, some worshipped a number of idols.

The great philosopher Sankaracharya developed a new system of philosophy reaffirming and reorganizing the philosophy of the Vedas and the Upanishads. That philosophy is still alive though more than a thousand years have passed.

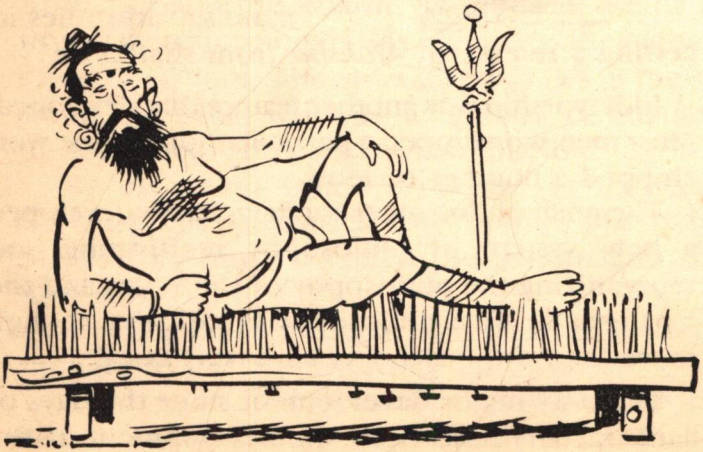
The only major development since the days of Sankaracharya has been the development of the

cult of *Bhakti* or devotion. The cult developed in many parts of India. In Bengal it was represented by Chaitanya, in U.P. by Surdas, in Gujarat by Mirabai, in Maharashtra by Dyaneshwer and Tukaram, and not least by Kabir.

This cult developed in the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The idea of a personal God and of a complete merger with him through devotion and surrender appealed to many. It was absorbed by Hinduism like many others. The Sufi movement in Islam has many similarities.

Yoga, which is still popular, lays down the rules of ascetic discipline and abstinence to be followed in order to cleanse the mind and to help it to concentrate on the contemplation of the *Brahman.*

As time passed, Yoga degenerated into various devices to win control over certain parts of the



body or to develop the power to perform certain acts regarded as miracles by the common man. You can see any number of yogis in religious gatherings at holy places, some standing or sitting in various difficult postures, others lying on beds of nails or subjecting their bodies to various kinds of torment.

Yoga is nowadays attracting attention in some circles in America and Europe as an escape from the boredom of modern materialist civilization.

5

OUR LANGUAGES & LITERATURE

We in India have some sixteen major languages, not to mention dialects. These include Hindi and Urdu which are now merging into a common language called Hindustani, Punjabi, Bengali, Assamese, Oriya, Gujarati, Marathi, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam and Munda. Is it not interesting that the number of languages in India is about the same as the number of languages in the whole of Europe? While Europe is divided into a large number of countries, all of us belong to the Union of India. This is quite an achievement and we should work hard to maintain it.

The history of Indian literature begins with the Vedas. For a long time Indian literature was spoken and not written. The Vedas were for centuries transmitted by the spoken word from one generation to another. They were reduced to writing much later.

In traditional Indian culture and philosophy, there is an important place for narration of the tale, whether folk story, myth or legend. The rishi or the sage emerges as the most authoritative storyteller. Every tale becomes a vehicle for making a

point. Many myths or legends have been used to illustrate an esoteric or mystic doctrine or an obscure truth.

This oral tradition involves the need for a living narrator. The rishi or sage is often replaced by an elder in the household—sometimes a grandfather or a grandmother—who continues this tradition as a means of imparting deep philosophical truths to younger people.

Writing first developed for recording commercial transactions rather than for giving shape to religious or literary compositions. Religious compositions were learnt by heart and were handed from guru to disciple by word of mouth. Literary compositions consisted of stories in verse about gods and heroes which were sung by bards. It was only later that they too were written down.

The Vedas are the earliest known literature of India. The Rig Veda, which is the most important of the Vedas, consisted of 1,028 hymns. Most of these hymns were petitions for crops, herds and long life. It is only a small number of them that rise to the level of literature. A few of them rise to great heights of eloquence, beauty and profundity.

The Vedas were followed by the Brahmanas, the Sutras, the Aranyakas and Upanishads. Max Müller writes in his book *India—What It Can Teach Us*:

> Whoever cares for the first intelligible development of religion and mythology: Whoever cares for the first foundation of what in later times we call the sciences of

astronomy, grammar and etymology: Whoever cares for the first intimations of philosophical thought, for the first attempts at regulating family life, village life, and state life, as founded on religion, ceremonial, tradition and contract—must in future pay the same attention to literature of the Vedic period as to the literatures of Greece and Rome and Germany.

Then came Buddhist literature from 250 BC onwards. In his book *Buddhist India*, Rhys Davis has this to say:

In the depth of philosophic insight, in the methods of Socratic questioning often adopted, in the earnest and elevated tone of the whole, in the evidence they afford of the most cultured thought of the day, these discourses constantly remind one of the dialogues of Plato.

Buddhist books were written in the language of the people: Prakrit and Pali, and not Sanskrit. Even at that time Sanskrit had ceased to be a spoken language.

Two well-known epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, were composed between 300 BC and AD 100. They have delighted and instructed people throughout the centuries. The stories in these epics have become part of the literary and cultural heritage of the Indian people. They help to unite the Indian people in spite of differences of caste, creed and language.

It is in this period that classical Sanskrit became the language that has come down to us. Never the spoken language of the common people, it was the language of the learned in which they carried on their philosophical discussions. Sanskrit got its

grammar from Panini and later Patanjali. This makes Sanskrit one of the richest and one of the most perfect of the world's languages. The famous orientalist, Sir William Jones, has described it as 'more perfect than Greek, more copious than Latin and more eminently refined than either'.

Sanskrit is particularly rich in poetry and drama. The golden age of Sanskrit literature lasted from AD 400 to 700. The dates of the greatest of these writers, Kalidasa, are placed anywhere from the first century BC to the first century AD. Kalidasa's *Shankuntala* has attracted world-wide attention. The German poet Goethe wrote of it:

> Wouldst thou the young year's blossoms
> and fruits of its decline,
> And all by which the soul is charmed,
> enraptured, feasted, fed?
> Wouldst thou the earth and heaven itself
> in one sole name combine,
> I name thee, O Shakuntala, and all at
> once is said.

Sanskrit literature began to decline after the ninth century AD. The Muslim invasions which began during the end of the century perhaps contributed to this decline. The rise of new languages also helped this process.

Tamil is the oldest among these languages. The others were Hindi or Hindustani, Marathi, Bengali, Gujarati, Telugu, Malayalam, Punjabi, Kannada and Urdu, which had their upsurge in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The rise of Poet Saints

helped the development of these new languages. They were social revolutionaries of a kind. They refused to accept the supremacy of the Brahmins and insisted on writing in the languages of the people. In that sense they were the counterpart of Martin Luther and the Protestants in Europe who insisted that the Bible should be translated from Latin, which was the monopoly of the clergy, to the languages of the people, such as English, French, German and Italian. Similarly, Indian protestants wrote in Hindi, Tamil, Bengali, Marathi, Gujarati, Telugu, Malayalam, Gurmukhi and Urdu. The poems of Dyaneshwar, Tukaram, Mirabai, Tulsidas and Kabir constitute a valuable heritage for us.

6

THE FAMILY

The earliest form of social organization in India, as elsewhere, was the tribe or the clan. The tribe was a larger group of people and a clan a somewhat smaller one. The members of both these groups were pretty numerous. Men and women in a tribe mated freely as they chose. It was the mother who reared and looked after the child for the first three or four years. The family was therefore a matriarchal institution. The child took its mother's family name. The father was either not known or unimportant. The matriarchal family survived in some cases till our own days. In the south of India, in Cochin, Travancore and Malabar and Mangalore, it lasted into the twentieth century till some so-called 'reformers', who sought to ape the British, got legislation passed to destroy it.

