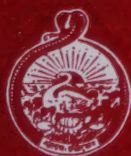


STATE SOCIETY AND SOCIALISM

Swami Vivekananda



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STATE, SOCIETY AND SOCIALISM

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SWAMI VIVEKANANDA



Advaita Ashrama.

(Publication Department)

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Swami Vivekananda was a versatile genius. There was no subject or problem, either secular or sacred, affecting human life, thought and action, which did not receive his keen attention. With his profound knowledge of history, power of acute observation and deep insight into the various factors that shape human life and thought, the Swami could not only analyse the socio-political and other problems of his time but also see with his prophetic eye far ahead into the future beyond the ken of ordinary mortals.

In this booklet, compiled by Swami Someshwarananda, a monk of the Ramakrishna Order, Swamiji's ideas and views about society, state and socialism, scattered over the pages of the eight volumes of *The Complete Works of*

Swami Vivekananda, are brought together and presented before the readers in the form of question and answer. The questions have been framed by the Compiler and their answers are culled by him from the inspired utterances and writings of the great Swami.

In the present confusion of thought and the miserable plight through which people in India and abroad are passing, Swami Vivekananda's refreshing, life-giving ideas and ideals on many of the burning socio-political problems that assail us today, shed new light and show us a more suitable and effective way to their solutions and thereby help establish a better world where people of all nations may live in peace and amity.

We are thankful to Swami Someshwarananda for undertaking this laborious painstaking job as a labour of love.

The numbers given within the brackets at the end of the passages are indicative of the volume numbers of *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* and the page numbers thereof, respectively. The details of the volumes are given separately at the end of the book.

8 May 1989

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SOCIETY :

ITS DIFFERENT ASPECTS

1. What is society? How did it evolve?

A common danger, or sometimes a common cause of hatred or love, is the bond that binds people together. By the same law that herds beasts of prey together, men also unite into a body and form a caste or a nation of their own. (4:471)

Society began to be formed and it varied according to different countries. Those who lived on the sea-shore mostly earned their livelihood by fishing in the sea, those on the

plains by agriculture. The mountaineers kept large flocks of sheep, and the dwellers in the desert tended goats and camels. Others lived in the forests and maintained themselves by hunting. The dwellers on the plain learnt agriculture; their struggle for existence became less keen; they had time for thought and culture, and thus became more and more civilized. But with the advance of civilization their bodies grew weaker and weaker. The difference in physique between those who always lived in the open air and whose principal article of food was animal diet, and others who dwelt in houses and lived mostly on grains and vegetables, became greater and greater. The hunter, the shepherd, the fisherman turned robbers or pirates whenever food became scarce and plundered the dwellers in the plains. These, in their turn, united themselves in bands of large numbers for the common interest of self-preservation; and thus little kingdoms began to be formed. (5:523)

2. How does society develop into statehood?

The Devas lived on grains and vegetables, were civilized, dwelt in villages, towns, and gardens, and wore woven clothing. The Asuras dwelt in the hills and mountains, deserts or on the sea-shores, lived on wild animals, and the

roots and fruits of the forests, and on what cereals they could get from the Devas in exchange for these or for their cows and sheep, and wore the hides of wild animals. The Devas were weak in body and could not endure hardships; the Asuras, on the other hand, were hardy with frequent fasting and were quite capable of suffering all sorts of hardships.

Whenever food was scarce among the Asuras, they set out from their hills and sea-shores to plunder towns and villages. At times they attacked the Devas for wealth and grains; and whenever the Devas failed to unite themselves in large numbers against them, they were sure to die at the hands of the Asuras. But the Devas being stronger in intelligence, commenced inventing all sorts of machines for warfare. The Brahmastra, Garudastra, Vaishnavastra, Shaivastra—all these weapons of miraculous power belonged to the Devas. The Asuras fought with ordinary weapons, but they were enormously strong. They defeated the Devas repeatedly, but they never cared to become civilized, or learn agriculture, or cultivate their intellect. If the victorious Asuras tried to reign over the vanquished Devas in Svarga, they were sure to be outwitted by the Devas' superior intellect and skill, and, before long, turned into their slaves. At other times, the Asuras returned

to their own places after plundering. The Devas, whenever they were united, forced them to retire, mark you, either into the hills or forests, or to the sea-shore. Gradually each party gained in numbers and became stronger and stronger; millions of Devas were united, and so were millions of Asuras. Violent conflicts and fighting went on, and along with them, the intermingling of these two forces.

