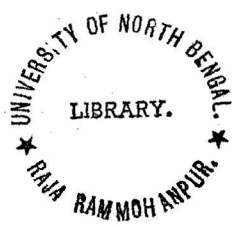




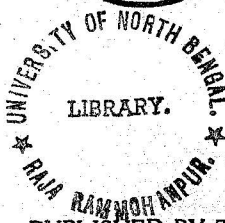
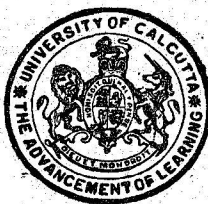
KAMALA DEVI



The Kamala Lectures

RATIONALISM IN PRACTICE

BY
R. P. PARANJPYE



PUBLISHED BY THE
UNIVERSITY OF CALCUTTA
1935

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FOREWORD

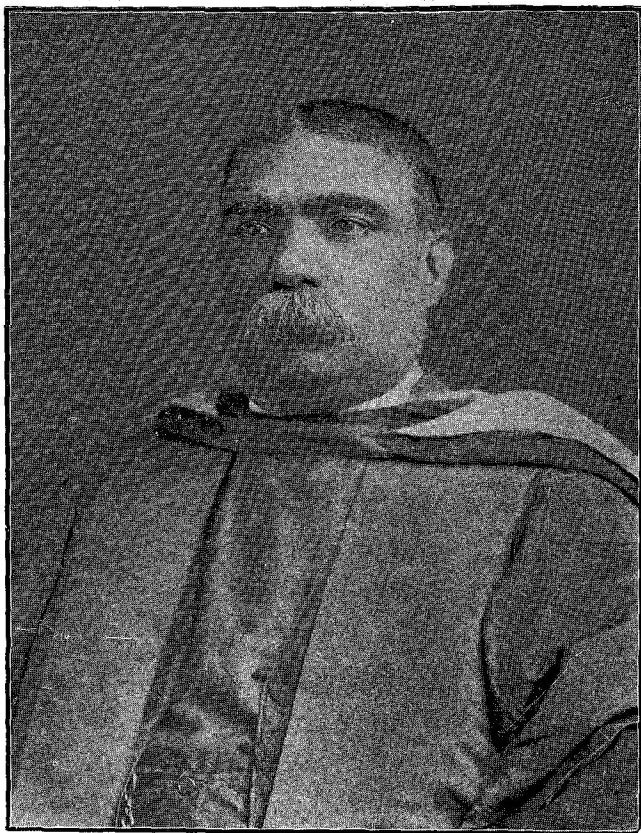
These Kamala Lectures were delivered before the Calcutta University in August 1934 according to the terms of the endowment founded by Sir Asutosh Mookerjee in memory of his daughter. They briefly discuss certain questions of general interest and are only intended to provoke thought in the younger generation. Naturally they deal with current topics, and later developments may modify some of the opinion expressed in them. On one point, however, I may remark that I see no reason to change my views. In the part dealing with political questions I have discussed the White Paper in some detail. This has now been succeeded by the Joint Parliamentary Committee Report, and the Bill based on it is now being discussed in Parliament and may have passed by the time these lectures are published in a book form. The essential features of the White Paper are mostly present in the Bill and where there is any departure it is generally for the worse. My criticism on the constitutional reforms, therefore, still holds good and applies with equal force to the Bill. That criticism, it will be observed, is based on general principles underlying national policy and not on mere fleeting political considerations. It is my earnest desire that the

younger generation should learn to have a wider outlook before getting immersed in the stormy waters of party manoeuvres or the stinking morass of personal intrigue.

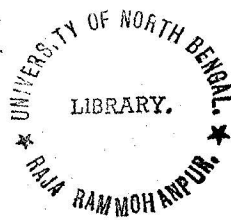
It is obvious that many other questions could have been similarly considered from a rational point of view, and the lectures could thus have been almost indefinitely expanded in scope or have discussed in greater detail the subjects actually dealt with. My object was, however, merely to supply the leaven and leave it to work in the minds of young men and women, and I am deeply grateful to the Calcutta University for giving me this opportunity and for the honour it did me in asking me to deliver this series of lectures.

LUCKNOW; }
4th May, 1935. }

R. P. PARANJPYE



THE FOUNDER



FOUNDER'S LETTER

77, RUSSA ROAD NORTH

BHOWANIPORE

CALCUTTA.

9th February, 1924.

To

THE REGISTRAR,

CALCUTTA UNIVERSITY.

SIR,

I desire to place at the disposal of my University Government Securities for Rupees Forty Thousand only of the 3 per cent. Loan with a view to establish a lectureship, to be called the *Kamala Lectureship*, in memory of my beloved daughter Kamala (b. 18th April, 1895—d. 4th January, 1923). The Lecturer, who will be annually appointed by the Senate, will deliver a course of not less than three lectures, either in Bengali or in English, on some aspect of Indian Life and Thought the subject to be treated from a comparative standpoint.

The following scheme shall be adopted for the lectureship :

(1) Not later than the 31st March every year, a Special Committee of five members shall be constituted as follows :

One member of the Faculty of Arts to be nominated by the Faculty.

One member of the Faculty of Science to be nominated by the Faculty.

One member to be nominated by the Council of the Asiatic Society of Bengal.

One member to be nominated by the Bangiya Sahitya Parishad.

One member to be nominated by the Founder or his representatives.

(2) The Special Committee after such enquiry as they may deem necessary, shall, not later than the 30th June, draw up a report recommending to the Senate the name of a distinguished scholar. The report shall specify the subject of the proposed lectures and shall include a brief statement of their scope.

(3) The report of the Special Committee shall be forwarded to the Syndicate in order that it may be laid before the Senate for confirmation not later than the 31st July.

(4) The Senate may for specified reasons request the Special Committee to reconsider their decision but shall not be competent to substitute another name for the one recommended by the Committee.

(5) The Lecturer appointed by the Senate shall deliver the lectures at the Senate House not later than the month of January next following.

(6) The Syndicate shall, after the lectures are delivered in Calcutta, arrange to have them delivered in the original or in a modified form in at least one place out of Calcutta, and shall for this purpose pay such travelling allowance as may be necessary.

(7) The honorarium of the Lecturer shall consist of a sum of Rupees One Thousand in cash and a Gold Medal of the value of Rupees Two Hundred only. The honorarium shall be paid only after the lectures have been delivered and the Lecturer has made over to the Registrar a complete copy of the lectures in a form ready for publication.

(8) The lectures shall be published by the University within six months of their delivery and after defraying the cost of publication the surplus sale proceeds shall be paid to the Lecturer, in whom the copyright of the lectures shall vest.

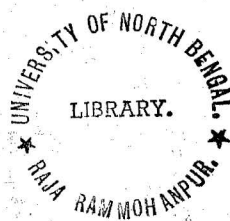
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(9) No person, who has once been appointed a Lecturer shall be eligible for re-appointment before the lapse of five years.

Yours faithfully,
ASUTOSH MOOKERJEE.



THE LECTURER



RATIONALISM IN PRACTICE

INTRODUCTION

The name of Sir Asutosh Mookerjee is a household word in Bengal and in the whole of India, and the present position of the Calcutta University is almost entirely due to his inexhaustible energy, great driving power, keen imagination and sturdy patriotism. In my younger days we used to read with pride his text-book on Conics and were elated at seeing a reference to his interpretation of the general differential equation of Conics in Edward's *Differential Calculus*. When we grew up, we, in other parts of India, came to realise the intellectual greatness of the man and envied your university at having such a wise and far-sighted mentor. While our grief at his passing away is still as poignant as it was eight years ago, we all hope that under the guidance of his distinguished son, your present Vice-Chancellor, the Calcutta University will continue its remarkable career and add to the reputation of

India for learning, science and philosophy among the nations of the world. Asutosh had no narrow feelings for provincialism, creed or race. He welcomed and encouraged eminence wherever it was found and I sincerely hope that the same catholic spirit will inspire all our seats of learning.

On this occasion these words of respectful tribute to the memory of the great man are particularly appropriate because I have been honoured with the invitation of the University for which Asutosh devoted all his energy, to give a course of lectures founded in memory of the favourite but unfortunate daughter of Asutosh and endowed by Asutosh himself, and am speaking under the chairmanship of a son of Asutosh. The whole atmosphere is suffused by the spirit of Asutosh and I wish I were competent to do justice to that spirit. My predecessors in this Kamala Lecturership were some of the greatest men and women of India like Rabindranath Tagore, Annie Besant and Srinivasa Sastri. I wish I was worthy of being their successor and competent to do justice to their traditions. But I have accepted the invitation, though with great diffidence, to enable me to pay this homage to his memory. To experts and to the older generation what I have to say will not present any novelty; but the younger generation may perhaps be interested to hear the views of one who has always been

their friend and well-wisher and who desires nothing so much as to see them rise to their full stature physically, intellectually and morally, and be ornaments to their country and to humanity.

THE RATIONALIST OUTLOOK

Man has been defined by some philosophers as a cooking animal, for he is the only animal that is known to cook his food. Others have defined him as a reasoning animal, for he is the only animal that consciously reasons. But a famous Cambridge tutor, too long engaged in correcting mathematical exercises, in which his pupils somehow pretended to have proved the result when they knew it beforehand, used to say that these two definitions, according to his experience, should be combined together and that man should be defined as an animal that cooks his reasons. It is, in truth, a well-accepted fact that although man can reason, or, rather, can be trained to reason, it entails a great deal of effort, and most people would rather avoid the trouble involved in conscious reasoning, and accept whatever opinions may be commonly held round about them. Further, if one considers the ordinary actions of individuals, they are generally based on imitation of others, and conscious reasoning has generally very little place in their actions. The object of this

series of lectures is to advocate the incessant use of reason in forming opinions, in giving expression to them, and in acting upon them. And it is only when humanity in general learns to regulate itself in this way that it will make rapid progress.

The path of the conscious rationalist is none too easy. Ideas, words and actions do not lead to unpleasant consequences if they follow the well-trodden path of the common-place. And it requires a great deal of moral courage to be true to one's individuality, when it is contrary to the prevailing view. Leaving aside the risk of being dubbed a crank if one follows what one thinks is right even in small matters, there are other questions in which the risk run in following the straight path of reason is very much greater. Not to speak of religious persecution in the past, which was essentially due to some people daring to follow the dictates of their conscience in opposition to the accepted opinions on religious matters, even in these days the risk run is very great. It may even be said that at a time like the present when dictatorships are rising everywhere, the path of the conscious rationalist may immediately, in Germany or Italy, lead to a 'concentration camp' or to 'Lipari islands,' or teach him practically the effects of a rubber-headed truncheon or castor oil, and that the choice of the present subject is entirely out of keeping with the spirit of

the times when it is being deliberately advocated that one's reason should be subordinated to the orders of a DUCE or a FÜHRER or a MAHATMA. But the subject has been deliberately chosen for this very reason that a strong plea for independence of thought and action is particularly necessary at the present juncture.