Then how did the family as we know it, consisting of a man, a woman and their children come into existence? The family first became noticeable somewhere between 600 BC and 300 BC. It accompanied and arose from the discovery of agriculture, which means the settled cultivation of the soil. It is when the fact dawned on primitive man that

sowing seed and ploughing and watering the soil could be expected to reap a harvest that what we call civilization was established.

Such a civilization flowered earliest in Asia, and centred round the Indus and the Ganges rivers.

As a result of agriculture being discovered, man ceased to be a wandering animal or a nomad. So in return for the liberty of travelling light through life, man gained a measure of security he had never known before.

Gradually, settled agriculture destroyed the tribe and the clan and it threw up its own social institution of the family.

As soon as settled agriculture became a way of life, the man became dominant and gave his name to the children. Thus was established the patriarchal family which, in the form it has come down to us, became the Hindu joint or undivided family. Such a family consisted of a man and his wife or wives and their children and children's children under the authority of the *Karta* or the head of the family — paterfamilias.

The patriarchal family emerged because it was the sort of unit best suited to cultivate the fields. Small plots to be cultivated separately by groups smaller than a clan resulted in the family. In those days, tractors and other agricultural machines were unknown and large-scale farming was not possible. The accumulation of private property took the form of surplus food. With that surplus a man bought other things. Among these was a woman.

In Hindustani the word 'aurat' and in French the word 'femme' do duty for both wife and woman.

Any digression from bearing and rearing children was frowned upon. In the Mahabharata



one reads,'for a woman to study the Vedas is a sign of confusion in the realm'.

The change over from the tribe or the clan to the family meant a fragmentation of society and created a danger of one family's hand being turned against another. That is why, along with the family, another social institution came into existence to maintain peace and order among families in that particular area. This was the beginning of what we call administration or government.

7

THE VILLAGE

We saw in the last chapter that, with the removal of the tribe and the emergence of the family, a void or vacuum was created. Nature, it is said, abhors a vacuum. Alongside the smaller group—the family, into which the tribe was splintered—emerged a much bigger group to fill the vacuum, and this group was the village community. It was a protective organism developed by tribesmen turned farmers—both against outside attack and against internal disputes. This development in India was a part of a world-wide phenomenon. It is claimed by a foreign writer, 'We do not know one single human race or one single nation which has not had its period of village communities.'

There are two factors which bound a village community together. One was common descent and the other was common ownership of land, which gradually gave way after some time to the land being divided between families. This process took several centuries. The village community managed to combine the absolute role of the head of the family over his family with a large measure of democracy and equality in the village as a



whole. At that stage there was no state or Government as we know it nor was there any statute book with laws on it.

One of the ways in which a disobedient villager was brought to book was to have his water supply cut off. Since there were no laws, customs had to be 'invented'.

The village community was ruled by a *samiti*, which means a meeting of people coming together. It was a general meeting of the Heads of Families in the village. Such a *samiti* met from time to time whenever required.

The *samiti* was a democratic body. Every member had a right to take part in any debate to which great importance was given. In the Atharvaveda, one of the sacred books of the ancient Hin-

dus, we find this prayer: 'Overcome thou the debate of him that is hostile to us, O Indira! Encourage us with thy might! Render me superior in debate.' It is sometimes said that the Indian mind of today is a dialectical[1] mind. We know now where this comes from!

In course of time the village *samiti* was to give way to what we know as the State. The village, 'the most enduring of collective forms' still survives. India is today still a country of villages. But as far away as Scotland the village and small town could also boast of survival as this charming folk rhyme testifies: 'Musselburgh was a borough[2] when Edinburgh was none and Musselburgh will be a borough when Edinburgh is gone.'

1 From dialectic or logical debate.
2 Historically, a small administrative unit in the U.K.

8

THE CITY

The city appeared rather late in the story of human society. It creates a different kind of civilization from the one that exists in the village. City life is called urban while village life is called rural.

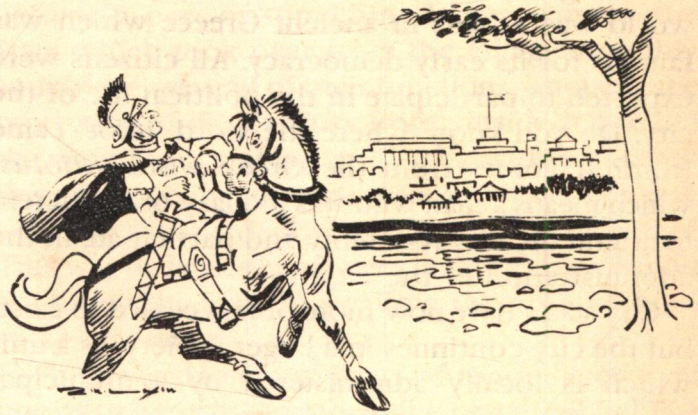
How and why did cities come into existence? The Greek thinker Aristotle tried to explain this phenomenon by saying that men came together in cities in order to live together; they remain together in cities in order to live a good life.

Some cities resulted from villages getting bigger and bigger. Other cities came into existence by being established from the start as urban societies. A river running out to the sea is often a point where a city developed. In other cases a good harbour provides a site. Calcutta is a city of the first kind while Bombay belongs to the second.

Another origin of cities was the establishment of a royal camp. Whenever the king or emperor pitched his camp, a city came into being. When the capital was moved elsewhere, the former capital continued to exist. In India, however, a major source of origin of the city was the temple around which people congregated. Cities first

came into existence, like the village community, in India and Egypt, Iraq and China.

The excavations at Mohenjo-Daro, in modern Sind, and Harappa, in Punjab, in Pakistan give us an idea of the kind of city that existed 3000 or 2500 years ago. It was a crowded collection of houses mostly built of brick. Each house had two storeys—some had more. Buildings were neatly



arranged in streets and rather narrow lanes, less higgledy-piggledy than in modern Bombay or Calcutta.

A little later the city of Pataliputra, which we know as Patna in Bihar today, developed a highly organized municipal system. 'Pataliputra in the 4th century BC,' wrote Havell, 'seems to have been a thoroughly well-organized city and administered according to the best principles of social science.'

Cities like Mohenjo-Daro and Pataliputra were

not only economic units consisting of an urban centre with villages surrounding it but also a political unit. As we shall see later, these cities were often city states which were either kingdoms or republics. When Alexander the Great invaded India in the fourth century BC., he found city states or republics flourishing at various places on the banks of the river Indus.

Among the best-known of the city states of the world was Athens in ancient Greece which was famous for its early democracy. All citizens were expected to participate in the political life of the city. Do you know where the word 'idiot' came from? It comes from the Greek word *'idiotus'* which means a man who was too lazy or indifferent to attend the city Assembly and participate in the administration of the city!

City states have now more or less ceased to exist, but the city continues in a larger society, as a unit which is locally administered by a municipal corporation or council.

9

KINGDOMS AND REPUBLICS

Gradually, the village assembly and the city became a part of something larger, namely, the State which took over from the village assembly and the city several of their functions—notably the protection of the territory from outside attack and the maintenance of law and order within it. Often these States came into existence as a result of a war, with the victors declaring themselves the rulers. This was because the villages and the cities would not allow the State to swallow them up without some resistance.

The governments of most of these States took one of two forms—a monarchy or a republic. The two types co-existed as neighbours. A kingdom was called *rajya* and a republic was called *ganarajya*. *Gana* means numbers and *ganarajya* means a state where large number of people rule, that is, a democracy.

It is reported that in the time of the Buddha, when some merchants from northern India travelled to the south, they were asked by the king of the Deccan who the king in their country was. The merchants replied: 'Your majesty, some countries

are under *ganas* (i.e. republics) and some are under kings.'

We are often taught that the Buddha's father was a king. That is not quite so. He was really the elected president of a republic. Since the title Raja was then used to describe both presidents of republics as well as kings, he was called a Raja.

These republics were highly democratic and were ruled by a *sabha*, which means 'a body of men shining together'. Sometimes these *sabhas* had



two houses, the second house being the House of Elders. The President of the republics, called the Raja, was elected by the people. Some of the states were so democratic that they actually refused to elect a king or even ministers. It is recorded that when Alexander the Great invaded India, these particular states had to send delegations consisting of 100 to 150 representatives to Alexander's camp for the purpose of negotiating treaties and signing them.