From the fusion of these different types and races our modern societies, manners, and customs began to be evolved. New ideas sprang up and new sciences began to be cultivated. One class of men went on manufacturing articles of utility and comfort, either by manual or intellectual labour. A second class took upon themselves the charge of protecting them, and all proceeded to exchange these things. And it so happened that a band of fellows who were very clever undertook to take these things from one place to another and on the plea of remuneration for this, appropriated the major portion of their profit as their due. One tilled the ground, a second guarded the produce from being robbed, a third took it to another place, a fourth bought it. The cultivator got almost nothing; he who guarded the produce took away as much of it as he could by force; the merchant who brought it to the market took the lion's

share; and the buyer had to pay out of all proportion for the things, and smarted under the burden! The protector came to be known as the king; he who took the commodities from one place to another was the merchant. These two did not produce anything—but still snatched away the best part of things and made themselves fat by virtually reaping most of the fruits of the cultivator's toil and labour. The poor fellow who produced all these things had often to go without his meals and cry to God for help!

Now, with the march of events, all these matters grew more and more involved, knots upon knots multiplied, and out of this tangled network has evolved our modern complex society. (5:523-25)

3. Is there any difference between the East and the West regarding society and state?

The whole of the Asian civilization was first evolved on the plains near large rivers and on fertile soils—on the banks of the Ganga, the Yangtse-Kiang, and the Euphrates. The original foundation of all these civilizations is agriculture, and in all of them the Daivi nature predominates. Most of the European civilization, on the other hand, originated either in hilly countries or on the sea-coasts—piracy and

robbery form the basis of this civilization; there the Asuri nature is preponderant. (5:526)

You certainly know the story of the Devas and the Asuras. The Devas have faith in their soul, in God, and in the after-life, while the Asuras give importance to this life, and devote themselves to enjoying this world and trying to have bodily comforts in every possible way. We do not mean to discuss here whether the Devas are better than the Asuras, or the Asuras than the Devas, but, reading their descriptions in the Puranas, the Asuras seem to be, truth to tell, more like MEN and far more manly than the Devas; the Devas are inferior, without doubt, to the Asuras, in many respects. Now, to understand the East and the West, we cannot do better than interpret the Hindus as the sons of the Devas and the Westerners as the sons of the Asuras. (5:470-71)

In Europe, political ideas form the national unity. In Asia, religious ideals form the national unity. (3:286-87)

In ancient India the centres of national life were always the intellectual and spiritual and not political. Of old, as now, political and social power has been always subordinated to spiritual and intellectual. The outburst of national life was round colleges of sages and spiritual teachers. We thus find the Samitis of the Panchalas, of the Kashyas (of Varanasi), the

Maithilas standing out as great centres of spiritual culture and philosophy, even in the Upanishads. Again these centres in turn became the focus of political ambition of the various divisions of the Aryans. (6:161-62)

Liberty is the first condition of growth. Your ancestors gave every liberty to the soul, and religion grew. They put the body under every bondage, and society did not grow. The opposite is the case in the West — every liberty to society, none to religion. Now are falling off the shackles from the feet of Eastern society as from those of Western religion.

Each again will have its type; the religious or introspective in India, the scientific or out-seeing in the West. The West wants every bit of spirituality through social improvement. The East wants every bit of social power through spirituality. (5:47)

I see that India is a young and living organism. Europe also is young and living. Neither has arrived at such a stage of development that we can safely criticize its institutions. They are two great experiments, neither of which is yet complete. In India, we have social communism, with the light of Advaita—that is, spiritual individualism—playing on and around it; in Europe, you are socially individualists, but your thought is dualistic, which is spiritual

communism. Thus the one consists of socialist institutions, hedged in by individualistic thought, while the other is made up of individualist institutions, within the hedge of communistic thought. (*The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita*, Vol.1, 1982, p.144)

You Western people are individualistic. I want to do this thing because I like it; I will elbow every one. Why? Because I like to. I want my own satisfaction, so I marry this woman. Why? Because I like her. This woman marries me. Why? Because she likes me. There it ends. She and I are the only two persons in the whole, infinite world; and I marry her and she marries me—nobody else is injured, nobody else responsible. Your Johns and your Janes may go into the forest and there they may live their lives; but when they have to live in society, their marriage means a tremendous amount of good or evil to us. Their children may be veritable demons—burning, murdering, robbing, stealing, drinking, hideous, vile.

So what is the basis of the Indian's social order? It is the caste law. I am born for the caste, I live for the caste. ... Born in the caste, the whole life must be lived according to caste regulation. In other words, in the present day language, ... the Western man is born individualistic, while the Hindu is socialistic—entirely socialistic.