A true rationalist must consider it his duty to bring the cold light of reason to bear on any problem whatsoever, and he will not allow any exception to this general principle. He will naturally allow due weight to well-considered discussions of the question in the past, but ultimately the judgment will be his own. No dictates of any authority, religious or secular, should deter him from this primary duty of independent judgment, and, further, no society should impose any such restrictions on the private judgment of the individual. This insistence on the duty of independent judgment is generally accepted in the realm of scientific research, and no scientist worth the name is deterred from forming his own opinions by the mere awe of great names in the past, or by any blind reverence for the classics of his subject. In the case of questions of a sociological nature, on the other hand, the independence of judgment is often warped by prevailing prejudices and sentiments. Thus, in discussions of economic problems nationalist considerations often underlie

apparent rational discussion. Thus, what two years ago was a wicked default when the French Government stopped paying its instalments for war debts to America, became this year for Englishmen the only right thing to do. The danger of departure from the Gold Standard which upset the Labour Government in the early autumn of 1931 disappeared a few months later when the National Government which came into power to save the Gold Standard actually sanctioned this departure and was in consequence hailed as the Saviours of the Nation. In the matter of historical research, it is well-known that patriotic feelings very often predetermine the conclusions, and reasons for them are invented afterwards. The accounts of a war between two nations written by writers belonging to those two are generally so different that they appear to refer to two totally distinct events. Incidents favourable to one's own country are emphasized and glorified, while unfavourable incidents are often misrepresented, or at least slurred over. Thus, the account of the battle of Jutland in the late war written by writers in the allied countries is quite different from the account of the same battle as presented by German writers. For Englishman the victor of Waterloo is Wellington, while for Germans it is Blücher. In the eyes of Muslim writers Shivaji is a "mountain rat" while to Maharashtra he is the

greatest national hero. In the discussion of ethical questions, certain subjects are often regarded as beyond the range of discussion. The prevailing ideas of morality are regarded as so fundamental that any rational consideration of them is considered almost indecent. Many of these ethical questions have assumed the colour of religious dogmas whose truth it is a deadly sin to question. Thus, a frank discussion of matters like marriage, divorce, birth control or sterilisation of the unfit, is hardly ever, in this country especially, possible without creating too much heat. In discussions on political questions rational considerations are almost the last to be taken into account. Party loyalties, patriotic sentiments, devotion to a leader, or even self-aggrandisement determine one's judgments rather than the merits of the question. While in 1920 entering the Legislative Councils or even voting at elections was the supreme sign of treason to one's country, it is now on the point of becoming the supreme sign of patriotism and both opinions have the sanction of the same Mahatma. While the very mention of the Councils was *harām* a few years ago, it was quite legitimate last year to do a great deal of Assembly lobbying in favour of the Temple Entry Bill. To the American admirers of Miss Mayo the treatment of the depressed classes in India is a tremendously living problem, but the treatment of

the American Negroes does not concern them in the least. F. E. Smith was so bitterly opposed to Irish Home Rule that he would even condone armed resistance on the part of Ulster, but Lord Birkenhead was a leading member of the Government that granted it. Ramsay MacDonald, the Labour Premier, imposed Land Duties, while Ramsay MacDonald, the National Premier, abolished them. Mr. Gandhi insists that the constitution of India must be determined by a Constituent Assembly, but the people of the Indian States need have no voice in the determination of their own political status. As a matter of fact, consistency, which is a necessary consequence of a rational outlook, is so rare among politicians that it is sneered at as unpractical, and some have even gone so far as to call it the characteristic virtue of an ass. Lastly, in the matter of questions narrowly religious, like the existence of God, soul, *Karma*, free-will, a frank or even any discussion at all is almost impossible. And till recent times the holding of heterodox opinions in such matters led to terrible persecutions all over the world.

While I have been insisting on the duty of every individual to try to form an independent judgment on every question as far as possible, it is at the same time necessary that he should be prepared to allow the same liberty to other individuals. He will

not be a real rationalist if, while claiming this freedom for himself, he denies it to others. It may be urged in opposition to this point of view that if a man feels that his judgment on any question is founded on purely rational principles, he would, by this attitude of toleration, be giving an opportunity to the holding and even the dissemination of erroneous opinions on the same subject, as presumably there can only be one correct opinion on any point. This feeling is often at the back of the minds of those who are intensely interested on any particular question. Thus, a sincere NAZI is firmly convinced that the programme of his own party is the only possible right programme for his nation's progress, and he is therefore fully prepared to take all measures against the propagation of any contrary ideas. This way of regarding the matter, however creditable to the person holding this view, is quite unreasonable, inasmuch as it overlooks the finiteness of human reason, the impossibility of being absolutely certain about any truth, and the relative nature of our knowledge. In forming any particular opinion, one can only take a certain finite number of facts into consideration, and one comes to a conclusion on the basis of these facts. It is not given to anybody to know all facts, for, as a famous writer had said, if one were to record all facts without exception, the record office will have to be another planet. What

one does is to take as many relevant facts as possible into consideration, but it is possible that facts which *prima facie* appear to be irrelevant may often have an immense bearing on the question. It requires a trained mind with a certain amount of imagination, to fix itself upon the relevant facts and discard the irrelevant ones. But one cannot be absolutely certain that all possible aspects have been necessarily considered. Human judgment is therefore almost always tentative, and absolute certainty is a thing that can hardly be hoped for. And the rationalist has to be satisfied with this modest position, for he can come to no other. The case is different for those who, once for all, give up the right to use their reason, and whose sole guidance is obtained from some extraneous authority. This is, perhaps, the reason why many persons holding either rationalist or fairly liberal views on religious subjects have, once for all, gone back either to complete obscurantism or have become thorough-going followers of a Pope, or a Prophet, or a Dictator. But to a rationalist, who considers his reason to be the characteristic which differentiates him essentially from other animals, such a position would be impossible, as he is convinced that liberty of thought is essential for the progress of mankind. •

These considerations will show that a rationalist has, above all, to be tolerant of other opinions. His

duty is to try to persuade other people by argument to accept his views, and even to re-examine his own views if he finds he is unable to bring other presumably reasonable people round to his own. But any kind of propagation of his views by forcible means is quite out of the question for him. In recent years such kind of propaganda has been becoming more and more common. In Germany whole libraries have been weeded out and books antagonistic to the prevailing NAZI doctrines have been burnt in many towns, and the mere possession of such books is regarded as a serious offence. To my mind there can be nothing more serious than this attempt to kill adverse views at their birth. "As well kill a man as a good book," said Milton. The greatest losers from this action will surely be the Germans themselves. But humanity itself, a large amount of whose progress has been due to the writings of eminent Germans in the past, is also likely to suffer a great deal. New ideas can arise at first in the minds of only a few, and they take time to gain wide currency. A few of them will certainly take root and help the cause of human progress. Many a promising idea in the past has been nipped in the bud in this way, and human progress has been retarded for several centuries. Consider what it would have been if the new-fangled invention of printing had been killed at its very birth six hundred

years ago. Even the use of chloroform was considered to be against religion, as pain was taken to be the lot of mankind in this world, and it was against the will of God to attempt to relieve pain. In fact, no discoveries in science or medicine could have been made if new ideas had been strangled at their very inception.

The idea that the ancients knew everything and that there is nothing new to be now discovered, especially in the department of ethics and social science, is one that can never be accepted by a rationalist. The world is moving forward, sometimes fast, and sometimes slow, but every age necessarily possesses all the accumulated experience and knowledge of the preceding ages, and may help to add something new for the benefit of future ages. When therefore we are told that the ancients had known everything that deserves to be known and that no new ideas can possibly be true, we are cutting at the source of all progress. As was said long ago : *antiquitas seculi juvenus mundi* (what we call antiquity is really the youth of the world) and as the world grows older, it will come to learn more and more. This position is now accepted generally in the department of science, though even there it was not reached without a great struggle. Even now, in subjects on the borderland of science and sociology, like psycho-analysis, eugenics and spiritualism, we

still meet with people who are not prepared to welcome new ideas. The famous men of antiquity were certainly great in their own time; but their successors stand upon their shoulders and are therefore naturally able to see much farther.

The rationalist will probably not have an intense faith in a future life, for which all sacrifices have to be made in this. What is then the ideal to which he directs his thoughts and actions? Without a high ideal his life will be drab and commonplace, and even his intellectual activity will not come into full play. To him this ideal can only be the advancement of humanity, and his thoughts and actions will be judged by the single test: do they help or hinder this progress? All social customs or institutions should also be judged by this same test, and then and then alone can correct conclusions be arrived at. This is a high ideal, which will appeal to every right-thinking human being. The action of every individual has some reaction, small or great, upon the actions of other individuals, and an action will be judged good or bad according as it adds to or detracts from the happiness of other individuals. And let me say, in passing, that my conception of humanity includes every human being and is not confined to any particular race, colour or creed.

I do not propose to expatiate upon the adequacy of this ideal. Man is naturally a social animal and

unless his inborn instincts are forcibly directed into wrong channels, he will find them a sufficient guide to life. The bias of race or of religion is not born with the child, but it is implanted into it by the elders about him, and a true rationalist will so regulate the education of the young that their instincts will be allowed to have full play. I do not know whether there is such a thing as an inborn racial sentiment; but when we see little children of different colours becoming quite friendly with each other in no time regardless of the difference in colour, one feels that colour prejudice is at least very much exaggerated by environment and upbringing. And educational reformers should do their best to see that these racial prejudices are not allowed to grow in the minds of young children. This ideal of humanity will naturally encourage international sympathies and discourage a narrow nationalistic outlook. While it is right and proper that the sphere of a man's thoughts and activities should gradually spread from self, family, village and country to humanity, it is necessary for every educational reformer to see that the first one or two or three of these do not completely absorb the thoughts and activities of the young. It is because a rationalist view of life is opposed to a narrow nationalistic view of life that the present German *régime*, in its crusade in favour of the Nordic cult and against so-called

un-Aryan and Jewish elements, is so keen on suppressing free opinion. One can see the same narrow racialism in the treatment of the Negroes and the coloured races in America and Africa, and the same is at the root of the treatment of the depressed classes in this country. All these are the effects of extraneous influences on the human mind, and a conscious effort has to be made to counteract these tendencies.

With the good of humanity as one's ideal, it is essential that every question should be considered in its bearing on the general good of our fellowmen. Whether a particular custom or an institution is desirable or otherwise can only be decided by considering its effect upon the persons affected, and a discussion of such a question must be influenced by considerations of time and place. An institution or a custom that might have proved beneficial centuries ago and under different circumstances may have outlived its utility by now and its abandonment must therefore be advocated. In such advocacy one is likely to come into conflict with prevailing ideas and prejudices. For, very often immense importance is given to old things simply because they are old or because they have been laid down by great men of the past as valid for all time. If one is really to justify his rationalist outlook, he will at times have to be brutally frank in such advocacy.

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We shall consider, in brief, several such ideas and customs and try to reason out the logical position, premising at the same time that our conclusions are not final and may be modified by the discovery of further facts.

POPULATION

Perhaps, the one question that most intimately concerns almost every aspect of our social and economic structure is the question of population. Many important events in history have been ultimately due to the pressure of population in one part of the world or another. Even the last great war was ultimately due to the want of space for Germany's increasing millions, and the murder of the Archduke at Serajevo, the violation of the Belgian frontier, or the submarine activities (which brought America into the war) were merely proximate causes which did not go to the root of the matter. In India, the population question is immensely important. We see that during the last ten years the population of India has increased by nearly 34 millions without any appreciable increase in its cultivated area. The pressure of population in certain parts of the country, and the resulting poverty and unemployment, form, perhaps, the most acute problem before the Government and the people.

Many measures tending to alleviate the lot of the cultivator or the labourer appear to be only symptomatic, as in a few years the growth of the population would have made these measures ineffectual. Humanity appears to be a Sysiphus trying to roll the heavy stone of civilisation up the hill and even before it reaches anywhere near the top, down it comes again pulled by the growing mass of humanity itself crushing everything on its way. Unless a way can be found for the proper distribution of the population of the world over waste areas—though this remedy itself would only be temporary—and of ultimately restricting the growth of population, I am afraid the world has not seen its last war.