Even the king was elected only for his own lifetime. It was not obligatory in the beginning for his son to succeed him. In ancient India there was no divine right of kings. The Brahmins, who enforced spiritual supremacy, saw to this! The coronation ceremonies of the time took the shape of election songs sung by the *samiti* which had elected the king. Here is one of these songs:

> This state to thee is given for agriculture, for well-being, for prosperity, for growth.
> Firm as the heaven, firm as the earth, firm as the universe, firm as the mountains, let this Raja of the people be firm.
> For firmness the assembly here appoints you.

The king was, therefore, looked upon as something of a trustee for the people. If he betrayed this trust or tried to defy the people, he was sacked by the *samiti*.

When people, therefore, talk of democracy being a recent import from Europe to India, they forget that our country can be proud of a long tradition

of democracy extending into the past, which we lost later in history.

By the end of the fifth century BC, republics had disappeared from the political map of India. They were replaced by strong and big kingdoms ruled by autocratic kings who had gathered all the power into their hands. Will Durant has said: 'Poverty was the mother, war was the father, of the State.'

10

A CONTRAST AND A BALANCE SHEET

These then are our roots as a nation.

Looking back we have every reason to be proud of our distant past and our roots. Younger countries, like the U.S.A. and Brazil, which came into existence only a few centuries ago, envy us our past. We have a precious legacy.

But do we live up to it? Can we really say that our behaviour today lives up to our heritage? Most of us would be honest enough to say that it is not so and the picture we present today as a nation is not an altogether pretty one.

This is not a history book and there is no time or space here for the various chapters in Indian history, the various empires that succeeded one another in all their glory, the repeated invasions from the north-west and finally the invasion from the sea by the British.

Like kangaroos, therefore, let us leap from the distant past to the present. Let us consider what kind of people we are and whether we are worthy of our wonderful heritage and if not, why not?

Even during the last forty years, during which we have been free from foreign domination, our

record is a fairly mixed one. We have of course made progress in certain directions, but in other respects we have lagged behind what might have been expected.

When I wrote my earlier book for children in 1940 called *Our India* I had dreamt that once we were masters in our own home we would rid ourselves of most of the evils from which our country suffered. Alas! like most dreams, that dream has not been fulfilled. When I turn the pages of that little book of mine these days I find that most of the evils to which I had drawn attention are still there.

Why is it necessary for us to consider our present condition? The answer is very simple. If we do not consider our present conditions, how can we improve and make our nation something of which we can be proud?

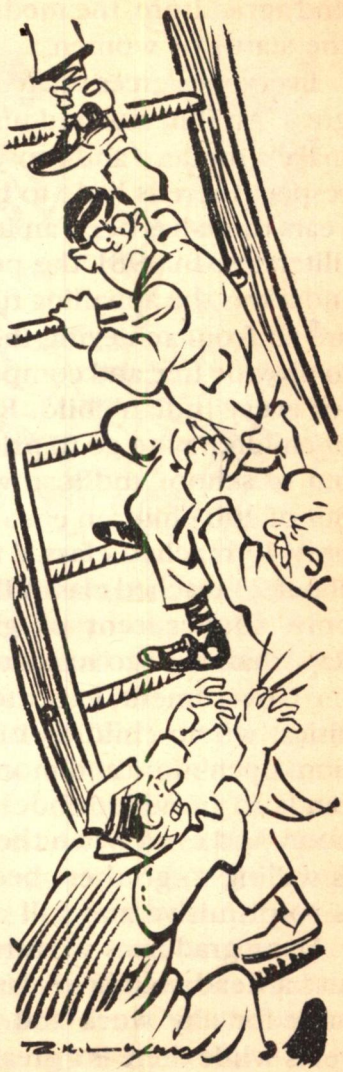
It is of course wrong to blame others for our own misfortunes as we often do. The fact is that most of our problems are of our own making. The key is in our hands.

So let us cast a good look at our strong and weak points, our achievements and our failures.

Our strongest asset is our intelligence. Nobody can doubt that the Indian people as a whole are brainy and clever. That we are a bright lot is brought out at international conferences where we usually shine. But that is also partly due to our use of the English language.

The best evidence of the fact that the Indian is

a talented person is to be found in the success of Indians in the U.S., U.K. and other countries abroad to which they may move. They are very much appreciated there and rise to key positions in science, research, academic life and technology of all kinds. That is because those are countries of opportunity. In those countries talent is appreciated, while in India there is not enough appreciation of hard work and intelligence. In fact, some people complain that we are in the habit of pulling down persons who rise to the top.

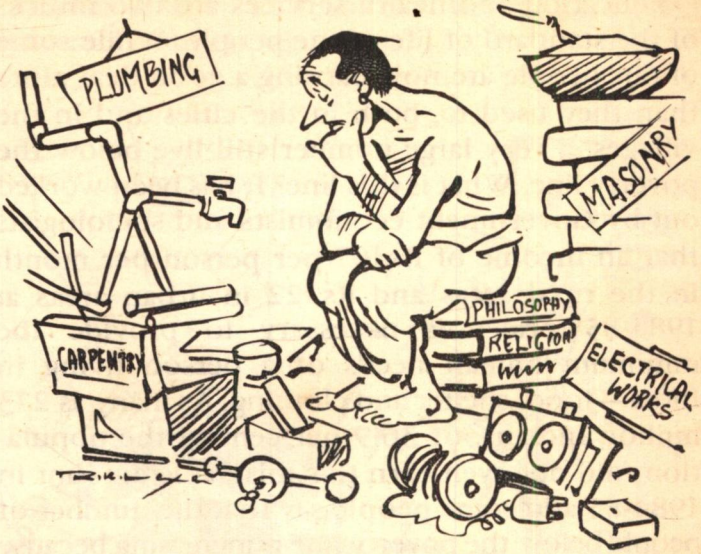


Our progress, or the lack of it, can be measured under many heads but in this short chapter we shall stick to education, health, the standard of living, industry

and agriculture, the media of communication and the status of women.

Everyone agrees that education is the key to progress. An illiterate and uneducated people cannot make a modern and prosperous nation. But in this respect there is little to boast of. In the last forty years there has been an increase in the number of illiterates. In 1981 the percentage of illiteracy in India was the appalling figure of 68.3 per cent. We are far from achieving the constitutional directive to provide free and compulsory primary education for every Indian child. Even of the small number of children who go to primary schools, many drop out of school and lose what they learned. Thus, out of 100 children enrolled in class I in 1971-72, only 37 reached class V four years later and only about 23 reached class VIII by 1978-79. As for girls, only 40 per cent of girls in some states like Rajasthan ever go to school. Why is this? Because the Government, eager to please the voters in the cities, where children of the rich receive education, open more and more colleges. This leaves no funds to provide schools in the villages for the poor. And even when there is a school no teacher is willing to go there because life in our villages is so primitive and full of hardship.

Many graduates we turn out of our colleges are just a dead weight. A large number of them are unfit for any work and remain unemployed for years while there is a great demand for technicians of all kinds—plumbers, carpenters, electricians,



motor-car mechanics and craftsmen. The prejudice against manual work prevents young people from learning the skills which we need. So on the education front, little progress.

Now let's see about health. Two criteria: Infant Mortality and Life Expectancy. In both there is progress but we are still at the bottom of the list, only above Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal in the whole world. Why? Not enough dispensaries, not enough doctors and nurses, not enough money provided for medicines and equipment. But in the cities there are modern hospitals and free expert medical advice available to the poor, some subsidized by Government and some by voluntary effort. Only a marginal improvement.

Education and health services are two indices of the standard of life of the people. While some of our people are now earning a good deal more than they used to, both in the cities and in the villages, a very large number still live below the poverty line. What is this line? It has been worked out by Government economists and sociologists that an income of Rs 107 per person per month in the rural areas and Rs 122 in urban areas at 1984-85 prices is necessary to provide the minimum human needs of a person living in India—food, shelter and clothing. As many as 273 million Indians, or 36.9 per cent of the population, did not even earn this miserable amount in 1984-85 and some people say that the number of people below the poverty line is increasing because of the increase in population.