Now, then, the books say: if I allow you freedom to go about and marry any woman you like, and the woman to marry any man she likes, what happens? ... The deformed, humpbacked, crazy, idiotic — no marriage for them, absolutely none, says the law.

... the Hindu says, 'We are *socialistic*. For the sake of one man's or woman's exquisite pleasure we do not want to load misery on hundreds of others.' (8:61-63)

Now, from the oldest times, you know, the primary education, according to the old Hindu customs, belongs to the village system. All the land from time immemorial was nationalized, ... belonged to the Government. There never is any private right in land. The revenue in India comes from the land, because every man holds so much land from the Government. This land is held in common by a community, it may be five, ten, twenty, or a hundred families. They govern the whole of the land, pay a certain amount of revenue to the Government, maintain a physician, a village schoolmaster, and so on. (8:68)

The European civilization may be likened to a piece of cloth, of which these are the materials: its loom is a vast temperate hilly country on the sea-shore; its cotton, a strong warlike mongrel race formed by the intermixture of various races; its warp is warfare in defence of one's self and one's religion. The one who wields the sword is

great, and the one who cannot, gives up his independence and lives under the protection of some warrior's sword. Its woof is commerce. The means to this civilization is the sword; its auxiliary — courage and strength; its aim — enjoyment here and hereafter. (5:533-34)

The loom of the fabric of Aryan civilization is a vast, warm, level country, interspersed with broad, navigable rivers. The cotton of this cloth is composed of highly civilized, semi-civilized, and barbarian tribes, mostly Aryan. Its warp is Varnashramachara,* and its woof, the conquest of strife and competition in nature. (5:536)

4. How did the modern European society come into existence?

So far as can be inferred in modern times, Central Asia and the deserts of Arabia seem to have been the home of the Asuras. Issuing from their fastnesses, these shepherds and hunters, the descendants of the Asuras, being united in hordes after hordes, chased the civilized Devas and scattered them all over the world.

Of course there was a primitive race of aborigines in the continent of Europe. They lived

*The old Aryan institution of the four castes and stages of life. The former comprise the Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudra, and the latter, Brahmacharya (student life), Garhasthya (householder's life), Vanaprastha (hermit life), and Sannyasa (life of renunciation).

in mountain-caves, and the more intelligent among them erected platforms by planting sticks in the comparatively shallow parts of the water and built houses thereon. They used arrows, spearheads, knives, and axes, all made of flint, and managed every kind of work with them.

Gradually the current of the Asian races began to break forth upon Europe, and as its effects, some parts became comparatively civilized; the language of a certain people in Russia resembles the languages of Southern India.

But for the most part these barbarians remained as barbarous as ever, till a civilized race from Asia Minor conquered the adjacent parts of Europe and founded a high order of new civilization; to us they are known as Yavanas, to the Europeans as Greeks.

Afterwards, in Italy, a barbarous tribe known as the Romans conquered the civilized Etruscans, assimilated their culture and learning, and established a civilization of their own on the ruins of that of the conquered race. Gradually, the Romans carried their victorious arms in all directions; all the barbarous tribes in the south-west of Europe came under the suzerainty of Rome; only the barbarians of the forests living in the northern regions retained independence. In the efflux of time, however, the Romans became enervated by being slaves to wealth and luxury, and at that time Asia again

let loose her armies of Asuras on Europe. Driven from their homes by the onslaught of these Asuras, the barbarians of Northern Europe fell upon the Roman Empire, and Rome was destroyed. Encountered by the force of this Asian invasion, a new race sprang up through the fusion of the European barbarians with the remnants of the Romans and Greeks. At that time, the Jews being conquered and driven away from their homes by the Romans, scattered themselves throughout Europe, and with them their new religion, Christianity, also spread all over Europe. All these different races and their creeds and ideas, all these different hordes of Asuras, heated by the fire of constant struggle and warfare, began to melt and fuse in Mahamaya's crucible; and from that fusion the modern European race has sprung up.

Thus a barbarous, very barbarous European race came into existence, with all shades of complexion from the swarthy colour of the Hindus to the milk-white colour of the North, with black, brown, red, or white hair, black, grey, or blue eyes, resembling the fine features of face, the nose and eyes of the Hindus, or the flat faces of the Chinese. For some time they continued to fight among themselves; those of the north leading the life of pirates harassed and killed the comparatively civilized races. In the meantime,

however, the two heads of the Christian Churches, the Pope (in French and Italian, *Pape*) of Italy and the Patriarch of Constantinople, insinuating themselves, began to exercise their authority over these brutal barbarian hordes, over their kings, queens, and peoples.