If this growth of population were inevitable there can be no prospect of a bright future for humanity. Human history will continue to be a record of alternate advance and destruction occasionally interspersed with great natural calamities like droughts, earthquakes or pestilence. Science is trying to combat these natural calamities and may even succeed in some cases like pestilence and drought, but an unlimited increase of population would be a disaster of the first magnitude. Even supposing the whole habitable portion of the globe were available for occupation by all races, there is a maximum limit of something like six thousand millions (about three times the present population

of the world) for the numbers that the earth can hold. But on account of various exclusionist policies like the White Australia and White South Africa policy, or the Monroe doctrine, even this maximum cannot be attained. For India no considerable outlet appears to be open at all. Japan is trying to equip herself with means to acquire expanding room, even by war if necessary. Germany and Italy are claiming to regain their old, or acquire new, colonies for their increasing millions, and another Armageddon appears to be as sure as anything can be, unless world opinion is organised and takes steps in good time to avert the danger.

If man were merely like animals not gifted with reason or a sense of prudence, it would not be possible to devise any such steps. But two kinds of steps can be suggested in this connection. One is the exercise of rigorous self-control in sex relations, and the other is the use of modern methods of birth-control. The first method alone is considered as legitimate by adherents of old faiths, though in some countries even this is not encouraged as an increased population provides easy cannon fodder for the realisation of nationalist aims. Thus, Mussolini is carrying on a vigorous crusade for larger families and giving prizes to the most prolific mothers in Italy. In India, the habitual benediction given to a married woman when she salutes her

elders is : *ashtaputrā-saubhāgyavatī bhava* (May you have eight sons). Japan, in spite of her annual increase of a million in her population is still averse to any methods of control. This method of self-control, however, labours under two difficulties. In the first place, the sex urge in human beings as in other animals is so strong that it often oversteps the bounds of prudence, and the average man will not be able to exercise the necessary long-continued control even though he is urged on to it by all the sanctions of religion and morality. Our old epics and other literature are full of examples of even the most devout and saintly characters falling victims to the temptations of sex. The other difficulty in this connection is the generally accepted medical opinion (though I speak about this with great hesitation) that long-continued sex-control has undesirable effects both on the physical health of the individual and on his psychology. The general conclusion seems to be that while self-control is to be encouraged and should be practised whenever possible, that by itself will not solve the problem of increasing population.

The other possibility is the wide adoption of contraceptive methods which appear to have been brought to a high degree of development in recent times. In western countries, whatever religious leaders may say, these methods appear to be widely

practised apparently even in religious circles, for now we do not find such large families among clergymen as there used to be in olden days. Even in Italy, in spite of the exhortations of the DUCE, the birth-rate appears to be falling gradually. The French, in spite of the large Catholic element among them, appear to have resorted to these methods for over a century during which the population of France has increased but little. If it were not for the increasing population of neighbouring countries, France would appear to have reached its optimum population, but French statesmen are also vainly urging on the people the necessity of having larger families. Although some experts incline to the opinion that an improvement in general material and intellectual conditions leads to diminished fertility, still this does not appear to account adequately for this great decrease in birth-rate in western countries, and these are to a certain extent solving, perhaps unconsciously, the problem of increase of population by methods of contraception. In India the need of a wide resort to these methods is two-fold. In the first place, the population of the country appears to have reached its optimum in many provinces and an increase beyond this is sure to lead to increased intensity in the struggle for existence. Moreover, a high birth-rate generally goes with a high death-rate and infant mortality in

this country is something too terrible to contemplate. The amount of physical strain entailed on our women by continuous child-bearing and the illness, and frequently the death, of these children appears to be of no benefit whatever but only leads to ill-health, early old age and premature death of many of our women. They derive no pleasure from life; they never experience the *joie de vivre*; they lead a merely aimless existence, being only reconciled to it by a fatalistic religion. If the knowledge of birth-control were widespread our women would be happier and longer-lived, our children healthy and cheerful, and our men would not be perpetually troubled with cares due to too large a family and its illnesses and needs. Even assuming that self-control is the best method, the opposition to contraceptive methods on that account exemplifies once again the familiar saying that the best is the enemy of the good. It is to be sincerely hoped that false ideas of religion or decency will not be allowed to retard the spread of a knowledge of these modern methods among our people and especially among our women.

Leaving aside the question of the quantity one next comes to the quality when population questions are discussed. It has been found in all countries that control, either by moral or physical methods, first spreads among the better classes. The better strains in the population are therefore apt to be

swamped by the comparatively rapidly increasing lower strains and the general level tends to go down. It is not intended to imply by this remark that the better strain means only the richer portion of the population, but in a country where there is reasonable opportunity for everybody to make his own fortune, not too much hampered by social barriers or effects of poverty, it is no doubt a fact that the class that gets on in the world, the well educated, the healthier or even those that possess moral qualities like enterprise, energy, self-control and prudence, are on the whole the better human material. Our social institutions, while giving opportunity to everybody to realise the best that is in him, should place the prizes of life before those that have merit and should ensure that the consciousness of having a *carrière ouverte aux talents* should be present to all. The eugenic point of view is not always before our leaders and legislators. If that were so, some of the causes which lead to a deterioration of the quality of the population would soon be done away with. One of these is the propagation, often more than usually rapid, by the diseased, the habitually drunk or the imbecile. In such cases a system of optional sterilisation and, in extreme cases, even of compulsory sterilisation, should be instituted by law, as it has been recently done in some of the United States and in Germany (which is indeed one of the few

really progressive changes effected there under the new dispensation). Those diseases that medical science tells us are inherited can be perceptibly diminished in one or two generations. The existence of the large leper population in India is due to an unhealthy social conscience in the country, for the proper measures for stamping out leprosy, *viz.*, compulsory segregation, and at least optional sterilisation of lepers, are considered to be too drastic by sickly sentimentalists. Venereal diseases should be capable of being largely controlled. Imbecility and extreme feeble-mindedness can be greatly reduced. The main idea should be to be as kind as possible to the individual, while keeping the future of the race always before the mind. The individual concerned has a right to be treated with kindness and sympathy as he is often not responsible for his own infirmity, but a line should be drawn so as to prevent him from propagating his infirmity in view of the good of future generations.

AHIMSA

• In the case of man one can at least hope that he will use his reasoning faculty to modify the undesirable effects of the unrestricted fecundity which he shares with the animal world. If the future of

the human race is to be something different from a continual and bitter struggle for existence in which the higher mental and moral qualities we associate with man will have no play, such measures as I have referred to above will have to be taken some time or other. One may platonically admire the nobility of the natural man while one is living in a city with all its amenities, but the state of the severe struggle for food and mates with his fellows and other animals, the constant battle with nature red in tooth and claw, if adequately realised, will lead to the inevitable conclusion that civilisation has been on the whole a good thing and that by following the same process as heretofore increasing happiness of man will result in the long run. In the case of animals, these human feelings and faculties do not exist. In the case of wild animals nature still has a great deal of say in keeping down their numbers and the growing need of man for space has gradually circumscribed their habitations and some of them appear fated to disappear within the course of a few centuries. But in the case of domesticated animals which man has saved from the effects of inexorable natural laws, man is responsible for their condition which necessarily depends on their numbers. In our country the doctrine of *ahimsā* has always appealed to the people, probably as a result of Buddhist and Jain influences. To many this simply means

non-killing and they would not willingly kill even a mosquito or a bug. But in all such cases a broad view has to be taken. If man has placed them in unnatural conditions he is responsible for seeing that they are treated properly and are able to lead a reasonably comfortable existence. I do not agree with the view of Descartes that animals are mere automata, but believe that they have a certain amount of feeling and can be trained to a certain extent. Cruelty to animals is a vile crime against them and further tends to deaden the finer susceptibilities of human nature. On the other hand, unrestricted breeding will lead to such increase of numbers that even for a single species the whole surface of the earth will be insufficient in the course of a few centuries. "The elephant" says Darwin, "is reckoned the slowest breeder of all known animals. I have taken some pains to estimate its probable minimum rate of natural increase; it will be safest to assume that it begins breeding when thirty years old, and goes on breeding till ninety years old, bringing forth six young in the interval, and surviving till one hundred years old; if this be so, after a period of from 740 to 750 years there would be nearly nineteen million elephants alive, descended from the first pair" (*Origin of Species*, Chapter III). In the case of a cow the figures for years must be divided at least by five, if not six.

Even in the case of cows therefore, for which Hindus entertain such great veneration, unrestricted increase of numbers will be impossible in the course of a few years. Some way of keeping down numbers is obviously called for. Control of breeding is not possible though selective breeding by prime bulls is possible and even necessary to keep up the quality of the animals. And even if cows could be sterilised by a surgical operation, nobody would keep cows that serve no useful purpose and according to our religious ideas the best gift to a Brahman is a cow in milk along with its calf (*savatsā payasvinī*). This irrational sentiment about cows and other animals has flooded India with hordes of useless animals, and the number of useful cows and bullocks is not sufficient for the needs of the people. Unless a rational opinion is widely spread, the cattle wealth of India will continue to deteriorate, animals will be half-starved and diseased as they are even now but too often. It is much better to restrict their numbers and have those that remain healthy and strong, good milkers or efficient plough bullocks. The only possibility of improving our cattle wealth thus seems to be the elimination of surplus cattle. In particular, keeping in continued miserable existence of old, diseased and disabled cattle seems to be neither humane nor rational and the large amount of money spent on *pinjrapoles* seems to be a mere

waste. It appears heartless to speak in this way on this matter and one is sneeringly asked : “ Will you kill your old people when they are no longer active or useful? ” But the question is not really so clinching as it appears. In the first place, the animal does not belong to the human kind and it is not advocated that cows and bullocks should kill other cows and bullocks. Again, how often have we heard a person envied for his sudden and unexpected death when he is old and leads a joyless life? The sudden disappearance at the hands of the butcher may be likened by a cow or a bullock—if it can feel and reason on this matter at all—to the heart attack or some similar happening in the case of a man. The anticipation of death and the miserable time one has before death supervenes, are what make death so terrible in prospect. If the animal does not know about the coming end it does not suffer much and in any case the pain of death is of very short duration and is not so bad as continued and intense physical suffering probably is. The people that talk so much of *ahimsā* and spend large amounts in feeding monkeys or ants or pigeons or stray cows and bulls are concerned with merely keeping the animals alive. They are not always known for tenderness to animals. Nay, the same person will, if he is a money-lender, heartlessly screw the last pie from his debtor, leaving him and his family to starve or

even occasionally to commit suicide, while he is donating large sums to *gawsalas*, *pinjrapoles* or temples for feeding cows and monkeys. After all, where human life and human happiness are to be weighed against the happiness or rather the continued miserable existence of some animals, I have no hesitation in preferring the first.

I have tried to show above that the doctrine of *ahimsā* or non-killing as applied to animals cannot bear the test of rational thought. I do not propose to discuss the question of vegetarianism or mixed diet. But if the elementary considerations mentioned above have any weight the question can be safely left to the experts in dietetics. I would leave the question to be decided by each individual for himself. To some a vegetarian diet may suffice, to others animal food may be necessary for perfect health. But one need not lose one's balance in such matters. The only thing that one can insist upon is that no shock to anybody's feelings should be given by a ceremonious parade of victims to be slaughtered or by a public exhibition of butcher's work. One may also legitimately ask that good milking cattle should not be slaughtered when their supply is not enough for the people's needs. But such questions should all be decided from the human and rational point of view and not from feelings of sentiment or religion.

