

different issue) are in fact just new editions of earlier empires and can therefore only pass for evidence of decay because, exactly as with the West Roman Empire, continuity has been interrupted by the Western impact. It is that invasion by the civilization of the West and not any hypothesized immanent principle that has made such a deep incision in Asian history. At the same time the theory asserts far too much, in so far as it ascribes to Western civilization on a world scale the same dominant and revolutionary rôle it has played in the Europe of the past. No historian, however authoritative he may be, has any right to jump to any conclusions on this point; for no one can say at this juncture whether the present crisis points to anything beyond a passing disorder.

There are quite a number of signs that the transformation which the non-Western world is undergoing is not a movement in just one particular direction, but is more like a large-scale process of fermentation in which various extremely diverse and contradictory tendencies are involved. We see the non-Western religions parading as the champions of world peace, and yet providing an ideological foundation in the struggle for political power—hampered in the race to acquire strong military resources only by the limited material potential. We see the growth of modern forms of nationalism of a markedly progressive type, bent on uplifting and caring for the mass of the people; and side by side with all that—or sometimes cutting right across it—the emergence of violently reactionary modes of nationalism, inspired by an intense yearning to revive the religious patterns of the past. Everywhere modern parliamentary systems are springing up, most of them on such weak foundations and so sadly lacking a social structure which might effectively support them, that their collapse would in many cases appear inevitable. Where there is a new rising middle class, it is usually unable to withstand the tremendous pressure and attraction exerted by the bureaucratic system; and its economic ethos and organization are nearly always of a traditional kind. The need to avoid the disastrous mistakes made in the past by Western capitalism and to tie everything neatly to a planned economy leaves little enough room for independent economic forces to grow strong and thus to provide an influence which might permanently counter-balance traditional tendencies towards monopolistic centralism. When there is a deliberate attempt made to construct a secular state, a theoretical basis for assessing politico-religious ideologies radically

and critically is very often wanting; and sometimes the 'secular spirit' is just an offshoot of the same tree that bears the branches of religion. The ancient religious heritage can wear the disguise of a modern humanism or agnosticism; and beneath the surface of rationalistic philosophies there may well lurk a mentality addicted to magic and superstition. It is by no means unusual to find an intensified consciousness of historical mission and calling grafted on to an unsuperseded mythical outlook. That is the kind of total impression one gets over and over again from situations which may differ one from another quite widely in some respects. It will become more apparent, however, if we now proceed to concentrate our attention on the principal areas affected by the encounter with the West.

## 2. THE GROWTH OF INDIAN NATIONALISM AND RENASCENT HINDUISM

Because of the 'colonization' of India the entry of Western civilization into that country and its eventual penetration have in practice been identified with the consequences of the British ascendancy there. However far-reaching the political and cultural effects of this on Indian life have been, the foreign régime would never have made such a revolutionary impact on all levels of Indian society, had it not been for the overwhelming influence of the capitalist economic system. It was this, first and foremost, which so thoroughly transformed the structure of society—even in the villages—that the conditions were created for the rise of a national state and culture. In pre-British India the conditions necessary for this, whether objective or subjective, were entirely lacking. The conquests of earlier invaders had given them a political ascendancy which simply took the old social structures for granted and did nothing to change their economic foundations. British capitalism was the first invader to turn India into an economic colony, more and more closely geared to the interests of a rapidly expanding British industrial system. Marx had already offered the diagnosis that 'England had a double mission in India: one destructive, the other regenerating—the annihilation of the old Asiatic society, and the laying of the material foundations of Western society in Asia.'<sup>2</sup> The situation was not the same, however, as with the break-up of the traditional economy of the European countries; for there the transformation occurred from within and at the instance of the indigenous rising bourgeoisie, whereas with Ind'