On the other side, again Mohammedanism arose in the deserts of Arabia. The wild Arabs, inspired by the teachings of a great sage, bore down upon the earth with an irresistible force and vigour. That torrent, carrying everything before it, entered Europe from both the East and the West, and along with this tide the learning and culture of India and ancient Greece were carried into Europe. (5:526-28)

What is this Europe? Why are the black, the bronze, the yellow, the red inhabitants of Asia, Africa, and America bent low at the feet of the Europeans? Why are they the sole rulers in this Kali-Yuga? To understand this Europe one has to understand her through France, the fountain-head of everything that is highest in the West. The supreme power that rules the world is Europe, and of this Europe the great centre is Paris. Paris is the centre of Western civilization. ...

From ancient times, France has been the scene of conflict among the Gauls, the Romans, the Franks, and other nations. After the

destruction of the Roman Empire, the Franks obtained absolute dominion over Europe. Their King, Charlemagne, forced Christianity into Europe, by the power of the sword. Europe was made known in Asia by these Franks. Hence we still call the Europeans Franki, Feringi, Planki or Filinga, and so on.

Ancient Greece, the fountain-head of Western civilization, sank into oblivion from the pinnacle of her glory, the vast empire of Rome was broken into pieces by the dashing waves of the barbarian invaders—the light of Europe went out; it was at this time that another barbarous race rose out of obscurity in Asia—the Arabs. With extraordinary rapidity, that Arab tide began to spread over the different parts of the world. Powerful Persia had to kiss the ground before the Arabs and adopt the Mohammedan religion, with the result that the Mussulman religion took quite a new shape; the religion of the Arabs and the civilization of Persia became intermingled.

With the sword of the Arabs, the Persian civilization began to disseminate in all directions. That Persian civilization had been borrowed from ancient Greece and India. From the East and from the West, the waves of Mussulman invaders dashed violently on Europe and along with them also, the light of

wisdom and civilization began dispersing the darkness of blind and barbarous Europe. The wisdom, learning, and arts of ancient Greece entered into Italy, overpowered the barbarians, and with their quickening impulse, life began to pulsate in the dead body of the world-capital of Rome. The pulsation of this new life took a strong and formidable shape in the city of Florence — old Italy began showing signs of new life. This is called the Renaissance, the new birth. But this new birth was for Italy only a rebirth; while for the rest of Europe, it was the first birth. Europe was born in the sixteenth century A.D., i.e. about the time when Akbar, Jehangir, Shahjahan, and other Moghul Emperors firmly established their mighty empire in India.

Italy was an old nation. At the call of the Renaissance, she woke up and gave her response, but only to turn over on her side in bed, as it were, and fall asleep again. For various reasons, India also stirred up a little at this time. ...

In Europe, the tide of revival in Italy struck the powerful, young, and new nation, the Franks. The torrent of civilization, flowing from all quarters into Florence and there uniting, assumed a new form; but Italy had not the power within herself to hold that stupendous mass of

fresh energy. The revival would have, as in India, ended there, had it not been for the good fortune of Europe that the new nation of the Franks gladly took up that energy, and they in the vigour of their youthful blood boldly floated their national ship on the tide; and the current of that progress gradually gathered in volume and strength—from one it swelled into a thousand courses. The other nations of Europe greedily took the water of that tide into their own countries by cutting new channels, and increased its volume and speed by pouring their own lifeblood into it. ...

Again, France is the home of liberty. From here, the city of Paris, travelled with tremendous energy the power of the People, and shook the very foundations of Europe. From that time the face of Europe has completely changed and a new Europe has come into existence. '*Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité*' is no more heard in France; she is now pursuing other ideas and other purposes, while the spirit of the French Revolution is still working among the other nations of Europe. (5:507-11)

5. And, what about the Indian society?

Onwards through several centuries, we come to a multitude surrounded by the snows of

Himalayas on the north and the heat of the south—vast plains, interminable forests, through which mighty rivers roll their tides. We catch a glimpse of different races—Dravidians, Tartars, and Aborigines pouring in their quota of blood, of speech, of manners and religions. And at last a great nation emerges to our view—still keeping the type of the Aryan—stronger, broader, and more organized by the assimilation. We find the central assimilative core giving its type and character to the whole mass, clinging on with great pride to its name of 'Aryan', and, though willing to give other races the benefits of its civilization, it was by no means willing to admit them within the 'Aryan' pale.