SOCIAL QUESTIONS

In dealing with social customs and institutions two principles must be kept firmly in mind and our opinion and practice should conform as closely as possible to them. These two principles are individual freedom and general well-being. In applying them, however, we must not allow spurious ideas of general good to over-ride individual freedom. If it is contended that a particular law or custom is desirable even though it encroaches on individual freedom, the proof of this desirability must be absolutely complete. The presumption is always in favour of freedom and the onus of proof should be on the other side. The insistence on preserving individual freedom is due to the fact that an individual sufficiently grown up and in possession of his normal faculties is likely to know better what is good for himself, and in any case would be better able to reconcile himself to any evil consequences of his own actions than if that action had been forced upon him by extraneous authority. Again, it has been the experience everywhere that wherever there is perfect freedom for the individual, the society has generally been able to make more rapid progress. New and beneficial ideas are likely to suggest themselves only in an atmosphere of freedom. History repeatedly teaches us that in a country

where all opinions, manners and customs are stereotyped, the people are unprogressive and generally tend to decay. For a short time, if the institutions are well suited to the environment, an appearance of happiness and contentment may be outwardly visible but the canker of decay is surely obtaining a foothold in that society.

In India, both among the Hindus and Muslims, these matters are generally judged by reference to old authorities, and discussions on them often take the form of scholastic disputations about the meaning and authority of old texts. A true rationalist should not attach any importance to the words of the texts themselves though he will do his best to understand the circumstances in which the particular institution developed, find out whether it subserved a useful purpose and then judge whether the circumstances have changed requiring a corresponding change in the institution. After all, one who cannot accept the position that the old authorities have been in existence for all time, surely understands that at one time these very texts were novel and probably incurred the opposition of the orthodox of those days. There should therefore be no objection to making new well-considered changes and these themselves will acquire the halo of antiquity with time. As a matter of fact, even the authorities to which appeal is made are generally so

numerous and conflicting that one can ordinarily get old texts to justify any innovation. But the rationalist should avoid this temptation to cite authorities in support of his position though these would be legitimate enough as mere illustrations. In our country almost every institution has taken on a religious colour and the path of the reformer is made exceedingly difficult. But he should not, by any action of his, add to these difficulties for the future and he should rely on the help of logic, history and experience, not only of our own country but of all the world.

There is a considerable body of persons who think that social changes should be brought about only by a change in public opinion and not by force of law. There is of course a good deal of force in this view as no law can be too far in advance of generally accepted public opinion as to what is right and proper. If the law is too much in conflict with accepted ideas it is likely to remain dormant and ineffective and people will get used to the idea of defying law in general. The Prohibition Law in America and the Sarda Act* in India are good examples of a law being too far ahead of public opinion. More often, however, law tends to be

* This remark does not imply any opposition on the part of the author to this Act; it is only desired that the Act should be strictly enforced and not allowed to be a mere dead letter.

behind the better ideas of the age and represents only the ideas of the past ages. The machinery for the modification of laws to suit changes of time is nowhere perfect. Existing laws always create vested interests which oppose any changes, and even where some kind of regular machinery exists it is only brought into operation when the abuses become too glaring. Moreover, in a country where laws are not made merely by the sole authority of a dictator the changes take a good deal of time to effect and hence the statute books are cumbered with numerous enactments which have survived their utility to the general public though they may perhaps be useful to the legal profession.

In India, law in matters of social institutions and practices has been even more conservative than in other countries with democratic or at least national governments, as during nearly two centuries our country has been under the rule of a foreign people whose inevitable tendency is to let well—or at least the tolerable or tolerated—alone. In order to stabilise its own position the British Government followed the policy of strict religious neutrality and as in India almost everything has some religious odour attaching to it, Government has been very timid in enacting any laws which interested people can represent as interfering with religious matters. The influence of Government has

thus generally been on the side of the ultra-conservative section. In the early days of British rule judges had *pandits* of the old type associated with them so that they could advise on the bearing of the old *smritis* and other texts, and it is said that they were not always unwilling to give biased opinions for a consideration. In any case these *smritis* and texts were so old that they did not accord even then with the actual circumstances and thus India has been tied to many laws quite out of date. Uncharitable critics of Government even say that the rulers were not always unwilling to preserve abuses so long as they did not make the task of Government too difficult, for in this way they could always justify to the world the necessity for the continuance of an alien rule. In any case the British Government has not generally been on the side of social progress at least so far as it can be effected by legislation. I admit of course that in case of the abolition of *Sati* or the Age of Consent Bill they have legislated in opposition to the religious point of view, but these instances are so few that the general statement made above is in the main justified. Only during the last ten or fifteen years, when the legislatures have contained a large proportion of elected members, we have begun to see some legislative activity in the direction of social reform, but the officials continue to preserve their extremely cautious attitude when

they should have been naturally expected to cast their weight, moral if not actually in the lobby, in the direction of steady, if gradual, progress.

While, as said before, law tends always to be too conservative, the ideal position should be for law to be slightly in advance of the common opinion of the unenlightened public and if Government were really courageous they can do much to help social readjustment. Here, however, I would draw a distinction between laws which make certain actions or abstention from certain actions compulsory for all, and laws that are only optional or permissive in character. In social matters the Sarda Act is of the first kind and the Widows' Marriage Act of the second. The duty of a rationalist is to advocate all laws which make for progress and are of a permissive character, while on laws of the other kind he must naturally take all circumstances into consideration while discussing them. He should always make it clear that his personal opinion is on the side of progress and that his own actions conform to the proposed law though he may hesitate in supporting a universal enactment by immediate legislation. To my mind, whenever legislation in social matters is proposed in future, it had best be of the permissive kind in the first place. Let the experiment be tried on a modest scale in the beginning; if it succeeds, then it will be time enough to press for its universal

adoption. This condonation of an attitude of hesitancy refers only to matters on which the practical difficulties, very much exaggerated if the matters have a religious bearing, are great. On other matters which relate to major points of morality or public well-being a courageous attitude is always to be recommended. It is generally not possible to conciliate religious obscurantists by moderate concessions in a spirit of compromise; they will have all or nothing and it is often as difficult to get a compromise measure through as a thorough-going one. But on matters of secular import there is no reason why too much weight should be given to fanciful religious objections. As an example, I would mention the need of compulsory registration of marriages and adoptions. Both these affect civil rights which the courts and the administration have often to decide upon. The innovation will be useful also as a piece of social reform and provide valuable data for drawing sociological conclusions.

The importance of the question of legislation in matters of social reform is seen from the fact that in the one supreme social problem of India, *viz.*, caste, not much real progress can be made without some kind of enabling or permissive legislation to regularise the position of persons prepared to break the accepted rules of caste. The first step was taken by the Special Marriage Act of 1872 which legalised

marriages between any two persons but required them to declare that they did not belong to any of the recognised religions. Thus it was not possible for a Hindu of one caste to marry a person of another caste without abjuring Hinduism altogether. But even this abjuration was not effective as he continued to be a Hindu in default of being anything else, for the only comprehensive definition of a Hindu is a person born of parents calling themselves Hindus and not formally admitted into any other religion. Then, after several unsuccessful attempts by Messrs. Basu and Patel a measure sponsored by Gour was passed in the last few years which legalised the marriage between Hindus of different castes without imposing on them the necessity of abjuring Hinduism altogether. Several other measures are required in order to make easy the path of the rationalist who does not believe in caste and wants to act in accordance with his convictions, before the position can be regarded as completely satisfactory.

The question of marriage, divorce, inheritance and legal rights of women form another large group on which rational legislation is eminently desirable in order to bring the law into harmony with modern ideas. The Sarda Act goes a little way in this direction but no legislation can be regarded as fully adequate which does not require that the age limit of marriage should be the same as that of legal

majority. The principle of individual liberty requires that no one should be bound down for life to another unless he or she is able to understand the full implications of this act. When the law does not allow a minor to enter into pecuniary commitments, it is unreasonable that it should allow this life-long commitment entered into on his behalf by his parent or guardian. This will of course require a compulsory kind of enactment for which, however, public opinion does not appear to be at all prepared. In this connection I may in passing also refer to the dedication of minor girls to temples or making minor children take the vow of perpetual celibacy and asceticism, and I would in accordance with rationalist principles sternly prohibit both these by law.

In the matter of divorce the legal position is exceedingly unsatisfactory. Hindu Shastras as accepted at present are supposed not to allow women the facility of divorce under any circumstances though in many castes below the highest, divorce is allowed by custom and is recognised by the courts. When however a bill is introduced in the legislature to allow divorce among Hindus, everybody, *i.e.*, among the vocal people belonging to the higher castes, begins to exclaim that the whole social structure will crumble down if the bill passes. On this question of divorce opinion even in many western countries is very reactionary. Marriage is

a sacrament, it is said, and cannot be broken. But to one who takes a reasonable view of things and who believes in individual freedom so far as it does not conflict with the similar freedom of others it appears obvious that divorce should be possible when the two parties do not observe the implications of the marriage contract. The rational view on this point would appear to be as follows :

When there are no children divorce should be fairly easy to obtain even by mutual consent provided that proper time is given for prolonged consideration and possible reconciliation and that the step is not being taken from a fit of momentary anger or passion ; desertion, adultery (not condoned by the other party), cruelty, loathsome disease, habitual inebriety, conviction for prolonged terms of imprisonment should be sufficient grounds for one party alone claiming divorce. When there are no children, divorce should not involve heavy pecuniary liability of a penal nature on the husband, and a return, whenever possible, of all mutual presents at the time of marriage and thereafter should be considered ordinarily sufficient, though the courts may decide that when one of the parties has been merely keeping the house while the other is earning the latter should get a share of the savings effected jointly during the marriage. When there are children of the marriage the question is a good deal more difficult as the

interests of third parties are then involved. In such cases more time should be given for reconciliation, but if such proves absolutely impossible divorce should be possible even in such cases, for while it is best for children to have the advantage of the fostering care of both the parents it is better that they should have the undivided care of at least one rather than grow up in an atmosphere of continuous wrangling or cruelty or immorality. In such cases both parents should contribute to the upbringing of the children according to their ability as they cannot claim to shirk their responsibility by the act of divorce.

In the matter of inheritance and the legal rights of women, again, Indian law and custom is sadly behind what is regarded as fair and just. So far as practicable men and women should be treated alike by law. A woman should get a portion from her parents' estate though this portion should be smaller than in the case of sons as the daughters leave the family to form a new home on their marriage. On the other hand every woman should get a certain portion of her deceased husband's estate and not, as among the Hindus, have a claim to mere maintenance. The share of the widow should be equal to if not more than that of a son and she should not be liable to forfeit her rights if she remarries.

The principles I have been advocating naturally emphasize the equality between the rights and status of men and women except in so far as natural and physical differences exist between them. The fact that women bear the brunt of keeping up the continuity of the race should only make us tilt the scale slightly in their favour and not, as in most modern societies, put them under special disabilities and disadvantages, making them virtually unpaid servants and play-things of men. Any advance in the position of women will be the best means of securing rapid progress of society in general. In the matter of education the claims of girls are at least as important as those of boys. They should have the same opportunities of improving themselves, and their enlightenment has far greater effect on the progress of coming generations. Marriage should not remain almost the only respectable method of providing for them, though, human nature being what it is, the vast majority of women will always consider wifehood and motherhood as the noblest ideal. But if these are entered upon in an atmosphere of conscious freedom, if wifehood is not forced upon them when they are little children, if the woman has the main say in the selection of her partner for life for which adequate facilities should be given by free social intercourse between men and women, if motherhood is not regarded, as it too

often is, as entirely beyond the control of the woman, if she has the determining voice in the number and spacing of the children she is to bear, then and then alone will our women bear their part in the well-being of society. There is no risk that if women are allowed full freedom in these matters they will shirk the duties of wifehood and motherhood, for these are the deepest and strongest instincts of women which no man-made law or custom can extinguish in the slightest degree. In certain cases however, due either to physical or mental peculiarities, women may select other careers, and society should not regard such women as exceptional or eccentric. Some women can contribute their peculiar share to the moral, intellectual and social progress if they are given the chance. Even under present conditions of restricted freedom many women have distinguished themselves in several fields of activity and it is a very short-sighted system which seeks to put a curb on enterprise, genius and originality of which there is not likely to be an abundance in the best of circumstances.