In the field of industry, communication and technology we have certainly made progress. We have got the jet plane which carries us long distances in a very short time, but the level of efficiency and manner of the personnel who administer them has showed a marked decline. So too with the teleprinter and the telex. Our telephone system has expanded vastly in numbers though not in efficiency.

The computer has now arrived in India and I imagine we shall soon have even the silicon chip in our country. All this testifies to our intelligence, our initiative and the quality of entrepreneurship which have enabled our industrialists to progress

in spite of laws and policies which have been extremely unhelpful.



Our workers too are intelligent and quick to learn. An American who worked in India during World War II said on his return to the U.S.A. at the end of the war that the Indian worker is as good as any worker in the world provided he is given training and leadership. But therein lies the problem!

It can of course be argued that much of this progress of the last forty years has also been made in

other countries during that time. As a young man, I used to point out that the railway had come to all countries of the world in the nineteenth century under whatever rule or government they may have been. So what was so wonderful about the British introducing the railway in India? The same thing may be said about the jet plane, the teleprinter and other forms of modern technology like the computer which we have over here along with most other countries of the world.

As against these strengths and achievements we have also to take note of our limitations. Not all who have brains in India also have the ballast of character. There are too many clever-clever people in India, but are there enough good men and women? When Kasturba Gandhi, Mahatma Gandhi's wife, died in Poona during her imprisonment with her husband in 1943, I said at a public meeting that Kasturba was good woman and argued that this was more important than being a clever woman. I do not think I was wrong in my order of priorities.

If we have progressed in industry, we have lagged behind sadly in agriculture. Our agricultural productivity is extremely low. It is not the small size of our farms which is against us because in the Republic of China (Taiwan) and in Japan, where their farms are also small, they produce the highest yield of rice per acre in the world. It is not the fault of the Indian farmer who is a shrewd and intelligent man. It is simply that agriculture has

been sorely neglected during the last forty years. This is sad because more than seventy per cent of the Indian people work on the land. It is our basic industry. I am inclined to blame our townspeople, of whom I am one, for this. We are selfish and look after our cities and neglect the villages. Mahatma Gandhi used to say: 'We of the cities will do everything for the people of the villages—except get off their backs'!



One of the ways in which we have neglected agriculture is by not providing irrigation widely enough, so that during a bad monsoon men and cattle are denied water in many parts of the country. When I wrote *Our India* the people in the villages prayed to the rain gods, who were capricious, for rain and I quoted a charming little poem in Bengali by Jasimuddin which runs as follows:

Black Cloud, come down, come down;
Flower-bearing cloud, come down, come;
Cloud like cotton, Cloud like dust,
O let your sweat pour down

Blind Cloud, Blind Cloud, come
Let your twelve Brother Cloudlets come,
Drop a little water that we
May eat good rice

Straight Cloud, Strong Cloud, come
Lazy Cloud, Little Cloud, come
I will sell the jewel in my nose and buy
An umbrella for your head!

Soft Rain, gently fall,
In the house the plough neglected lies,
In the burning sun the farmer dies,
O Rain with laughing face, come!

In 1987, India went through a very bad failure of the monsoon resulting in drought. As a result people had to face great hardship for lack of water. I saw in the newspapers that people still prayed in the villages for rain. Isn't it sad that we have not learnt anything during the last forty years? In most

other countries they do not pray for rain. They know how to collect the rain water so that it can be put to use during a dry period.

We have many more radio stations than we had forty years ago, and T.V. did not exist at that time, but unfortunately these radio and T.V. stations are controlled by those who are in office. They broadcast what the Government wants and do not allow criticism of the Government's policies and actions. So their increase in number is only a partial improvement on the old days.

However, Indian newspapers have vastly improved in all directions. There are many more Indian language papers than before and also in English. And, even more important, they provide more varied and interesting information about our country and the world, and they play a very important part in uncovering many misdeeds of highly-placed persons. Such 'investigative reporting', as it is called, makes our newspapers and magazines very valuable in a country in which economic and political power is concentrated in a few hands.

Finally, take another index of a country's progress—the position of women. Through the ages, the Indian woman has been treated as inferior to men and her social status has been low and pitiful. Sati, the ban on remarriage for widows, child marriages, no redress against cruelty, concubinage and marrying more than one wife, and the purdah system are all the result of these orthodox attitudes. In the last century Raja Ram

Mohan Roy, Maharshi Karve and other social reformers decided that such treatment of women was a disgrace and they campaigned against these evils with some limited success. Laws were passed to prevent sati and child marriage, but it was only when Mahatma Gandhi encouraged women to come forward to join the struggle for independence that a large number of women came out of their homes to take up political and social work. Today, we have a number of women in high positions in industry and business, and they have shattered the myth that men are superior in any respect. But of course, such freedom from orthodox oppression has not reached more than a small proportion of our women. In the villages, and even in cities, the old ideas still prevail. Child marriages still occur on a large scale, widows are still treated like outcasts. As recently as 1987 there was a case of sati in Rajasthan, many men still have more than one wife, women continue to wear the burka. What is even more disgraceful, many of the so-called 'leaders'—political and social—justified these acts as being in keeping with ancient tradition!

No! we have a long way to go in this as in many other fields of national life.

India is of course a highly populated, large and diverse country, and managing its affairs is not at all easy but by and large, as a management consultant by profession, I am inclined to the conclusion that India has been and continues to be a very

badly managed country right upto this day.

Okay! we surely are not going to allow things to remain like this? We are going to march. We are going to go places . . . We should advance, but how? We shall try to see in the pages that follow.

11

THE NEED FOR REFORMATION AND RENAISSANCE

For a long time the countries of western Europe were in the grip of what were called 'The Dark Ages'. It was a period of ignorance, stagnation and cruelty.

But then two important things took place. One of these was called the Reformation. A great deal of the backwardness of Europe at that time was due to the unquestioning acceptance of the dictates and decisions of the Pope, the head of the Roman Catholic Church. Whatever he said was law and could not be questioned either by priest or by people. As a result of this the individual and his conscience did not count at all. The Holy Inquisition saw to that!

Yet another aspect of this oppression was that the Holy Bible and scriptures were in Latin and not available in the languages of Europe like English, French, German and Italian. The Clergy therefore monopolized all information and knowledge with which they dominated the minds of the people.

Martin Luther who led the Reformation attacked not only the infallibility of the Pope but he also

asserted the rights of the individual and his conscience. He demanded the translation of the Bible into the languages of Europe so that the scriptures were available to the people.

These revolutionary demands led to fierce controversy and even warfare, such as the massacre of the Huguenots in France, the Thirty Years War and the Hundred Years War. But in the end the free



spirit of man won, and in many countries of Europe, like England, the Protestants won supremacy.

This social revolution was accompanied by what is called the Renaissance or the Enlightenment. 'Renaissance' in French means rebirth. This was a flowering of all the creative talents of the people, whether in the field of architecture, painting, poetry, music, literature, drama, science or technology. The Renaissance took western Europe right to the forefront of civilized nations.

What India needs today is a reformation and a renaissance. The reformation will free the Indian people from outdated religious taboos and orthodox attitudes which prevent social change. The reformation would also put an end to untouchability and other evils manifested in the caste system. It would free women from the indignities they suffer in the rigid patriarchal family which is out of tune in these democratic times.

What does the Reformation require? That the religious heads of the Hindu, Muslim and other religions should hold discussions with members of their own faith and decide on how to reform their religious practices and their beliefs in conformity with modern scientific thought. Once people are free from the rigid dogmas of their religion they would be free to question the institutions and beliefs which have been thrust upon them.

This in turn would allow them to take a fresh

look at the world in which they live and to find new expression for their talents in all fields of life. It would pave the way to a Renaissance which would cover the entire country and would not be confined to small groups of privileged people, as is the case today.

12

UNITY IN DIVERSITY

If India needs a renaissance to revive the glories of the past, such as Europe had after the Dark Ages, we shall have to face the present situation before we can look ahead hopefully at the future.