it was a matter of foreign interests, not centred in the rule of a conquest-régime—as had been the case with previous invasions—but governed almost entirely by the economy of Great Britain. The consequence was that those very forces which served to free Indian society from the grip of an obdurate traditionalism at the same time made her the slave of foreign imperialism. If therefore the rise of Indian nationalism has been tumultuous and full of inner contradictions, the ambivalent rôle of British capitalism in its day of power must be held very largely accountable for that, since the growth of a national consciousness began under the very influence which impeded and sometimes even stifled its free development. The British colonial régime swept away the traditional system of land tenure, because it was completely unsuited to the requirements of a capitalist economy. Proprietary rights in the soil had always belonged to the tribe or its subdivisions—the village community or clan or fraternity settled in the village; but these were gradually replaced by a system of private ownership.<sup>3</sup> In some parts of the country the class of tax collectors were made landlords (*zemindari*), paying fixed rents to the East India Company. Elsewhere ownership on the part of the individual peasant was introduced (*ryotwari*); and where that happened the existing system of tax assessment according to the actual amount of produce was dropped and fixed payments in cash were levied instead. When times were bad and the harvest poor, the fixed charges still had to be met; and there was much mortgaging, selling and purchasing of land as a result. The communal character of the village was undermined, since the various essential functions relating to village life were in course of time taken over by the state. Agriculture was commercialized and specialized to satisfy the market and also for the production of raw materials needed by industry in Britain. The influx of British manufactured goods and the growth of urban industry in India itself brought about the decay of the village industries; and this in turn disrupted village autarchy. The transforming of the villages into administrative units of a centralized state, dependent on the total economy of the country, did more than anything else to encroach upon the tenacious inertia and passivity which had always been there at the base of the social pyramid. It has also opened a way for more advanced forms of co-operation on a nationwide scale.<sup>4</sup>

New social classes began to emerge as a part of the same process. Whilst the landlord class was on the whole conservative politically

and economically, the peasant proprietors gradually acquired a national consciousness, as they more and more felt the pressure of a centralized state. A fair proportion of farmers, both owners and tenants, joined the ranks of the landless labourers. Out of the mass of impoverished peasants and artisans the modern working-class was formed. It was illiterate; and not until after the First World War did it awaken to national and class consciousness. It was the new intelligentsia and the rising bourgeoisie who became the spear-head of the nationalist movement.

As village autarchy slowly disintegrated, great cities sprang up which felt the impact of the new dynamic economy and of India's increasing participation in world trade. These cities bred an independent attitude and outlook, the like of which the traditional townships—always tied to the apron strings of a bureaucratic centralism—had never known. The growth of an urban middle class was greatly facilitated when in 1835 a scheme for providing an 'English education' was introduced. Its original purpose was chiefly to promote 'European literature and science among the natives of India'; but in the latter part of the nineteenth century it was extended to include the training of native administrators, indispensable to the proper functioning of a modern state. In addition to this there was later on a relatively small but qualitatively important number of Indians who received their education in Western countries. Thus the spread of English education proved to be one of the main factors in breaking down the numerous linguistic, communal, social and religious barriers and in the creation of a uniformly trained middle class with direct access to the sources of modern Western civilization and to Western ideas.

It is very true, as Lord Cromer of Egypt has said, that colonial rule is necessarily conservative. It is equally true however that Western colonialism inevitably revolutionizes. If it was impossible for even the East India Company to imitate without modification the ways of the Mogul government, with the change-over to direct rule under the British Crown after the middle of the nineteenth century it was simply not practicable to balk the introduction of modern political ideas any longer. The title *Kaiser-i-Hind* which Queen Victoria assumed was quite useless as a substitute for the ancient idea of the sacral kingship; nor could the colonial administration, however partial it might be and however hard it might struggle, as a system,