Many new and often apparently outrageous ideas are now-a-days being propagated. The Russian Revolution which has cut off most of the old moorings of society has given rise to many a discussion of the most fundamental ideas. Such of these as relate to economic and political questions

may be dealt with in another place. But even as regards the fundamental concepts of social structure doubts are being raised. Is the institution of marriage as now understood essential? Should companionate marriage be allowed and recognised by the state? Is the institution of family necessary to the growth and well-being of society? Should divorce at the sweet will of one party alone be allowed without any inquiry? Should abortion be legally permissible and if so up to what stage? Should parents be left absolutely free to determine the career and direct the up-bringing of their children or should the State arrange for the rearing of children? On these points opinion cannot be expressed without due consideration. Probably it will be found that some of these ideas which have arisen as a mere reaction from old conservatism will not stand the test of reason and experience; it will be, I believe, seen that the institution of family and marriage is essential for the continued growth and well-being of the human race; that, on the whole, parents are better able to bring up their children than the State, though the latter is justified in insisting on certain minimum conditions of healthy life and intellectual and moral training. But even such questions should not be regarded as outside the pale of rational argument. Even principles of morality are of a relative nature. Thus the patriarchal

system whereby the father is the head of the family, which we are accustomed to regard as the cornerstone of the social structure, is not universal and in some parts the matriarchal system is in full vogue. Polyandry is practised in a few parts of the world; premarital chastity is not insisted upon in others; the *jus primae noctis* was recognised a few centuries ago and the Maharaj Libel case shed a lurid light on ideas relating to sex in some castes about sixty years ago. Such questions are not likely to come for practical action at an early date in this country. But even assuming, as I fully believe, that the main ideas at the root of our social structure are sound, a discussion of them will only strengthen their hold upon our minds and occasionally enable us to cut off some of the excrescences that have gathered around these sound ideas; and a taboo on their discussion is sure to do far more harm than good.

POLITICAL QUESTIONS

It has been already remarked that in the discussion of political questions rational argument often has no place but that judgments are formed on the basis of nationalistic sentiments, party or sectional loyalties, devotion to an individual or even selfish considerations. High-sounding phrases form the stock-in-trade of most of our politicians, and actual thinking, if done at all, is confined to a very

few who are sneeringly dubbed "doctrinaires." The four kinds of motives mentioned above form a descending scale of respectability, and a nation's political advance can be very well gauged by the class of motives actuating its politicians. But even if all politicians are actuated by wholly nationalistic considerations, still a nation is something much less than humanity and occasions often arise when narrow nationalistic considerations have to give way to larger international and humanist considerations. A country that puts its own supposed advantage above the larger interests of humanity will be hated by all though it may occasionally be also feared, and it will find no friends in its hour of difficulty and thus may ultimately be acting against its own true interests. The spirit of internationalism is directly opposed to the spirit of the doctrine "My country, right or wrong," and is not a mere passive attitude of sickly sentimentality but is a lively realisation of the fact that no country can in these days afford to stand isolated from others and that whatever affects other countries indirectly affects itself.

This spirit of internationalism has hardly been developed in our country. The reason is that our foreign relations have been for over a century in the hands of our rulers and we have not been brought face to face with them. Our politics has been naturally confined to a struggle to obtain increased

rights from our rulers and our vision has been therefore necessarily limited. But it is time, in view of the impending political changes, that we learn to take a wider view and leave the rôle of the frog in the well. There are people who even advocate our giving up our original membership of the League of Nations. It is quite true that the League has not yet fulfilled all its objectives and that in the greater problems of international relationship it has signally failed. But an organisation of this nature cannot attain complete efficiency and final form in the course of a few years. The work that it has already done, though humbler in character than its ideals, is still of a very important nature; it has tried to replace the arbitrament of force by discussions round a table, it has compelled statesmen to give at least lip-service to higher ideals and made them ashamed to acknowledge blatantly selfish motives, it has brought the statesmen of the world into personal contact with one another, and in matters of labour conditions, health information, drug traffic and other narrowly humanitarian subjects it has done a great deal of useful work. Considering that the League has no sanctions behind it, it may be said to have done quite well; of course it can be only just as efficient as its individual members can make it. It depends upon the enlightened opinion of the world for its success and all right-minded persons should do their

best to keep the League ideals before themselves and before those they can influence. Finally India, in spite of its present political dependence upon Britain has in the League a forum of honour and dignity; it allows Indians of eminence to play some part on the world's stage and increase India's prestige in the world, and when India attains a higher political status, it will provide a still greater opportunity for the future. Nothing can be so short-sighted as a resignation from the League in a moment of anger or from a false idea of economy.

Turning now to political questions in the narrower sense of the term, we must have some definite principles on which to take our stand in coming to any judgment. Of such questions those relating to the constitution of government take the first place. Although it has been said by Pope

" For forms of government let fools contest,
Whatever is best administered is best "

still most people now-a-days agree with the dictum that good government is no substitute for self-government and that the government of a people must be by the people and for the people. Even if we do not believe in a formal social compact as conceived by Rousseau, there can be no question that the institution of government has replaced the state of wild nature because it subserves some essential needs

and offers many advantages. In modern days every system of government must be judged by the criterion : How far does it make decent living possible for the people subject to it? This decent living should provide for the peaceful prosecution of one's activities without interference from outside, and should provide reasonable opportunities for the satisfaction of everybody's physical, mental and moral needs. One expects from government adequate freedom to regulate one's own life in so far as it does not involve interference with the similar freedom of others. But this does not lead us far. In organised societies all men are dependent on one another and government naturally involves a great deal of restraint on freedom. In the first place governments restrict freedom in order to preserve their own existence and every citizen is supposed to count for nothing when the safety of the state is in danger. *Salus populi suprema lex*. In view of this safety the state maintains the army, the police, the judiciary, etc., and collects taxes from the people to pay for them. It even compels the citizens in some countries to undergo compulsory military training so as to fit them for the defence of the state in case of need. In the second place it is obvious that the freedom of one individual often conflicts with that of others and the state has to come down with a strong hand to preserve this

freedom for all. Some believe that these two matters should comprise the whole duty of a government, *viz.*, to preserve its own existence and to keep the ring clear for all the citizens.

This view is not, however, now generally accepted and the duties of the state have begun to range over a vast variety of subjects and both the extremes of Fascism and Bolshevism claim to regulate almost all the thoughts and actions of all the subjects. As a matter of fact even if the state is only to ensure perfect freedom for everybody to realise his highest capacities, and treat all persons on a footing of equality, this equality is far from being realised in practice. Theoretically the capitalist and the worker may be free to exchange, or not to exchange, their capital and labour; but, in actual practice the capitalist can ordinarily afford to wait a fairly long time and keep his factory closed, while the worker sees starvation staring him and his family in the face if he remains unemployed even for a few days. A policy of *laissez faire* is in such a case a mere mockery of the name of freedom. The state has therefore necessarily to interfere and make new laws in order to bring the two sides on a less unequal footing. This being the case the proper constitution of the state or the proper machinery for making and administering laws is a matter of vital need for the good of the people.

It is obvious that a person or a class of persons is best able to decide what is best for himself or themselves, and ordinarily that constitution is likely to be the better one in which the larger number of people are in a position to have an effective voice. Some are inclined to think that a dictator or a superman would be the best person to judge what is the best for the people as he brings an independent judgment to bear on the matter, and that, moreover, he can administer the state much more efficiently unhampered by perpetual discussion and by the instability often seen in democratic forms of government. They point to the apparent vigour of administration displayed by a Mussolini or a Kemal and to the continual change of governments in France or to repeated revolutions in Spain or in South American states. But the apparent efficiency of a dictatorship in these times has not had enough time to prove itself to be permanent, and if one were to judge by the lessons of history the death of the dictator would be a signal for a long period of turmoil. Moreover the duties of the state being so multifarious in these days, the dictator cannot look to all matters personally and he has to entrust most matters to others who in their own sphere become miniature dictators though always fearing the fate that has recently overtaken some of the trusted colleagues of Hitler or at least dismissal from their

posts as has happened several times under Mussolini. Again under all forms of government vested interests always begin to develop and these think more of consolidating their own position than of the general good of the people, and the remedy against the growth of such vested interests is the intense light of public criticism. On the other hand the instability of the mob is always a besetting danger of democracy, and interested people are ever ready to play upon the momentary passions of the people. But taking everything into account it appears that a democratic form of government, in which the legislators and administrators are likely to be called to account by the people, is by far the best, even though dictatorships appear to be getting into momentary favour. It is only necessary to see that the general level of intelligence among the people is steadily raised so that they may not give way to gusts of passion, and one of the first duties of the state is to do its best to improve the education of all its subjects.

The rationalist would therefore support wholeheartedly all movements tending towards perfect democracy in which all would start on an equal level and have equal opportunities. He will not allow vested interests to grow too strong, for they are sure to retard its growth and will try to consolidate their own position at the expense of the general public.

He will moreover try to confine the activities of the state to matters which it can properly deal with and oppose all measures which interfere with private opinion, religious beliefs or personal freedom. In political matters he will keep before his mind the truth, valid in all spheres, *natura non agit per saltum* (nature does not work by jumps), and will resist the temptation to be an impatient idealist desiring to effect everything in his own lifetime. As a practical man he will have often to compromise, satisfying himself with the second best if he cannot get the best, though always keeping before his mind's eye his ideal of perfect equality and freedom for all. The rationalist may be charged as being unfit for politics if he acts on these principles but, if he sticks to them through thick and thin and advocates them even in face of obloquy, he will surely exercise great, though indirect, influence on matters of current politics.

Applying some of these ideas to the present discussions on constitutional reform I think he will come to the conclusion that the proposals made in the White Paper do not make for the ultimate sound progress of the country. It has been well said that small reforms are the enemies of great reforms. This saying is profoundly true if such reforms are merely a treatment of symptoms and are likely to constitute obstacles to further progress or are intended

as a permanent settlement of the whole question. On the other hand if the small reform is only an instalment of the larger reform which is for the moment unattainable, then there it is proper to welcome even the small reform. The White Paper does lip service to democracy by having an extended franchise for British India but hamstrings it by overloading the legislatures with nominated representatives of the autocratic rulers of states and thus firmly entrenches these rulers in their irresponsible position. It nominally gives the vote to women though in the present circumstances the number of women enfranchised will be only a very small fraction of the men who will get the vote. It creates or rather continues the system of special electorates for capital, landlord interest and labour, etc., when the first two classes, by their favourable position, can always get more than their proper proportion even without such special provision. It continues and extends the system of communal representation and makes the realisation of the dream of a homogeneous nationality impossible by leaving to the various minority communities no incentive to co-operate with the majority community, as it already gives them more than a proportionate share of representation. It nominally aims at a federation of all India, but there is no provision by which the states yield anything for the common

good of the federation. It does not even enunciate the fundamental rights of citizenship for all and the peoples in the states are as good as non-existent so far as any reference to them in the White Paper is concerned. It requires a further reference to Parliament, with all its delays and difficulties, before any change can be made in the constitution of the services. It lays down no programme with a view to make India ultimately self-sufficient as regards her own defence. It leaves finance practically out of the purview of the ministers as about eighty per cent. of the expenditure will be beyond their control. On all these matters it creates fresh obstacles in the way of an advance to complete democracy in which all would have equal rights and privileges. On the other hand, I am not very much afraid of several of the safeguards mentioned therein, for these would not be used when things are going on well and will soon get out of date just as the theoretical veto of the King in England has not been used over two hundred years, and their formal removal would not be so difficult as the doing away with newly created vested interests. For all these reasons I am inclined to consider even the present position better than that envisaged in the White Paper; for it is better to bear the ills we have than fly to others which we have far greater reasons to fear.