I believe, as a result of a great deal of exposure to people of all classes and kinds, including the tribal people of Ranchi and the farmers of Rajkot, that the Indian people are by and large both intelligent and not lacking in character. Yet truth demands that we face the reality which is not all beautiful.

Since the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi on 30 January 1948, India has lacked the leadership we people deserved. Four decades of the absence of adequate leadership have taken their toll, and yet the devotion to 'farm, family and freedom', as Rajaji described it, is still to be found in remote areas of the country as far apart as Nagaland and Kanyakumari.

There is of course wide diversity and divergence in the nature and character of different types of people who make up India. But there is enough in common to permit generalization. Unity and



Diversity are not enemies. In the case of India, unity is only possible if diversity is cheerfully accepted.

It is common for people to say that the Sikhs have such and such characteristics, the Syrian Christians have such and such characteristics and the Parsis yet another set of qualities. There is great danger in generalization of this kind. Each of these groups have an infinite variety of individuals. One contradicts anything that might be said about another.

When I was a student in England there was a book published called *The Myth of National Character* which showed how inaccurate such generalizations are: The Englishman was 'remote', the Frenchman 'amorous' and the Russian 'ruthless and dominating'. This is a good warning about making generalizations about the Indian people and the various types that compose it.

In a little book such as this, where one has to simplify a little, allowance has to be made for a certain amount of simplification, yet it is broadly true that we Indians offer an example of unity in diversity.

Are we a nation or state? It all depends on how we define the words. A state and nation are not the same thing. Some nations are divided into more than one state and some states contain more than one nation. I would describe India as a nation in the making; that is, we are a collection of peoples, each with its own language and distinc-

tive identity, and many of them more numerous than some nations in Europe and elsewhere.

When I was in school people only married people of their own religion or their own caste. A marriage between two different kinds of Indians were frowned upon not only by the so-called communities but also by the law. At that time two Indians who professed different religions but wanted to marry had to renounce their respective religions. They had to affirm solemnly before the marriage that they had renounced their respective religions and did not practise any known religion. Now any two Indians marry, if they so desire. They do so in increasing numbers. In those days the parents of both sides would turn their backs on the couples. They do not often do so now. Good.

We do mix but not at the rate at which people in other countries do. When we go to other countries we do not intermingle freely with other people there and become an active part of their society. That is why other countries do not welcome our settling in their countries. They complain that we keep to ourselves and our customs, that we return to India to find brides and that we return to India to die.

Under Roman law there are two kinds of animals or birds. The first type is the *animus revertendi*, that is those that have the homing instinct or the instinct to return home. The other kind does not have this instinct. Under Roman law if you find an animal or bird of the first kind you cannot

become its owner, but if you find and acquire an animal or bird of the second kind you can become its legal owner. Indians evidently belong to the first category.

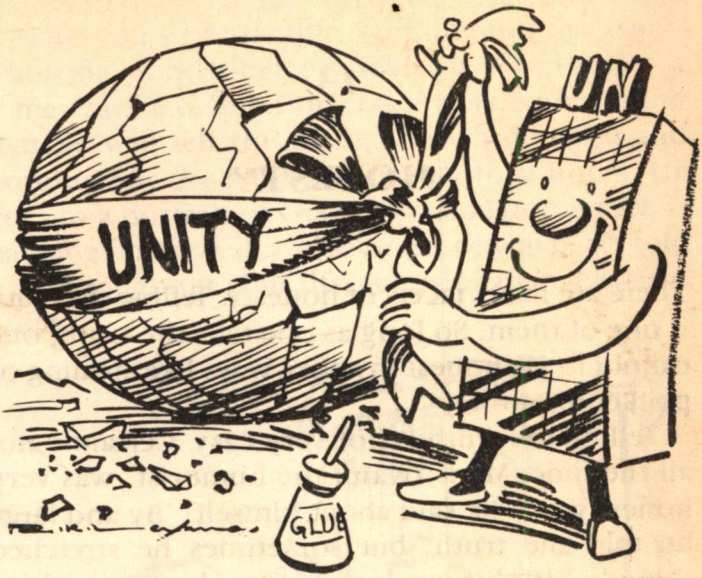
When I was in Brazil in 1948-49 I was told they did not welcome Indians or Japanese because they and their children did not become Brazilians and forget their past.

As I have mentioned, many more educated people have begun to mix, and gradually one would expect more and more young Indians to be only Indians and nothing else because their parents come from different parts of the country.

We claim to be nation. What is a nation? A nation has been described as a group of people with an illusion about a common origin and an aversion to a common opponent.

British rule in India certainly helped to make us more of a nation by providing both a provocation and a cement. Now that British rule has gone, there is no one to help us in that way and it is now entirely up to us whether we shall evolve into a nation or break up into smaller ones. Western Europe which is inhabited by a number of different nations is these days trying to become one community. The countries of western Europe are slowly but steadily surrendering part of their sovereignty to a larger unit.

The world is today shrinking. The wireless, the telephone, the telex, the teleprinter and the jet plane are all fighting distance and making it pos-



sible to communicate. So too in economic affairs, the world is becoming one market.

World unity is now on the agenda of history and the sovereign nation state is on its way out. With the rest of mankind we shall have to stop being narrow-minded, stop suspecting foreigners and learn to live as good neighbours. The United Nations is a small but halting step in this direction.

Meanwhile, let us step in front of a mirror, and have a good look at ourselves and consider what we need to do to look more attractive.

13

HONESTY

There are many facets of honesty. Telling the truth is one of them. So long as one tells the truth, one cannot be dishonest in other ways like stealing or pocketing money.

Telling the truth is not very easy. Certainly not all the time. Mark Twain, the humorist, was very honest when he said about himself: 'By and large he told the truth, but sometimes he stretched things a little.' If we can say that about ourselves, we should be pleased.

Some people distinguish between a white lie and black lie. A white lie, it is claimed, is one which does not do anyone else any harm. If, for instance, I am asked to address a meeting in Timbuctoo and I have already many speeches to deliver that month and I excuse myself on the ground that I am not free on that particular day, I am guilty of a white lie. Similarly, when a hostess asks me to dinner on a particular day and I know she does not serve dinner till 11.00 pm. which is well past bed-time for me, I plead my inability by reason of a previous engagement. That again is a white lie. The trouble with a white lie is that one does not always know

where to draw the line between white and black.

Have you seen the film 'Nothing But the Truth' featuring Bob Hope? I enjoyed it when I saw it some years ago. Bob Hope takes a bet with a friend that he will tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth for twenty-four hours. He goes to a portrait of George Washington which is hanging on the wall and says: 'Since you never told a lie throughout your life, surely I can manage for a day?'



But, alas, he does not. His friend makes him tell the whole truth to his boss who promptly fires him. He is then made to tell the whole truth to his fiancée who then breaks off the engagement and, at the end of the twenty-four hours, Bob Hope is ruined. So he goes to George Washington's portrait, shakes his fist at him, and says: 'You old humbug, you pretended to tell the truth all your life; see what happened to me in twenty-four hours.'

Mahatma Gandhi preached the twin virtues of truth and non-violence. The massive corruption that is a part of our national life today, not only of our ministers but of many of our citizens, would not have been there if we had remembered Mahatma Gandhi's advice.



14

WHAT IS A COMMITMENT?

We think we know the answer to this question but quite often we don't. Quite often we take a target as an achievement. Our Five Year Plans are a very good example of this.

Quite often people agree to do something but fail to carry out their commitments. One wonders whether they really meant to carry out their promise even when they made it. Sometimes of course a man lies and makes a promise with every intention of breaking it. But most promises which are broken are made with the best of intentions but after some time has passed the man or woman who made the promise tends to take it less seriously and does not feel guilty about breaking it.

The failure to keep engagements is a good example of this. Excuses made in such cases are unconvincing. 'I was delayed by this or that.' Sure, but on enquiry it turns out that one had to do something which mattered more than the promise made. 'I was delayed by a previous engagement.' Sure, but why did you not cut it short by telling the person concerned that you had to be somewhere else at that time?