to make itself as independent as possible of the motherland, push the British constitutional tradition and control by the British parliament to one side. The Mogul rulers had established Islam as the dominant religion, and for the rest had confined themselves, like their predecessors, to maintaining an agro-managerial and tax-collecting bureaucracy. British colonialism interfered as little as possible with the indigenous religious and social traditions and had not the least intention of putting Christianity in the place of Islam. Its arrival was nevertheless incomparably more disruptive than Muslim control, which had had rather a stagnating effect on Hinduism. The British method of indirect rule left the existing princely courts alone, so far as was possible, but at the same time deprived them of their real power and prestige. Through the persisting communal barriers the British legal system edged its way in, not only in matters relating to the penal code—where the fundamental principle was equality before the law—but also in the sphere of civil law, still very largely left intact. As the range of modern technology rapidly expanded and the whole Indian peninsula was opened up to modern traffic, trade and industry, the British administration found itself compelled to interfere ever more drastically with wider and wider areas of Indian life.

In all this one fact, which overshadowed all the rest, remained perfectly clear: the system was insuperably 'foreign'. It was this which concealed the real sting, inflicted the deepest wounds and must be held to account, primarily at any rate, for the transformation which has come upon Indian civilization. Since time immemorial India had known 'foreign' invaders. She had long been inured to them; and she had in the end absorbed them all. The Muslim conquerors had imposed a religion which could scarcely be assimilated, because of its Jewish-Christian origins; but it had also become immune from any further penetration by that virus and so itself held no danger for the main body of Hinduism. The two religions took up defensive positions towards each other; and in other respects the Mogul rule was basically so traditional that it functioned as an indigenous régime. But the British Rāj was so incontrovertibly 'foreign' in its very being, in its whole spirit and activity, that Indian civilization found itself for the first time at a loss for any effective means of resistance. The key to this 'foreignness' was not the British attitude of racial superiority, for in a caste-ridden society that fitted

... perfectly well; nor was the fact of colonial dependence on a remote country overseas, unpalatable though it was, in itself all that difficult to digest. India could quite well have accommodated herself to being dominated by what must always have been a relatively small group of white people, biding her time until the régime either disappeared of its own accord or was forced out. What made the 'foreignness' such a thorn in the flesh was an imponderable and yet highly effectual dynamic spirit which, as the Indians intuitively realized, was the arch-enemy of the deepest urges and aspirations from which in the past had flowed the very life-blood of their civilization. Fundamentally what the British intervention had disturbed was the 'ontocratic pattern'. Thus the clearest light falls upon the enigma of transformation in India during the last one and a half centuries, not from any reactionary bid for self-preservation or any attempt on the part of Indian civilization to shield itself from the foreign impact, but where it has tried in one way or another to make something of that foreign spirit its own. Just there lies the critical issue on which battle has been joined. The struggle is an obstinate one and the final outcome unlikely to be declared for some time to come. Some of the signs are that the Indian organism is putting up a successful fight against the disease, is producing antidotal substances and is busily acquiring immunity. Yet there are other indications, no less positive, which suggest that further crises of decisive importance are still to be expected and that the well-tried measures of the past—to absorb or to contain the foreign impact—will prove quite inadequate in this encounter with the West.

There can be no question that the activities of Christian missions have been of incalculable importance in this struggle; but the growth of modern India offers no exception to the general rule that missionary expansion and its consequences are caught up in the whole complex of Western penetration. The ancient Syrian Orthodox Church of South India exemplifies the fate that the Christian Church can expect within the continuum of Indian society: it can only continue to exist by becoming part of the caste system. The Jesuit embassy to the court of Akbar, Xavier's efforts at evangelization, they were scarcely perceptible ripples on the surface; and even the Protestant missions of the eighteenth century would have left hardly a trace behind them, had it not been for what has happened since, over the past one hundred and fifty years. The reactions of modern India to the Western

impact are to be understood only against the background of the Christian missions and their influence. The reverse is equally true.