As practical men we know of course that we have not a clean slate to write on and that we have to start with things as they are. All that we can hope to do is to make gradual improvements but they should be in the right direction. To take one part of the scheme in the White Paper which has been so much discussed and has led to a split in the Congress Party itself, *viz.*, the Communal Award, it must be admitted by all that the ideal would be to have no special electorates based on religious differences but to get all people to vote together irrespective of their religion. But communal bitterness does exist; various communities do not trust one another and consider that special representation is required to give them opportunities to ventilate their needs. And finally even now there actually do exist such electorates and it is impossible to do away with them immediately. Attempts, gradual though they may be, must, therefore, be made to get out of this hopeless *impasse*. Reasonable people who accept the correctness of the ideal may probably agree to such a gradual process. Accepting for the moment the present distribution of seats between the various communities the law might lay down that at the end of every five or ten years one quarter of the special seats by separate electorates should be automatically done away with and they should be added to the general seats, some of the consti-

tuencies being made multi-membered with specially reserved seats for the particular minorities in these general constituencies. In this way at the end of twenty or forty years—a sufficiently long time for communal distrust to be moderated and for the backward communities to come up to the level of the more advanced—separate electorates will disappear, the protection for minorities being then only in the form of reserved seats in multi-membered constituencies. Later it may be found feasible to abolish gradually even this reservation, especially if some system of proportional representation is simultaneously introduced. If the White Paper had incorporated some such scheme in the communal award the opposition to it would not have been so great. Impatient idealists would certainly have exclaimed against the long period of waiting but reasonable men will realise that they cannot expect to reach the ideal in their own life-time and that in the history of a country a few years more or less are not of great importance.

On this question of communal discord it is obvious that an immediate solution cannot be reached. Too much heat has been created, religious prejudices have been fanned into flame, often by interested persons, and selfish motives have also been cleverly represented as identical with communal advantage. National considerations have been

completely ignored. The only thing one can do is to give the healing powers of time a chance to effect a cure, while trying to make conditions favourable for allowing passions to subside. It is almost useless to attempt to get the grown-up people to change their views. The main work should be with the younger generation whose better instincts should be appealed to and before whom the noble ideal of a united nation with equal opportunities and freedom for all should be constantly presented. At the same time nothing should be done to aggravate the situation and no new permanent difficulties should be allowed to grow up while trying to meet the temporary situation. It should be made worth the while of minority and backward communities to try to raise themselves to the level of the more advanced. The system of weightage whether in the legislatures or the services makes this almost impossible, for then there would be nothing for them to work for.

We are continually hearing in India and other countries, specially those brought into existence as the result of the War, of the *rights* of minorities. We hardly hear anything of the corresponding *duties* of minorities. To me these appear equally, if not more, important. It is equitable that persons belonging to minorities should be allowed free scope to live their personal lives as they choose, have full opportunities for the education of their children in

their own mother tongue, possess full freedom for observing their own religion and cherishing their own special cultural inheritance and be allowed all the rights of person and property enjoyed by the members of the majority community. On the other hand they should not aim at creating a state within a state but should identify themselves with the general interests of the nation as a whole, should learn the language of the majority along with their own and try to understand and sympathise with the point of view of other communities. Such a realisation of duties as well as of rights will soon reduce the gravity of the problem of minorities and reasonable people should do their best to help it on, and not add to the bitterness already existing ; opportunities for co-operation and joint work should be fully used and the question of minority claims should not be introduced in all matters whether they are relevant or not. Thus in a discussion of the question of the separation of judicial and executive functions it is absurd to allow one's judgment to be influenced by any consideration of the share to be obtained by any community in the additional recruitment of officers that may be necessitated by such a separation.

Not much less important than the rôle of religion in our political life is that of property. Actually it is often even more so, for, even if we do

not quite admit that money is the root of all evil, still excessive love of it is the root of most evils. The primary duty of the state is the protection of person and property, and while as regards the protection of person the duty may be said to be absolute except in so far as it is subordinated to the even more fundamental necessity of the protection of the state itself, in the case of property it cannot be said to be of the same absolute nature. The state itself is continually taking a share of everybody's property by direct or indirect taxation, and no court will give more than a nominal punishment if a starving man steals a piece of bread. The institution of property is no doubt of supreme importance to the stability of the state itself and conduces to the general good. It acts as an incentive to everybody to do his best and thus add to the common stock of goods and services. The magic of property has made the peasant proprietors of France the great bulwark of the state. Even in Soviet Russia where at first they thought of abolishing all private property and tried to make all means of production the property of the state, opinion is veering round to the view that some relaxation of this policy is required if the best is to be obtained out of the energies of all citizens. Millions of years would be necessary if human nature is, if ever, to undergo such radical modification as to approximate to that of bees and ants in which

every individual is completely specialised and lives only for the community. The assurance that every person will be able to enjoy the fruits of his own energy and labour is the motive force behind most of the actions of all men, and the strength of this assurance should not be diminished except for the gravest of reasons.

It has already been mentioned above that taxation both direct and indirect is an invasion on the rights of property though it can be also fairly contended that these taxes are paid in return for the protection that the state affords in order to make the acquisition of property possible. Really speaking if all men were absolutely equal before law the only legitimate tax would be a uniform poll tax, but all over the world the principle of taxation according to taxable capacity is rightly accepted as just. This taxable capacity is not proportionate to the amount of one's income but increases at an accelerated rate with the income, and graduated rates of taxation on income and heritable property are prevalent everywhere. The main difficulty in regard to free enjoyment of the fruits of one's labour is with reference to the question whether this right to free enjoyment should be held to include an uncontrolled right to dispose of one's property after death. There are obviously two sides to this question. On the one hand the right to dispose of one's own acquisition

is highly prized, and if that were taken away the acquisitive instinct might lose a good deal of its intensity. A man works hard not merely to enjoy personally the fruits of his labour but to provide for his wife and children whose comfortable existence he wants to insure after he is gone. Again many find their enjoyment of property in the anticipation that they are founding—or continuing—a family with their name and reputation. Property rights obviously include the right to make gifts according to one's pleasure, and the dividing line between immediate gifts and deferred gifts is somewhat thin. For all these reasons it is contended that the right of unfettered bequest or automatic transmission to natural heirs is of the utmost importance and should be an essential part of the rights of property.

On the other side it can be contended that the possibility of coming into vast property without working for it and of thus enjoying a comfortable existence is no incentive to others. They vividly realise the injustice of the world when they find that one man, clever, strong, honest and enterprising, has to work hard often even to get a tolerable living, while another who is stupid, weak, dishonest and indolent is able to command all the good things of life, including the most desirable woman for a wife, simply because he was lucky to have had a father, or a grandfather or even some ancestor

several generations removed who was clever, strong, honest and enterprising. We may even add in passing that this ancestor is often only a fictitious one in India as adoption is so commonly required in rich Indian families owing to want of legitimate sons at some stage or another. The facilities for acquiring property and transmitting it entire have resulted in placing a good part of the means of production in the hands of a very small minority and making similar opportunities scarce for others.

- The unabashed flaunting of wealth and luxurious life in the face of the vast mass of the common people has given rise to feelings of jealousy and is obviously one of the principal causes of the rise of socialism and bolshevism. If the transmission of blood is considered essential, even that object is not always effected as several families, as said above, are continually replenished by adoptions. Moreover for one man who is able by his own energy to acquire wealth there are in successive generations an increasing number who are in a position to lead an easy and indolent existence. The man who acquires wealth knows the value of money, the trouble required to earn it and the use that can be made of it. But the man who gets it without any merit of his own has no such idea. He generally does no useful work and is only engaged in devising fresh methods of spending his leisure and wealth and is ever ready

to try new ways of extravagance devised elsewhere, and incidentally to spend the wealth of the country not for its own benefit but for the benefit of the foreigners. Often indeed his vacant mind leads him into vice and ruin.

The rationalist not being accustomed to respect an institution simply because it is old is bound to realise the large substratum of truth in this case against unrestricted transmission of wealth. While honouring the memory of the great men of old he is not overawed by the mere name of their puny descendants of the present day. While restriction of uncontrolled inheritance may to a certain extent discourage enterprise, still the prospect of power, prestige and opportunities for service to country or humanity which great wealth makes possible, will always prove a sufficient attraction to most men. That the prospect of providing for, or founding a new, family is not necessary as an incentive is also shown by the fact that in Europe many great men in all fields, including those who have amassed great wealth, are not seldom bachelors or at least childless. It is very bad for humanity to be bound by the dead hand of the past in any field, religion, social institutions or possession of wealth. Just as one condemns the institution of caste as it is based on mere birth, so also one is bound to question the institution of property when it is based on mere heredity.

The state should see to it that an institution which was intended to help on the advance of humanity does not lead to its stagnation or even to a reaction which may engulf the social structure itself.

Realising the advantage as well as the need of gradual advance we do not advocate any sudden and startling changes. The principle of taxation of inheritance is now recognised to a certain extent in all countries of the world. Even in India probate duties are at present imposed. If this system is gradually extended so that there is a steeper graduation of the scale of those probate duties and their rate much heavier when the heirs are distant relations for whom the deceased had not much natural affection, and if landed property is not exempted from the operation of such duties, a good deal can be effected in a few generations to make vast permanent accumulations of wealth difficult and allow it to circulate among a larger number. The increased yield of such taxation can be used either for lowering other taxation or for introducing new services beneficial to the common people.

It is not proper merely to pooh-pooh the growing trend towards socialism of the younger generation. The new Congress Socialist Party is a tremendous portent and the movement is sure to gain strength and perhaps develop in undesirable directions unless well-considered attempts are made

in good time to meet it half way. Mere insistence on prescriptive rights, discourses on the great services done in the more or less remote past by the ancestors of the privileged classes, and even appeals to the sacredness of formal engagements will not stem the tide of the new movement. Relations between capital and labour might have to be revised. Land should not, as in some parts, be allowed to be the monopoly of a particular class. Housing conditions of the great mass of the people in towns which are at present a positive disgrace, must be immediately improved even at the cost of the vested interests of the ground landlords and slum-owners. Conditions of industrial labour have to be improved and the labourers must be given fair conditions of living, an increased amount of leisure, and an interest in the profits from their concerns. The present state of things when there is a superfluity of goods in the world accompanied by starvation and unemployment, must be changed even if we have to change the basis of our economic and industrial system. If that system is not able to satisfy the new needs it must be considered whether state regulation of economic activities and even ownership of some industries will not effect an improvement. The need is for clear thinking and for courage to discard our long cherished ideas if necessary. It is not enough to say "We are all Socialists now" in

a patronising tone but to move actually in the direction of rational socialism without being frightened by the mere word.

EDUCATION AND ALLIED QUESTIONS

It has often been already said that to get the rational point of view on any question accepted and acted upon, we must have a wide spread of education which enables people to think for themselves. The importance of education as a means of propaganda is recognised by all. The Roman Catholic Church has always insisted upon keeping the education of Catholic children in its own hands and in France, Italy, Germany, Spain and other countries the State had a long tussle with the Church on this question till the Church schools were entirely abolished in some of these countries. In England the education question has always had reference mainly to the position of Church schools, Catholic schools and religious teaching and the controversy is not yet finally ended. In Italy the Fascist régime regards the education of the children as a matter of the utmost importance and every child is made to believe as an article of faith in the greatness of the Duce and the excellence of Fascism. In Germany the schools are being organised so that every child will grow up a pure Nazi. In Russia the schools

aim at making all children followers of the Bolshevik doctrine of the dictatorship of the Proletariat. Here in India there is a good deal of vocal opinion in favour of religious education in schools. Muslims are said to be apathetic to the education of their children unless they are taught the Koran in the schools. In all these cases the object aimed at is to implant such ideas in the minds of the young that they may be impervious to any doubts in future. The rationalist view is to train the child to think for itself and then let it arrive at any opinion it considers justified. In short the rationalist idea of education is that it is a propaganda against propaganda.