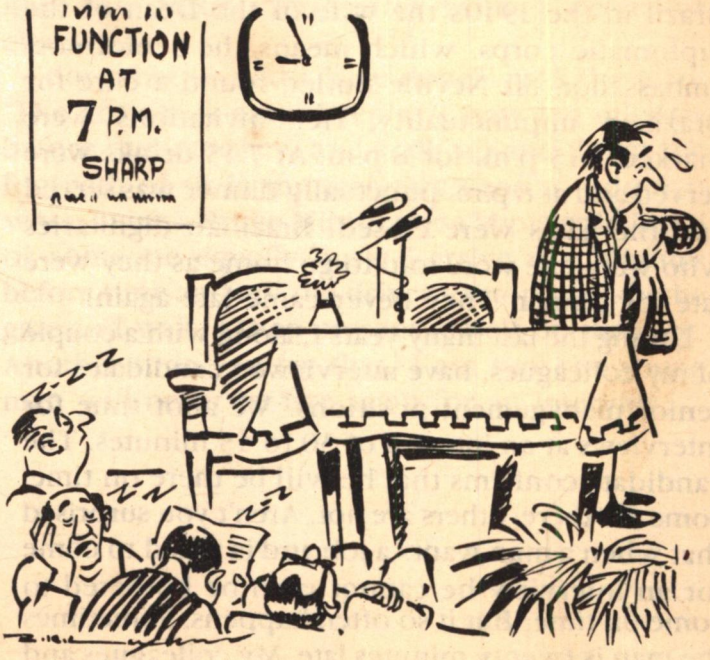
We are not the only unpunctual people in the world. All countries that are agricultural and have not yet become industrialized are rather vague or flexible about time. In agriculture, unlike business, time is not money. My experience in Russia in the twenties and thirties, and in Brazil in the forties taught me that this was a common weakness. In Brazil nobody was on time unless one stipulated *hora inglesa*, which means British time. It was only then that a Brazilian realized that 3 p.m. meant 3 p.m. and not 5 p.m.

Gandhiji and Rajaji were two notable exceptions to unpunctuality. When Rajaji found that people had not come on time for a meeting and party organizers were keeping him from appearing on the platform on time because people had not collected in the audience, he refused to co-operate but said that he would sit on the platform from the time of the meeting till the audience had collected. He was not prepared to be unpunctual because others were. I noticed that soon audiences came on time for Rajaji's meetings because, unlike other political leaders, he would not keep them waiting.

Gandhiji was equally keen on punctuality. I remember in the 1930s, in the midst of a discussion I had with him in his ashram at Wardha, he would stop me in the middle of a sentence and say, 'Masani, your time is over'. He pointed to the kitchen clock in front of him to prove his point. 'But I haven't finished what I had to say Bapu,' I would protest. 'Never mind,' he would say, 'this

time belongs to someone else who is waiting outside by appointment. You can go out and join the bottom of the queue and come back again when your turn comes.' I would do so and when I entered the room again a few hours later the Mahatma would say, 'This morning when I interrupted you, you were saying . . .' He would put the words in my mouth and ask me to continue. That was wonderful consolation for the interruption.

Meetings in India seldom start on time. Ten to fifteen minutes are considered a legitimate delay. In this way the punctual are punished for the



benefit of the unpunctual. The same thing happens at dinner parties. You are invited at 8.30. It is 9.30 but no dinner is served. Somebody inquires in a whisper. He is told that 'Mr and Mrs so and so have not yet arrived'. They come at 10 p.m. and expect to be given drinks. So the guests who came at 8.30 wait till 11 p.m. when they are half asleep.

At a friend's home not long ago our host and hostess waited for a certain couple to turn up. They turned up at 10 p.m. and cheerfully announced that they had already had dinner somewhere else!

When I was Ambassador in Rio de Janeiro in Brazil in the 1940s the wife of the Dean of the diplomatic corps, which means the seniormost ambassador, Sir Neville Butler, found a cure for Brazilian unpunctuality. Her invitations were marked 7.45 p.m. for 8 p.m. At 7.45 drinks were served and at 8 p.m. punctually dinner was served and the gates were closed. Brazilian dignitaries who were late were told to go home as they were late for dinner. They never came late again!

During the last many years I, along with a couple of my colleagues, have interviewed candidates for senior management positions. We allot time for interviews at an interval of 30 to 45 minutes. The candidate confirms that he will be there on time. Some are there, others are not. Aren't you surprised that when a man wants a job and is asked to come for an interview he cannot even be bothered to come on time? But it so often happens. Sometimes the man is twenty minutes late. My colleagues and

I are obliged to wait patiently for him to come.

I shall tell you what I do then. I get up to receive the man, shake hands with him and offer him a seat, all very politely. I then draw attention to the fact that he is twenty minutes late. He gives the usual excuse of the bus or train being late. I politely turn down the excuse and invite the gentlemen to leave. 'But aren't you going to interview me?' he asks in surprise. 'No,' I reply, 'if you are twenty minutes late when you want a job, how late will you be when you have the job? Your poor employer; fancy having to put up with you for the next few years. You suffer from a defect of character.'

'But what should I have done?' asks the man. 'The answer is easy,' I reply. 'Come ten minutes before the interview and walk up and down the footpath or sit in my secretary's room. I do that when I visit a Prime Minister or a Minister in Delhi or someone equally busy. I arrive five minutes before time and tell the driver to stop outside the gate and wait. I then present myself on the spot. Another time you try that.' I am sure the young man will never be late again for an interview.

15

DISCIPLINE

Ever heard of it? Yes? You are lucky. Most children in India haven't.

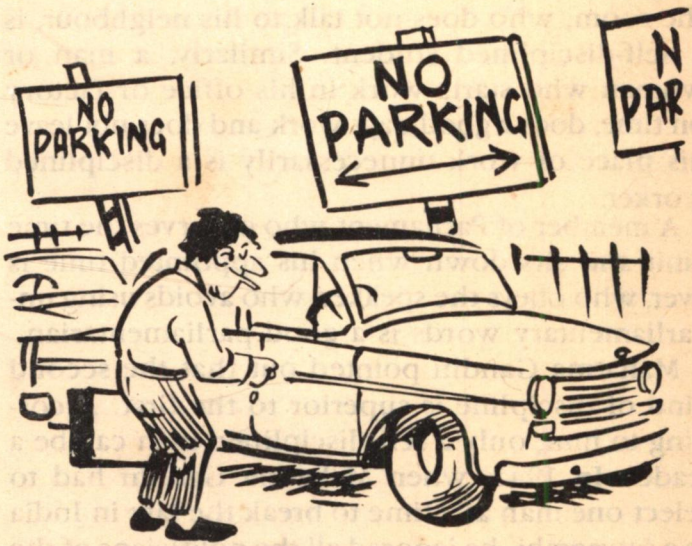
If you turn to the dictionary, which I hope you do occasionally to find out the meaning of a word, you find that the meanings of discipline are 'mental and moral training', 'a system of rules for conduct' and 'train to obedience and order'.

At the Leslie Sawhny Training Centre in Devlali, we were told that it was the first time that the trainees had become aware of discipline. Neither their parents nor their teachers in school had taught them to obey rules or to attend on time. At the training centre they were refused a meal when they came too late. All of them learnt to be on time and by the end of the course they were glad that they had been taught what discipline was.

I had a very dear friend called Leslie Sawhny who retired as a Colonel from the Indian Army and became a very successful industrialist. He was loved by young people who found in him a warm and lovable leader. Talking of discipline he used to point out how a *kisan* or peasant who did not know anything about discipline or cleanliness or

punctuality, after a few months of drilling and training on joining the army, became the finest and most disciplined *jawan* or soldier in the world.

In our country discipline is very weak. On the roads both motorists and pedestrians break traffic rules and create dangers and problems for themselves and others. Among these are changing lanes, overtaking a car on the wrong side, blowing a horn in a silence zone, parking in a no-parking area, and exceeding the speed limit.



In Parliament and the Assemblies in the states, members defy the speaker who is in the chair and prevent the proceedings from being carried out in a quiet and dignified manner. In schools and

colleges students defy their teachers and cheat during exams.