The Indian climate again gave a higher direction to the genius of the race. In a land where nature was propitious and yielded easy victories, the national mind started to grapple with and conquer the higher problems of life in the field of thought. Naturally the thinker, the priest, became the highest class in the Indian society, and not the man of the sword. (6:159)

In brief, this caste system had grown by the practice of the son always following the business of the father. In course of time the community came thus to be divided into a series of classes, each held rigidly within its own boundaries. But while this divided the people, it also united them,

because all the members of a caste were bound to help their fellows in case of need. And as no man could rise out of his caste, the Hindus have no such struggles for social or personal supremacy as embitter the people of other countries.

The worst feature of the caste is that it suppresses competition, and the checking of competition has really been the cause of the political downfall of India and its conquest by foreign races. (8:242)

All the land from time immemorial was nationalized, as you say—belonged to the Government. There never is any private right in land. The revenue in India comes from the land, because every man holds so much land from the Government. This land is held in common by a community, it may be five, ten, twenty, or a hundred families. They govern the whole of the land, pay a certain amount of revenue to the Government, maintain a physician, a village schoolmaster, and so on. (8:68)

From time immemorial India has beaten all other countries in point of fertility and commercial industries. Up till a century ago, the whole of the world's demand for cotton cloth, cotton, jute, indigo, lac, rice, diamonds, and pearls, etc. used to be supplied from India. Moreover, no other country could produce such

excellent silk and woollen fabrics, like the kincob etc. as India. Again, India has been the land of various spices such as cloves, cardamom, pepper, nutmeg, and mace. Naturally, therefore, from very ancient times, whatever country became civilized at any particular epoch, depended upon India for those commodities. This trade used to follow two main routes — one was through land, via Afghanistan and Persia, and the other was by sea — through the Red Sea. After his conquest of Persia, Alexander the Great despatched a general named Niarchus to explore a sea-route, passing by the mouth of the Indus, across the ocean, and through the Red Sea. Most people are ignorant of the extent to which the opulence of ancient countries like Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome depended on Indian commerce. (7:357)

Krishna had opened the gates of spiritual knowledge and attainment to all irrespective of sex or caste, but he left undisturbed the same problem on the social side. This again has come down to our own days, in spite of the gigantic struggle of the Buddhists, Vaishnavas, etc. to attain social equality for all.

Modern India admits spiritual equality of all souls — but strictly keeps the social difference.

Thus we find the struggle renewed all along the line in the seventh century before the

Christian era and finally in the sixth, overwhelming the ancient order of things under Shakya Muni, the Buddha. ...

This extreme adaptability in the long run made Indian Buddhism lose almost all its individuality, and extreme desire to be of the people made it unfit to cope with the intellectual forces of the mother religion in a few centuries. ...

Then there is a veil of darkness and shifting shadows; there are tumults of war, rumours of massacres; and the next scene rises upon a new phase of things. ...

The task before it was profound, problems vaster than any their ancestors had ever faced. A comparatively small and compact race of the same blood and speech and the same social and religious aspiration, trying to save its unity by unscalable walls around itself, grew huge by multiplication and addition during the Buddhistic supremacy; and (it) was divided by race, colour, speech, spiritual instinct, and social ambitions into hopelessly jarring factions. And this had to be unified and welded into one gigantic nation. ...

The reaction-movement, led in close succession by Kumarila in the north, and Shankara and Ramanuja in the south, has become the last embodiment of that vast

accumulation of sects and doctrines and rituals called Hinduism. For the last thousand years or more, its great task has been assimilation, with now and then an outburst of reformation. ... The movement of Shankara forced its way through its high intellectuality; but it could be of little service to the masses, because of its adherence to strict caste-laws, very small scope for ordinary emotion, and making Sanskrit the only vehicle of communication. Ramanuja on the other hand, with a most practical philosophy, a great appeal to the emotions, an entire denial of birthrights before spiritual attainments, and appeals through the popular tongue completely succeeded in bringing the masses back to the Vedic religion. ...

The movements in northern India during the Mohammedan period are characterized by their uniform attempt to hold the masses back from joining the religion of the conquerors—which brought in its train social and spiritual equality for all.

The friars of the orders founded by Ramananda, Kabir, Dadu, Chaitanya, or Nanak, were all agreed in preaching the equality of man, however differing from each other in philosophy. ...