There is a widespread school of thought which looks at education from a narrow utilitarian point of view and wants it to be severely vocational, teaching an agriculturist's child the details of practical agriculture and that of an artisan the artisan's craft. From such a point of view one may even argue that the teaching of the three R's may be a waste of time which could be better used in making the child work directly at his vocation. But we insist upon the need of education because it will train the child to think for itself and the subjects of training can be so selected that they will also be always useful in life. Our aim must be to make the child a better human being with all its faculties

fully developed. We do not want it to be a mere machine fitted only to take its place as a particular little part of the social structure, holding readymade opinions, debarred from considering any question independently and in fact so brought up as to be unable to do it. It used to be the practice in certain countries to bring up a special class of persons peculiarly adapted to guard the purity of the women by subjecting them to a physical operation which made them impervious to the temptations of sex. This practice is now universally condemned as cruel and inhuman, and as a matter of fact this class developed other undesirable characteristics, for they became leaders of revolt against their masters and were noted for indescribable cruelty and oppression. The present desire in some countries to use the education machine for eliminating the faculty of reason is likely to produce a race of intellectual defectives who will by this process become far more liable to be swayed by passion and selfishness and prove ultimately even a greater danger to the State than an intelligent, thinking and rational people is ever likely to be.

We have far greater faith in human nature and capability than is evinced by such advocates of education as a means of propagating their own particular theories. We think that human nature left to develop freely its inborn tendencies will turn

out far better men and women than mere automata. Any educational system that tries to do anything else must be condemned. The child should be gradually taught the way of coming to an independent judgment and of using all available materials for the purpose. Gradually it should be taught the main laws of nature, of man's organisation into social units and the interdependence of all men. The child is continually gathering impressions and the teacher's work should be only to help on this process. The importance of the three R's lies in the fact that they form the beginnings of a well considered scheme to teach the child to use its reason, to learn from the experience of others and to communicate its own ideas. If literacy simply means, as is laid down in the census regulations, merely the ability to sign one's name and to spell through an easy letter, it would not be of much use. The minimum standard should be ability to understand what is read and to express ideas intelligently. Moreover no educational system can be complete which does not provide for keeping up this literacy and encourage the continued use of the literacy acquired.

The problem of education in India has two aspects, extension (which involves finance) and organisation. As regards the first it is admitted by all that we must have a system of compulsory

elementary education as soon as possible and that this must be regarded as one of the primary duties of the state. This would involve a largely increased expenditure but the country should be able to afford it, and if retrenchment will not provide all the necessary funds, the country should agree to increased taxation for the purpose. One point bearing on this question is not often given enough importance. It is not enough to get little children into schools; it is necessary to keep them there for four or five years, otherwise they will not become effectively literate and will soon relapse into illiteracy. At present in all parts of India—except the few places where compulsion is in vogue—children leave school after a year or two in the infant or first class. The money spent on them is absolutely wasted. Thus the amount available for primary education is not used to best purpose and for this again compulsory attendance for four or five years is absolutely necessary. In addition to this some arrangement for part-time instruction for adults would be very desirable and the school teachers, if properly encouraged, will probably agree to do this work for a small additional remuneration. Along with schools in all villages of a considerable size, providing a minimum number of children of school-going age, the state should also encourage the starting of libraries or reading rooms which would enable the pupils to continue to use their

knowledge of reading and so improve themselves. A good part of this work can, however, be done through voluntary effort if properly organised.

There is a section of our public men, especially among the backward classes, who regard elementary education as all-important and the higher grades of education as much less important or even as a luxury. These grades are, all the same, of great importance to the progress of the country, for out of persons who have received education of higher grade will rise the leaders of these backward classes themselves. There should not really be any antagonism between various grades of education but all should be considered as essential parts of a single system. The ideal should be that elementary education should be available to all while the higher grades should be available to those who can benefit by it; and this availability should not depend merely upon the pecuniary status of the guardians of the pupils, but any one should be able to command it, if he or she is sufficiently capable. I do not therefore agree with the view that these higher grades should be made more expensive and should more or less pay for themselves. Rather would I agree to a restriction on pupils who flock to high schools and colleges simply because they or their guardians can afford it and not because they can benefit by it. In any case no poor boy or girl should find it impossible

to go higher owing to poverty; and the so-called educational ladder must be made a highway on which only the dull and the incompetent will have no right to walk. The amount of intelligence in this world is not so great that we can afford to let a good part of it lie dormant or undeveloped, and it can hardly be said that intelligence is a necessary concomitant of the wealth of the guardians. It is better that the dull son of a rich man should at an early age take to some useful pursuit within the range of his powers rather than vainly try to take a degree which he cannot ordinarily attain and thus waste a good part of his life.

The educational system of a country being one whole, the proper organisation of it is of the utmost importance and it should be planned on a well-considered basis so that it may yield the best results. At present it is consciously or unconsciously taken for granted that every child that enters the infant class of an elementary school is sure to go up to the University and each stage of education is regarded as only one of the preparatory stages for this final end. But when one sees that only an infinitesimal part of the pupils in elementary schools do reach the University, the absurdity of such an idea becomes at once apparent. One can mark four fairly well-defined stages in the mental development of a growing human being : (i) child (up to the age of 10 or

11), (ii) boy or girl (from 11 to 14 or 15), (iii) adolescent (14 or 15 to 17 or 18) and (iv) adult (18 onwards); and to these four stages of mental development correspond four kinds of education, *viz.*, elementary, middle, high school and college. The limits of age mentioned above are only approximate but should not require alteration by more than a year at the utmost. Corresponding to these four grades there should be four classes of institutions: elementary school, middle school, high school and college or University. The course at each should be a complete one marked at its close by some kind of formal test or certificate. While the elementary stage should be approximately uniform for all and both for boys and girls, there should be more differentiation at each later stage. Thus the middle stage should be divided between purely scholastic schools and lower vocational schools of various kinds. These vocational schools should lay emphasis on the particular vocations proper to particular localities. If it were at all possible an expert psychological examination of children at the end of the elementary stage should be made and they should be advised about their future education. In these vocational schools intellectual education should not be altogether neglected but a portion of the time should be devoted to general intellectual subjects like science, history, geography, citizenship, etc., and

rudiments of English should be taught as a mere language. At least this stage should have been reached by all intelligent farmers, workmen, etc., and ultimately one hopes that it will be taken by all.

In the high school stage there should again be further differentiation and along with high schools, giving general intellectual education, there should be specialised schools in various branches. A more thorough practical knowledge of English should be given and pupils who have completed this stage should be able to take their place as the more intelligent and cultured part of the population. School teachers should be recruited from persons with this qualification except possibly in the case of elementary school teachers, who may have passed the middle stage and taken two years' pedagogical training afterwards. At the end of this stage a pupil must be able to enter on highly specialised courses like medicine, engineering, etc.

The last stage is the University which should aim at producing specialists of various kinds who are sufficiently trained to tackle a new problem in their subject. It is not necessary to attract to the Universities large masses of students whether they are capable of profiting by them or not. It is not particularly desirable to have large numbers but high quality should be the object in view. The present rush to the Universities is not in the best interest

of the country. Many graduates now being turned out are not of the real University standard and have wasted time and money in their efforts after a degree. It would be better if they can be diverted into channels more suited to their capacities while their minds are sufficiently receptive to new ideas. An educational system organised broadly on these lines will probably be of greater use to the country than the present haphazard plan when the Arts or the Science degree is the only goal before the young student. It is of course necessary that a wide choice of various kinds of specialised institutions should come into existence so as to suit different capabilities and temperaments and for this a largely increased expenditure is required. But the question before the country is not whether we can afford it but whether we can afford to avoid it.

The need of a properly organised system of education exists not only in the case of boys but of girls—even more insistently in the case of girls than of boys. In the first and last stage the same institutions will serve for both, after making provision for some alternatives which may suit their special aptitudes. The middle and the high school stage should ordinarily be taken by boys and girls in separate institutions. I do not, however, agree that the intellectual capacities of boys and girls are so essentially different that we must have absolutely

separate curricula for boys and girls. Broadly speaking the curricula may be similar and it is not in the interest of the well-being of future families that men and women should have been educated on quite different lines.

In our system of education we must take care that the importance of a sound knowledge of English is not overlooked. English has brought various parts of our country together, has made possible our contact with the wide world and has been the means of making us familiar with modern ideas. It would be a short-sighted policy if narrow ideas of nationalism lead us to neglect this fountain from which we imbibe invigorating thoughts. There is a growing school in India which wishes to make Hindi the national language and if it succeeds the result will inevitably be to lessen our contact with English history, science, literature and philosophy. An average person can be expected to know one language only ; and that must of course be his mother tongue ; only a few can master effectively two languages and a much smaller proportion can master three or four. The question is whether the possible second language should be English or Hindi for those whose mother tongue is other than Hindi, and I have no hesitation in saying that it should be English as that is immensely more useful than Hindi in almost all respects. On the question of languages Indian opinion

does not appear to be well thought out. If one can point out some uses of any particular language, it is immediately put forward as a candidate for a place in the educational curriculum, often in a compulsory form. But what we have to see is the relative importance of various languages and other subjects and we should not overload our curricula with languages as no time would then be left for other subjects. For Hindu students the following four languages have been contending for a place; the mother tongue, English, Hindi and Sanskrit. I have no doubt about the first two being taken in this order, and if a third can be at all learnt there may be a choice between Hindi and Sanskrit, though personally I would suggest that Sanskrit should be preferred as it would not be generally learnt after one has left school or college, while there is every possibility of one being able to get some familiarity with Hindi in later life. For the Muslim it is even worse; the languages that put in a claim for his attention are Urdu, the common language of his province, English, Persian and Arabic, in favour of all of which plausible arguments can be advanced. In his case I would make the first three necessary, keeping the other two optional generally for only a few. In this matter we have to take a common-sense point of view. If the child is asked to learn too many languages it will only get a smattering

of all without an effective mastery over even one.

In India the spirit of narrow particularism is too prevalent. The caste system splits the Hindus up into small sections some of which number only a few hundreds. Christianity and Islam, which began as universal religions open to all, are also succumbing in India to this fissiparous tendency and are developing more or less fixed castes among their adherents. Even among Europeans in a city like Bombay there are fairly well-marked social castes typified by their characteristic institutions, the Byculla Club, the Bombay Gymkhana, the Commercial Gymkhana and the Y.M.C.A., and I dare say keen observers will find similar divisions in Calcutta. In the political sphere this fissiparous tendency is seen in the demand for new provinces, often of a microscopic size, whose financial position will not enable them to have a tolerably efficient governmental machine, and in the insistence on the continuance of the identity of hundreds of little states which can never hope to function as proper administrative units but which all the same aspire to keep up all the paraphernalia of a separate existence. The same phenomenon is observed in the attempts to transform mere dialects into distinct languages or obstruct by artificial means the natural tendency of a small dialect to die out when it is surrounded by

a widely spoken vigorous literary language, when such a dialect is spoken by a few thousand only and can never hope to have a wide currency. Irrational sentimental reasons are advanced why this should be done when the sensible thing to do is to let these dialects die out. After all language is the means of communication and the more people one can communicate with in a language the more useful it would be, just as a telephone system in a place where there are only a few subscribers is not of much use. Such ideas of nationalistic or linguistic particularism appear to be quite opposed to all rational considerations. It is a pity that the Hindi and Urdu languages which started with a common basis have now become distinct languages to the great loss of both owing to religious and racial sentiment. The same kind of narrow nationalism is responsible for the present attempts to revive the Irish language which is the mother tongue of only a few thousand people in the west of Ireland. In India the aim should be to encourage about a dozen languages which are spoken by at least five or ten millions and let the others die out in the natural course of things owing to increased communication between different parts.