This interaction was already apparent at the start of the nineteenth century in the earliest attempts to reform Hinduism, which were embodied in the Brahmo Samāj. The author of that society, Ram Mohān Roy (1772-1833), adopted enthusiastically the ideas of the European Enlightenment; and it was in that light that he interpreted Christianity, welcoming it above all for its social message and its emphasis on the value of the human being. With a plea for English education he combined a passionate call for social reform. He rejected the caste system, championed the rights of women, challenged the authority of Brahman religion and took issue with superstitious customs and beliefs. As a reforming sect, the Brahmo Samāj came as something in which the growing class of educated Hindus, who saw the need for Westernization, could take refuge against the claims made by the Christian missionaries. Its social activities are nowadays an accepted part of the modern Indian scene; but its weak spot was its religious basis. In the long run it has not proved so easy to maintain a complete harmony between imported Western ideas and the religious philosophy of the Vedānta. Under the leadership of Keshab Chandra Sen (1838-84) the Brahmo Samāj was refashioned as a syncretistic sect in which the Christian and Western elements were submerged in various forms of ecstatic Bhakti religion.<sup>5</sup>

The setting up of the Arya Samāj in 1875 was an unmistakable sign that the Western impact was making itself yet more deeply felt. The tremendous attraction of English education, Christian and neutral, as well as the mass conversions of outcastes to Christianity were a challenge to orthodox Brahmanism. The leader of this militant organization, Dayanand Saraswati, found a firm basis for the defence of Hinduism in the plenary authority of the Vedas. A strict monotheist, he found there the sanction he required for a forceful campaign against idolatry, animal sacrifice, sacerdotal rule and various social evils such as untouchability and child marriage. He was convinced that the contents of the Vedas agreed completely with the teachings of modern science, and that gave him a spring-board for his attacks on the inconsistent and anti-rational texts of the Bible. The Arya Samāj established an Anglo-Vedic College in Lahore with the avowed aim of combining the study of Hindu literature and Sanskrit with the study of English and modern science. The movement's influence

however remained limited owing to its rigid exclusivism, which ignored the post-Vedic development of Hinduism and entered the lists against the characteristic tradition of complete tolerance.

Hopes then centred upon an All-India movement, to give expression to the Westernized ideas of the educated classes and to revive the great religious and philosophical traditions of Hinduism. The way for this was prepared partly by theosophical propaganda for a reformed universal Hinduism and partly through the message of Ramakrishna Paramahansa (1836-86), which comprehended all religions in a single creed of the ultimate mystical unity of all reality. It was Swamī Vivekananda (1863-1902) who proclaimed this message, founded on the philosophy of the Vedānta and conjoined with a call for the renewal of Hindu society, as the ultimate basis of Hinduism. With this in view he set out to arouse the national consciousness; and he became the prophet of this message in Western countries too.

In the meantime the nationalist movement for political independence had gathered strength. It was a nationalism which in the very nature of the case bore an ambivalent character. In many respects it was a recognizable product of the Western impact which had broken through the traditional social structures and brought into being a new middle class equipped with the education, the sense of cultural unity and the civic outlook which enabled the Western idea of the national state to take root in its midst. On the other hand, as it was driven to adopt more and more positively antagonistic attitudes and courses of action—and especially when it began to involve broader sections of the population—the nationalist struggle was thrown back on the religious and cultural resources of traditional Hinduism. In the personality, vision, activity and historic rôle of Mahātmā Gandhi the tension pent up in that ambivalence was unleashed with extreme force, and in his whole life and thought the man was an incarnation of the Hindu ontocratic pattern. That was certainly the secret of his appeal for the masses in the villages. It is not to be wondered at that the Bhagavadgītā became for him increasingly the source of his religious inspiration, for this Song is one of the most vital sections of the Mahābhārata Epic, which is itself the quintessence of Hinduism in symbolic form, as was pointed out in Chapter Four. The Song is a catechetical instruction regarding the place of man in the universe around him and the true purport of all human action. The scene of the battle, for which the instruction is meant to prepare us, is a place

of strife in the sacred world, where Arjuna, the initiate, ignorant as yet of the cosmic significance of the conflict, is to be released by his initiator, Krishna, from the bandages blindfolding him and given a sight of the cosmic order.<sup>6</sup> Gandhi's campaigning for a sacred Hindu society, his ideal of 'Ramrajya' and his Swadeshi philosophy, as well as his insistence on the caste system and his call for a return to a simple economy centred on the 'charkha', the spinning-wheel, must be seen against that background. This religious nationalism was grounded in a cosmic theory, in a belief in the mystical unity of all existence. This was the source and goal of all religions; and Hinduism was the comprehensive expression of it. From this belief arose his deeply felt repugnance towards Western technocratic society, which he condemned as 'satanic'.