Discipline can be of two kinds. The first is when it is imposed on someone from outside. In this way soldiers are ordered by their officers to obey commands, prisoners are ordered by their warders or jailers. That is one kind of discipline.

Another, and superior kind is self-discipline, where a person does what he should without somebody ordering him. A student who is in his class on time, who gets up when the teacher enters the room, who does not talk to his neighbour, is a self-disciplined student. Similarly, a man or woman who starts work in his office or factory on time, does a good days work and does not leave his place of work unnecessarily is a disciplined worker.

A member of Parliament who observes the time limit and sits down when his appointed time is over, who obeys the speaker, who avoids using unparliamentary words is a good parliamentarian.

Mahatma Gandhi pointed out that the second kind of discipline is superior to the first. According to him, only a self-disciplined man can be a leader. In 1941, when Mahatma Gandhi had to select one man at a time to break the law in India as a satyagrahi, he ignored all the politicians of the day and chose Acharya Vinobha Bhave since he considered him to be the most disciplined man he knew. Gandhiji was right. It has been said that Alexander the Great conquered the world, but he

could not conquer himself. That is, a conqueror of men, lacked self control. How sad.

16

SAYING 'NO'

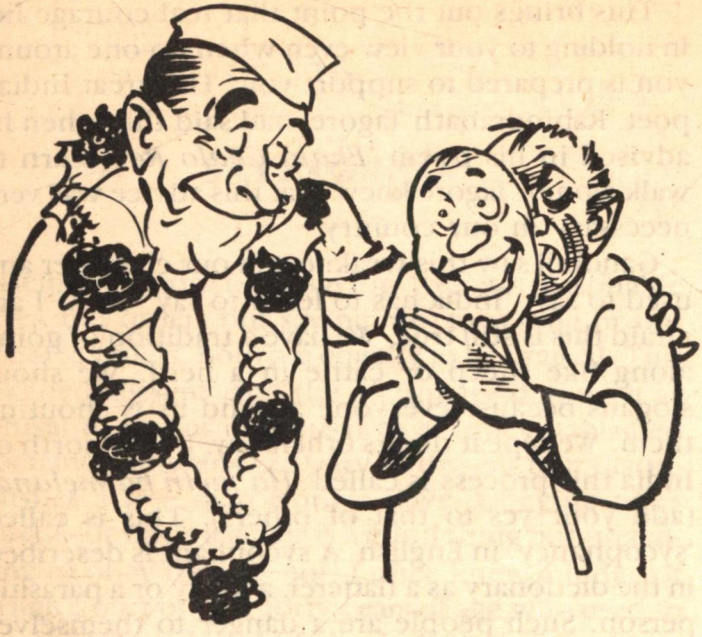
Discipline consists in saying 'yes' to reasonable rules and orders but saying 'no' to wrong or oppressive orders. Both are equally to be praised. This is called 'dissent' and the dictionary defines it as refusal to assent or refusal to accept established doctrines. It is this capacity to dissent that distinguishes a free man from a slave. Obeying one's parents or one's teacher is a good thing but pretending to obey them is not. I once knew a judge of a High Court of over forty years of age who used to smoke despite his old father's dislike of smoking. When the father entered the room my friend hid his cigarette behind his back. When I asked him why he did so, like a schoolchild caught cheating, he said he wanted to respect his father's wishes. In my view there are only two honest things he could have done. One was to have stopped smoking altogether and the other was to have smoked in his father's presence while asking to be excused for doing so.

An English poet has written:

> They are slaves who dare not be
> In the right with two or three

This brings out the point that real courage lies in holding to your view even when no-one around you is prepared to support you. The great Indian poet, Rabindranath Tagore, had said this when he advised in his poem *'Ekalo Chalo Re'* (Learn to walk alone). Tagore knew that this advice was very necessary in our country.

Gandhiji saw this weakness in our character and used to say: 'India has to learn to say "no".' I am afraid this is still true. We have a tradition of going along like sheep or cattle in a herd. We shout slogans because everyone around us is shouting them. We repeat things others say. In the north of India this process is called *'Ha mein ha melana'* (add your yes to that of others). This is called 'sycophancy' in English. A sycophant is described in the dictionary as a flatterer, a toady or a parasitic person. Such people are a danger to themselves and to others. By pretending to agree, when at the back of their minds they know it is wrong, they become cowards and lose their self-respect. The effect on the person flattered is even worse. When a king or ruler or leader is flattered by his followers it is found that flattery often goes to his head. He becomes arrogant and oppressive. It is part of human nature to enjoy flattery and we have to be very careful not to encourage flatterers. Even good men become victims of flattery. I was a friend of Jawaharlal Nehru till he became Prime Minister of India. One could agree or disagree with him without his losing his temper. But once he became



Prime Minister, the flattery of the sycophants in Delhi was so powerful that Jawaharlal Nehru got angry when one disagreed with him. This was bad for him because it came in the way of his being told the truth or being given good advice. This is historically true, as most kings and emperors lose touch with their people because flatterers come between them.

Gandhiji was a great democrat. Satyagraha, the weapon of truth, is a weapon of the defence of democracy. He said that even one man or woman has the right to defy a law provided he does not

run away but stays where he is in order to pay the price. In other words, the conscience of the individual is superior to the law of the land provided a man or woman has the courage of his or her convictions. Thus bad laws ultimately get changed.

17

WORK

Work while you work and play while you play
That is the way to be happy and gay.

But what is work? Perhaps the simplest way of defining it is that it is some form of physical or mental effort for some purpose which may be to produce an article of daily use or a machine or a book or a play or write a poem or compose a piece of music.

Not all work gives pleasure. Not all work is easy. Some of it is really tiring and boring but unless people work they will not be able to eat or drink or live comfortably. As a great economist has said, 'There is no free lunch.' Everything has to be paid for. It is generally paid for in money which one gets by doing work of some kind. Work has another quality apart from giving us the things we need in life. It also helps one to keep sane. A cruel punishment is to lock up a person in a room with no work to do, nothing to read, no music to listen to, no one to talk to. This is called solitary confinement. It is punishment given in prison to those who defy jail rules.

Work does not come naturally to most people.

We have to be trained and motivated to work.

At the one extreme there are people who dislike work. Such people are called lazy. A British humorist Jerome K. Jerome wrote: 'I love work. I can sit and look at it for hours on end.' On the other hand there are people who love work. According to the author of a book called *Workaholics*, too much addiction to work is as bad as addiction to liquor. 'All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy', is an old and well-founded saying.

Throughout the world and particularly in India there are only a few workaholics but millions of lazy people. You may judge a country's capacity to work by the number of holidays it has in a year. India would get the first prize for laziness because of the ridiculous number of holidays in a year. We have at least twenty-five but we are still not satisfied and are happy when someone dies and a holiday is declared. How absurd!

I remember when I was a schoolboy, when a teacher or somebody died we boys left our schools gleefully shouting 'holiday-holiday'.

A friend of mine has calculated how much an Indian government employee works throughout the year. It is disastrously low. According to him it works out to 1440 hours here in India in contrast to 2180 hours a year in Japan.

But even this is misleading. If we take into consideration the luxury of religious holidays, *utsavs*, fairs, festivals, deaths and other excuses for not working which occur from time to time every year,

the number of hours would drop to less than 1400 a year. My friend, by computing a working day at 7.5 hours, thus arrived at the conclusion that an average Indian Government employee works only 186 days out of 365 days in a year. How can any country hope to advance if laziness and sloth are encouraged in this way? It makes a mockery of Jawaharlal Nehru's adage *'aram haram hai'* and Indira Gandhi's words: 'There is no substitute for hard work.'



Even today clerks in banks and government offices are notoriously lazy and do not put in an honest day's work. Clerical employees in Government secretariats say that the pay that they get is to attend office. 'If you want some work done you will have to pay extra', meaning a bribe.

No wonder we are a poor country because productivity and prosperity are the result of hard work.

For a large nation to turn from sloth to hard work takes time. But nothing stops you or me from working hard and if all of us work hard our nation as a whole will work hard and be prosperous. So the cure lies in ourselves. That is what is called having a work ethic. Do you have one? How about getting one for yourself?