The need of religious instruction in schools and colleges is considered very acute in many circles as modern education is necessarily modifying current

ideas on many points of belief and social conduct, and the so-called godless education of the present day is held responsible for most of these alleged evils. It may very well be asked of the advocates of religious education why India reached such a low state as to fall an easy prey to a few foreigners who came here merely as traders, if before the introduction of English the educational system was so ideal that no child learnt anything except its religion. Is it not because all thought and originality was so completely suppressed that the few great men that did arise in those days were mere exceptions and that the general population was steeped in ignorance, taught to regard everything old as sacrosanct and unable to learn anything new? Did not these old ideas impress upon everybody a fatalistic outlook which discouraged the need of personal effort? Were not the various divisions sanctioned by religion so firmly impressed upon all that all classes could never be brought to co-operate even in times of grave emergency? Had not the practice of religion degenerated into a mere mechanical observance of religious rites from which all substance had disappeared? These advocates, from a feeling of vague discontent at change which they cannot reconcile themselves to, attribute all the supposed evils to want of religious instruction. They are always looking backward when the proper attitude

is to look forward and work for a better future. In this connection I do not desire to say anything about the philosophical ideas at the basis of all religions, but it is obvious that these ideas are too difficult for the young mind to grasp and that religious education is sure to degenerate into meaningless observances or mechanical repetition of some form of words which hardly convey any real import. What such instruction is sure to impress upon the minds of the pupils is that one not belonging to your own religion or caste or sect does not belong to your own world. Early upbringing should do everything to broaden one's sympathies and to enlarge one's outlook. On the other hand the insistence on religious education is sure to accentuate our communal divisions and make the attainment of national solidarity very much more difficult than it is. I have nothing to say against a study of the evolution of religious ideas by those who feel interested in the subject, and our universities should make adequate provision for such study. If the study of religion as contrasted with rationalism is considered useful, I would suggest that this study should be of some religion other than one's own; then the student will bring an independent mind to bear upon this study and see the matter in its true perspective. But I do not think that this suggestion will meet with the approval of the advocates of religious teaching.

Others again advocate this kind of teaching as an essential aid to character building and moral education. The need of religion to support moral ideas is now-a-days being questioned more and more. It is quite possible to give moral instruction by basing it on the broad facts of history and the inborn tendencies of the human mind, and the work of the Moral Education League and the practical experience of men like Mr. F. G. Gould is worth any amount of mere theory. But by far the best way of imparting moral instruction is to do it indirectly, by the healthy moral atmosphere of the schools, by the encouragement of true sportsmanship and above all by means of the personal influence of the teachers. If these means are wanting, formal religious instruction will produce no desirable results and may even produce canting hypocrites, who repeat noble sentiments but whose actions belie all the noble principles supposed to be at the basis of their religion.

The main need of the national educational system is the improvement of the quality of the teachers. They should be selected for their high character and zeal for their profession. The teaching profession must not be allowed to become the last resort of all failures in other walks of life. They should be placed in a position where the burden of material existence does not lie too hard upon them. They should be paid a satisfactory wage for their

most useful work and should feel a reasonable security about their position and prospects. What we see in this country, and also elsewhere, is that the teachers are generally hopelessly ill-paid and dependent upon the whims of their immediate superiors. Good work cannot be expected from them under such conditions and public opinion must see to it that the temptation to economise on the salary bills of the teachers is sternly resisted by the powers that hold our purse strings.

Another important question connected with education is the advisability of having special schools for particular classes. Thus we have special schools for Hindus, Muslims, Christians, and particular sects of these religions; then we have special schools for pupils belonging to Depressed Classes and Anglo-Indians or schools for the very rich like the projected Public School at Dehra Dun or the various colleges for scions of ruling and aristocratic families. In regard to all these I think the presumption must be against special schools based on class, community or religion and any particular case has to be fully made out. It is not desirable that during the impressionable years of life a child should be kept apart from influences which will broaden his outlook by bringing him into contact with persons he does not meet at home. A Hindu child would be all the better for coming to know that the manners

and customs, the dress or food of all people are not exactly like his own and that difference in these matters is not inconsistent with a fellow pupil's being quite a "decent chap." In residential schools there may be for a little time some difficulty about food arrangements but it should be possible to get over it with a little trouble. When the difference is one of language I am afraid we shall have to tolerate the existence of special schools but admissions to them must not be based on any other principle than that of the mother tongue, and with this reservation should be free to all. I am entirely opposed to separate schools for the depressed classes; all schools maintained wholly or partially from public funds should be available to them on the same terms as to other children. I am prepared to go even so far that if such a school does not admit these depressed class children it should not get any public grant. In the initial stages there may be some opposition, but experience in Bombay, where such an order was issued in 1923, shows that the higher classes have now begun to realise the advantage of educating their children and will not take them away for long on the ground of such opposition. Such common schools will do more to raise the depressed classes and to change the mentality of the higher classes with regard to them than almost any amount of other propaganda. As regards special

schools for particular religious denominations with provision for the teaching of the religion of that denomination I think that they also must be open to all children and the religious teaching should be optional only. In any case I am entirely opposed to the practice of some missionary schools which admit non-Christian children and still make instruction in the Christian religion compulsory for all, and a conscience clause should be introduced where it does not exist at present in the code. Moreover the State should not subsidise the teaching of any religion, and if a community wants to provide facilities for religious education of its children it should do so at its own expense. Finally as regards the proposed public school and similar aristocratic institutions I do not like the idea of separating various classes merely on grounds of wealth. It would do the rich man's child a great deal of good to know how the poor live and feel, that it is possible to go to the school otherwise than in a motor car, that there are people who do all their own work without calling for a servant, and that money does not necessarily make a person liked or respected. In a school the pupils soon begin to take one another at their intrinsic worth and the lesson learnt there remains a lasting possession. We do not wish to see young children grow up like the aristocrat who complained of being poor and wondered how it was

possible to exist on an income of only fifty thousand pounds a year. Without, therefore, absolutely saying that such schools should not exist as it would be interfering with the freedom of others, I think it will be agreed that the State should not subsidise such expensive institutions at the cost of the general tax-payer. If the rich want to have such special schools for their own children, let them pay for them themselves.

There is too much hankering in our country merely for the mere possession of a degree irrespective of the quality of attainment that the degree connotes. The consequence is that various universities unconsciously tend to outbid each other and the standard of all gets lower and lower. They should try to aim at quality rather than mere quantity. The reputation of our country in the world depends upon the calibre of our best men who add to the stock of the world's knowledge. The Calcutta University under the excellent guidance of Sir Asutosh Mookerjee can rightly claim to have done a great deal in the cause of research and I hope that it will continue to do so. But I hope that a remark on this matter will not be misconstrued. A good deal of so-called research now being carried on in most universities not only in India but elsewhere is mere hackwork. The bounds of knowledge are so rapidly extending that most of our graduates find it difficult to start

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their research on useful lines. With many of them it is merely passing a couple of years after graduation in some work of an intellectual nature. Perhaps in future research will have to be specially endowed and scholars maintained for doing research for several years without asking for immediate results, though this is likely to lead also to jobbery and favouritism. But an excessive number of our graduate students should not be encouraged to go in for it, as only a few are really capable of making real additions to knowledge. On the other hand training in attacking a new problem is all important and some way must be found for giving this training so that when they go out into the world they will be able to make their way through any difficulties which may present themselves in their regular work.

Besides formal educational institutions from the elementary school up to the University there exist many indirect facilities for the dissemination of ideas and knowledge. Among these the most potent at the present day are newspapers, theatres and cinemas, and broadcasting. Attempts are being made in many countries to rope in all these agencies to the service of the prevailing opinions or even to the will of a dictator. Experience in Germany has shown that journalism to order fails of its purpose in a very short time as nobody buys journals which are only voicing the orders of the authority in power.

A free press is the best safeguard of real liberty and while a few regulations, especially to see that it is honest and not demoralising, may be legitimate, the journalist should feel that in carrying on his work he need not keep the fear of the jail always before his mind. Newspapers should be free to give any information, barring of course secret information about defence, etc. obtained by illicit means, or advocate any opinion, but they should not be allowed to burke contrary opinions or use the power of news selection to restrict freedom of thought. I have often wondered whether instead of having laws allowing libel actions or prosecutions for sedition it would not in most cases be better to have a law by which an aggrieved party, including Government, should be entitled to demand from a newspaper the same amount of publicity for an authoritative counter-statement as for the original statement. This may impose more burden on the publicity departments of Governments but it will have a far greater effect in circulating and forming correct views than public prosecutions whose only effect is to make the alleged offender a martyr. Some less reputable papers are in the habit of appealing to the grosser feelings of the public and sail so close to laws against libel, sedition and obscenity that they vitiate public taste and do incalculable harm. To set the law in motion against them often effects the

very object which they are after, *viz.*, increasing their circulation and thus swelling their profits. It is worth considering whether the profession itself cannot be organised so as to encourage a high standard. If their brothers in the profession agree that some editors are overstepping the bounds of good taste and pandering to the lower passions of the mob, any action taken against them will not be resented and will not result in greater popularity; in any case the authorities would then be justified in taking stringent action against the erring editors after due warning. Only care will have to be taken that this new organisation does not become a close trade union as, in the opinion of some, is occurring in the medical and, perhaps also, the legal professions. No reasonable point of view seriously argued should be prevented from finding expression in the press. The same remarks apply with regard to books. The desire to bring the criminal law to bear against heretical opinions must not be yielded to; and some recent cases against writers of heterodox opinions on matters of religion or sex show that the forces of conservatism and reaction are always arrayed against freedom. But if we wish to preserve and enjoy freedom we must be prepared to pay the price of eternal vigilance. On one or two points one's opinion may perhaps agree with that of reactionaries, but the principle of freedom of opinion for all

is even more important than correct opinion on one or two points, and it would be an act of supreme folly to ally ourselves with such reactionaries to enjoy a momentary triumph.

CONCLUSION

During the last fifteen years we have had innumerable exhortations against slave mentality from Mr. Gandhi and his associates. A rationalist is always opposed to this slave mentality ; but he would oppose it in whatever sphere it is found. These exhortations, when closely examined, merely show that the slave mentality complained of has reference only to Government and to modern ideas, and that it is only intended to replace it by a similar mentality with regard to the Mahatma himself. In Germany the principle is being laid down that justice and Hitler's will are one and the same ; in Italy the Duce's word is law ; and similarly in India some ardent followers of Mr. Gandhi desire to lay down that his view must be unquestioningly accepted however often and however rapidly it may change, that the inner voice of the Mahatma should prevail over the inner voice of every other individual. Often this inner voice is brought into requisition when you cannot sustain your position by argument, and is a mere cloak for whims and fancies. The ration-

alist does not pretend to the possession of any inner voice which cannot bear the light of reason.

The necessity of using one's reason in the consideration of any problem is accepted in theory by many people but in any particular case one is only too liable to be diverted from this general rule by personal feelings, tradition or devotion to some authority. In carrying out one's opinions into effect one has often to consider attendant circumstances, but one's thoughts are one's own. The opinions I have expressed on many questions of the day are not to be accepted because I or even far greater men than myself hold them. Consider such questions for yourselves; do not be afraid that your reason will lead you astray. If the habit of independent thought is more widely cultivated, and freedom of personal action is generally accepted, I am sure that young men and women will find their lives of greater interest not only to themselves but to their country. A nation made up of automata may in some ways be easier to manage and to rule; but a nation of free and intelligent beings working consciously together for the general good is a far nobler ideal for which it is worth striving with all one's might.