At the same time the phenomenon of Gandhi reveals something of the depth and the strength which the impact of both Western civilization and the Christian message has acquired in India during the course of this century. Apart from this he is hardly to be understood. His conception of an independent national state—and his indefatigable struggle for it—only became possible because they formed part of a counter-phase to British colonialism. His political action had about it a dynamic realism which transmuted Hindu ascetic ideals of mystical self-deliverance into a force capable of rousing the masses of the people. His fight against untouchability, although its aim was to assert the full cohesion of the Hindu community, showed all the same a prophetic and passionate concern for the lot of the outcastes which had a Christian inspiration and would have been unthinkable without it. He read the Bhagavadgītā as a 'gospel', coloured by his interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount. It is not just a coincidence that countless numbers of Hindus have interpreted the life—and more especially, the death—of Gandhi in accordance with their idea of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

Mahātma Gandhi is venerated by the people of India as the father of the fatherland; yet the outcome of his struggle for independence is far from being what he had hoped and imagined it would be. In India, as elsewhere, the impingement of the West has pursued a logic of its own. What in the end set its seal upon the political structure of independent India was not Gandhi's ideal of a sacred country, but the left-wing and agnostic humanism of Nehru. India has proclaimed itself a sovereign democratic republic, based on a

Gandhi's  
Sacred  
Country

socialist pattern of society. The declared intention of the government that this pattern should be casteless—already put into practice through various legislative measures of social reform—has laid the axe to the roots of the whole caste system. Although discrimination against the outcaste, so called, may still persist in the villages, untouchability as such is no longer countenanced.<sup>7</sup> The 'joint family' is fast disappearing. The Hindu Marriage Bill has legalized inter-caste marriages, set up monogamy as a standard and given the right of divorce to women. Through the explosive effects of the principle of universal suffrage the masses are learning to think in terms of human rights. The ideal of the Welfare State, which found expression in the First and Second Five Year Plans, is based on the assumption that it is possible for democracy to engineer drastic changes in society without destroying freedom. As Pandit Nehru has pointed out, 'there are no examples in history where this kind of experiment has been tried in any country'.

The main nerve of the experiment on which independent India has now embarked is located in the idea of the secular state. The validity of the principle is denied by the Hindu communal organizations; and the working out of the idea in practice faces a tough obstacle in the traditional structure of society. But the really fundamental problem is the difficulty of getting such a conception firmly implanted in a soil so ill prepared and also of giving it a clear and positive content. Panikkar argues convincingly<sup>8</sup> that the joint family and the sub-caste groups have amounted to a total denial of the idea of the social whole, of community in fact. For the first time in India, the community projects have been using the term 'community' to denote the quality of relationship within a whole society, transcending communal, caste and other sectional interests. This notion of community—as distinct from religion on the one hand and the state on the other—is new to India, where in the cultural pattern of the past religion, community and state have never been distinguished from one another in that way.<sup>9</sup> Even today the Hindu objection to the principle of the secular state is based on the classical theory that the state's proper task is to administer the 'sanātana dharma', the eternal cosmo-social law.<sup>10</sup> Thus the most stubborn features of resistance derive from the ontocratic pattern of Hindu society.

What really threatens the new idea of the secular state however is not that orthodox Hindu opinion which rejects it outright, but a fresh atmosphere of thought in modern Hinduism which accepts the

idea—and even actively supports it—whilst interpreting it in such a way that it is absorbed into Hinduism itself. Dr Radhakrishnan's modern Hindu apologetics are infused with this new ethos.