18

TOO MANY PEOPLE

When I asked someone who had been to New Zealand what she enjoyed most there, she said 'driving along the roads and not seeing a human being for miles!' That was a lovely contrast from our own streets which are crowded and swarm with people.

This brings us to one of the major problems in India—too many children. In Australia it is said:

Get the habit
Of the rabbit
Multiply or die

We can adapt it to our situation. 'Get the habit of the rabbit/Multiply *and* die,' because that is exactly what happens when too many children are born. Many children die within the first year of their birth. That is what we mean when we say that India has high infant mortality.

On television you will see short films of which the moral is that there should be an interval of three years between the birth of two babies in a family. Otherwise, it is pointed out, the second child will turn out to be a weakling and the mother is hardly able to attend to the first as she has



has to shoulder the responsibility of caring for another baby.

Our country can hardly progress till this evil is eliminated. No policies, however sound or wise, can help us to produce enough food and enough articles of daily use for people who multiply at this rate.

There is a great deal of talk about family planning, but little progress has been made and by the end of the century the position can be even more frightening than it is today. Our government, which professes great concern about this problem, does precious little about it. Only about one per cent of the outlay of our Five Year Plans is allotted

to population control. Even this is not always spent.

Then again, all the tubectomies for women and vasectomies for men which are claimed do not actually take place as the money allocated for this purpose is pocketed by politicians and others who produce false certificates of such operations.

We cannot of course use force on people in a matter like this, but we can give encouragement to deserving people by rewarding them. For instance, it is quite democratic to levy an increased income tax for every child over the first two. On the other hand, there could be a rebate of taxation for people who have no children or have only one child. Similarly, we can make arrangements that a government employee does not get a promotion or increment in his job if he insists on having a third or fourth child.

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ARE YOU A GOOD NEIGHBOUR?

Cleanliness, it is said, is next to godliness. True enough.

But then there are many different conceptions of cleanliness. Different people are clean in different ways. The Indian bathes a lot, but till recently the Englishman didn't. On the other hand, the Indian thinks nothing of throwing rubbish or dirty water out of the window on to the footpath where you or I may be walking; or of collecting cockroaches, which he is reluctant to kill, and leaving them on the landing so that they may enter the neighbour's flat.

That certainly is not good neighbourliness, and being a good neighbour is part of being civilized. Playing the loudspeaker so loudly, while you listen to the news or music, that your poor neighbour cannot sleep; or exploding fire-crackers at Diwali-time or otherwise which wakes people out of their sleep and makes the poor dog cower with fear under the bed, are not examples of good neighbourliness.

Blowing the horn in a slience zone is a form of noise pollution. It is because of this that the hear-

ing of older people in India is more defective than that of people of the same age in other countries.

I had almost forgotten the Indian habit of talking at the top one's voice, which is another form of noise pollution. I had to travel third class by train as Secretary of a political party because my party couldn't afford travel by a higher class. The third class compartment in my time was a very long one. But anyone could follow the conversation at the other end of the compartment and learn the names of the people there, their profession, income, details of their families, which they were exchanging with each other at the top of their voices because they did not know how to carry on a private conversation.



That is why many

Indian children who listen to their mother and father conversing at the top of their voices also get into the habit of speaking too loudly. I am sure you don't do so.

So we have a lot to learn about being good neighbours, about cleanliness and about fighting pollution of various kinds.

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THE GOLDEN RULE

Surely you know the Golden Rule. Your parents or your teacher should have taught it to you by now. Otherwise, ask them why they have not. 'Do unto others as you would that they should do unto you', is the Golden Rule.

It is very hard to practice because most of us have a double set of standards, one for ourselves and another for all others. We condemn other people, but fail to judge ourselves by the same standard. That is why Gandhiji often said: 'Turn the searchlight inwards.'

Moral Re-armament (MRA) people say the same thing in their slogan: 'When you point a finger at someone, three fingers point back at you.' How true!

Before one does something which involves another a good question to ask ourselves would be: 'How would I feel if he did that to me?' That might stop us doing something which is unkind or lacking in consideration for others.

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THE FUTURE IS YOURS

The intention of this book has not been to preach. We of my generation have made such a mess of our country's affairs that, in my opinion, we have no right to preach to young folk. But, as I have explained earlier, unless you look at yourself in the mirror you cannot really tell whether or not you have brushed your hair, or in the case of those who are in their adolescence, you have shaved or forgotten to do so. But that can happen.

There is an interesting story about what happened in Rashtrapathi Bhavan when Mr C. Rajagopalachari, popularly known as Rajaji, was the last Governor-General after the British handed over power. One of his ADCs forgot to shave that morning and joined Rajaji at breakfast. Rajaji, who had a dry sense of humour, decided to teach the young man a lesson in a rather amusing way. 'I am sorry you are not well this morning,' he said to the young ADC, 'you look very sick. You must see a doctor immediately. I suggest you skip breakfast today.' Thus dismissed, the young man went to his room and stood in front of a mirror to find out what was wrong with him. He then realized he had

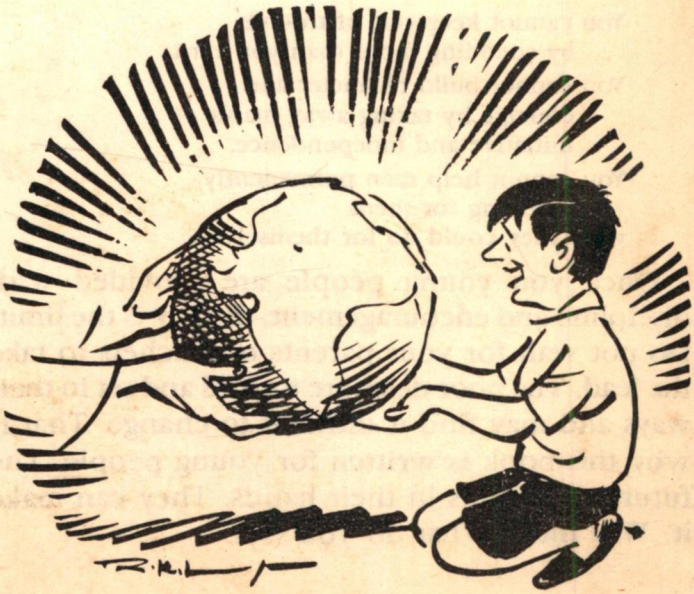


not shaved that morning. At lunch-time, when he reappeared after a shave, Rajaji said: 'I am glad to see you looking so much better. The doctor's medicine has already started working.'

We must, therefore, look at our failings which of course we have in common with the rest of humanity. We shall then be in a much better position to consider how to shed these deficiencies and move ahead. That is a task you children and younger people in India have to face. I am sure you will be

able to do so successfully when the time comes.

We Indians are more talented than most people. We are blessed with good brains and a capacity to do big things. This is what our doctors, engineers and teachers do when they settle abroad in more advanced countries and have the benefit of two things which we are deprived of in our own land. The first of these is encouragement and opportunity. Neither our government nor we encourage those who do something new or something big. On the contrary, we are apt to pull them down because we have glorified envy, which is a vice. The other thing we do not have in India is



discipline. As soon, therefore, as an Indian is provided with discipline and encouragement or opportunity, he goes places. Why don't we start doing this in our own country? We can do so by paying heed to some very wise words that fell from the lips of a great American, President Abraham Lincoln:

> You cannot bring about prosperity
> by discouraging thrift.
> You cannot strengthen the weak
> by weakening the strong
> You cannot help the poor
> by destroying the rich
> You cannot establish sound security
> on borrowed money.
> You cannot keep out of trouble
> by spending more than you earn.
> You cannot build character and
> courage by taking away man's
> initiative and independence.
> You cannot help men permanently
> by doing for them
> what they could do for themselves.

Once you young people are provided with discipline and encouragement, the sky is the limit. Do not wait for your parents or teachers to take the lead. The poor dears are too old and set in their ways and may find it difficult to change. That is why this book is written for young people. The future of India is in their hands. They can make it. Will they? What do you say?

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