Hinduism is more a way of life than a form of thought. While it gives absolute liberty in the world of thought it enjoins a strict code of practice. The theist and the atheist, the sceptic and the agnostic may all be Hindus if they accept the Hindu system of culture and life. Hinduism insists not on religious conformity, but on a spiritual and ethical outlook in life.<sup>11</sup>

To a certain extent this view accords well with the classical position of Hinduism, which has always found a place for agnostic and even 'atheist' philosophies which accept the axiom of 'karma-samsāra' as a sufficient explanation of life's vicissitudes, though they might question the existence of an ultimate reality. The only stipulation was that they should conform to the recognized practices of Hinduism as prescribed by the caste-dharma. In modern Hinduism that classical stipulation is replaced by a demand for conformity to 'the Hindu system of culture and life'. This vague and somewhat elusive formula leaves room in fact for a modern form of Hindu secularism, differing—as Dr Devanandan explains—from other forms of secularism. The Hindu secularist of today is no philosophical secularist with an organized system of thought which seeks to explain life without reference to God; he is ready to accept and carry out Hindu religious rites, whether he believes in them or not. He defends Hinduism when it is attacked, and he maintains that his chief concern is with the realities of the immediate present, as being of more importance than the possibilities of a remote future which at best can only be matter for speculation.<sup>12</sup> All the same we have to realize that this modern Hindu secularism is concerned to give a meaning to Hinduism which will enable it to function as the spiritual basis for the modern Welfare State. It is not simply that some of the major tenets, such as belief in karma-fatalism, are pushed into the background; there is also an active interest in building up a just order of society in the here and now, a demand for social legislation which will ensure freedom from the tyranny of religious custom, besides a critical attitude towards religions in general and traditional Hinduism in particular.<sup>13</sup>

The point at issue is what exactly does Hinduism continue to represent, if this modern secularism is indeed a part of it? It looks as though this secularism, whilst it means on the one hand a thorough

revision of the pattern of society and the modes of Hindu thinking, is on the other hand the prime factor in making Hinduism the national ideology of India. The very unity created by the modern Welfare State is transforming Hinduism from a composite religion of various 'samayas' and 'mārgas' into a 'sanātana dharma', a comprehensive religion universally applicable to mankind everywhere and at all times. The basic principle of religious relativism, made popular chiefly by Gandhī, acts as the cement so vitally necessary to building up a unified nation. In the Basic Education Scheme it was this principle which supplied a foundation for the secular state.<sup>14</sup>

In view of all this it is clear that the struggle for religious liberty, now being waged by the Indian Church, is one of the most profound consequence, since its effect must be to clarify the conception of the secular state. It has rightly been said that religious freedom is the pre-condition and the guardian of all other freedoms. It is the corner-stone of democracy. Leading Christians in India are well aware of their Christian responsibility in this respect.

History bears testimony to the fact that the growth and development of democratic political institutions and democratic social values depended in great measure on the religious convictions of Christian citizens in the Western countries of the 17th and 18th centuries where democracy as we know it, first took root. It may well be claimed that in countries which have adopted a democratic constitution and where the majority of people are convinced believers in other religions, Christian citizens have a special responsibility, not only to help to work effectively the democratic structure of Government, but also to translate the democratic values of life in terms of social action . . . their religious faith places unique emphasis upon just those convictions about the nature and destiny of man which furnish the foundations for what has been described as the democratic view of life.<sup>15</sup>

### 3. CHINESE REVOLUTIONS FROM THE T'AI-P'ING REBELLION TO COMMUNISM

As the nineteenth century proceeded, the Chinese Empire was compelled slowly but surely to yield to the increasing pressure of Western expansion. It is quite understandable that the Chinese were prepared to resist to the last ditch in that struggle; for the Western intrusion was something completely alien to the traditional structure of their civilization. China has known many barbarian invasions and