Then there came again a period of confusion. Friends and foes, the Mogul empire and its

destroyers, and the till then peaceful foreign traders, French and English, all joined in a *mêlée* of fight. For more than half a century there was nothing but war and pillage and destruction. And when the smoke and dust cleared, England was stalking victorious over the rest. (6:160-66)

... The conquest of India by England is not a conquest by Jesus or the Bible as we are often asked to believe. Neither is it like the conquest of India by the Moguls and the Pathans. But behind the name of the Lord Jesus, the Bible, the magnificent palaces, the heavy tramp of the feet of armies consisting of elephants, chariots, cavalry, and infantry, shaking the earth, the sounds of war trumpets, bugles, and drums, and the splendid display of the royal throne, behind all these, there is always the virtual presence of England—that England whose war flag is the factory chimney, whose troops are the merchantmen, whose battlefields are the market-places of the world, and whose Empress is the shining Goddess of Fortune herself! It is on this account I have said before that it is indeed an unseen novelty, this conquest of India by England. (4:452)

6. What is meant by 'national characteristics' ?

Individuals have each their own peculiarities, and each man has his own method of growth, his own life marked out for him by the infinite past life, by all his past Karma as we Hindus say. Into this world he comes with all the past on him, the infinite past ushers the present, and the way in which we use the present is going to make the future. Thus everyone born into this world has a bent, a direction towards which he must go, through which he must live, and what is true of the individual is equally true of the race. Each race, similarly, has a peculiar bent, each race has a peculiar *raison d'être*, each race has a peculiar mission to fulfil in the life of the world. Each race has to make its own result, to fulfil its own mission. (3:108)

Each nation has its own peculiar method of work. Some work through politics, some through social reforms, some through other lines. With us, religion is the only ground along which we can move. The Englishman can understand even religion through politics. Perhaps the American can understand even religion through social reforms. But the Hindu can understand even politics when it is given through religion; sociology must come through religion, everything must come through religion. For that is the theme, the rest are the variations in the national life-music. (3:314)

With every man, there is an idea; the external man is only the outward manifestation, the mere language of this idea within. Likewise, every nation has a corresponding national idea. This idea is working for the world and is necessary for its preservation. The day when the necessity of an idea as an element for the preservation of the world is over, that very day the receptacle of that idea, whether it be an individual or a nation, will meet destruction. The reason that we Indians are still living, in spite of so much misery, distress, poverty, and oppression from within and without is that we have a national idea, which is yet necessary for the preservation of the world. The Europeans too have a national idea of their own, without which the world will not go on; therefore they are so strong. (5:443-44)

When we were children, we heard the story of a certain ogress who had her soul living in a small bird, and unless the bird was killed, the ogress would never die. The life of a nation is also like that. Again another thing you will observe, that a nation will never greatly grudge if it be deprived of these rights which have not much to do with its national purpose, nay, even if all of such are wrested from it; but when the slightest blow is given to that purpose on which rests its national life, that moment it reacts with tremendous power.

Take for instance the case of the three living nations, of whose history you know more or less, viz the French, the English, and the Hindu. Political independence is the backbone of the French character. French subjects bear calmly all oppressions. Burden them with heavy taxes, they will not raise the least voice against them; compel the whole nation to join the army, they never complain; but the instant anyone meddles with that political independence, the whole nation will rise as one man and madly react. No one man shall be allowed to usurp authority over us; whether learned or ignorant, rich or poor, of noble birth or of the lower classes, we have equal share in the Government of our country, and in the independent control of our society — this is the root-principle of the French character. He must suffer who will try to interfere with this freedom.

In the English character, the 'give and take' policy, the business principle of the trader, is principally inherent. To the English, just and equitable distribution of wealth is of essential interest. The Englishman humbly submits to the king and to the privileges of the nobility; only if he has to pay a farthing from his pocket, he must demand an account of it. There is the king; that is all right; he is ready to obey and honour him; but if the king wants money, the Englishman

says: All right, but first let me understand why it is needed, what good it will bring; next, I must have my say in the matter of how it is to be spent, and then I shall part with it. The king, once trying to exact money from the English people by force, brought about a great revolution. They killed the king.

The Hindu says that political and social independence are well and good, but the real thing is spiritual independence — Mukti. This is our national purpose; whether you take the Vaidika, the Jaina, or the Bauddha, the Advaita, the Vishishtadvaita, or the Dvaita — there, they are all of one mind. Leave that point untouched and do whatever you like, the Hindu is quite unconcerned and keeps silence; but if you run foul of him there, beware, you court your ruin. (5:457-58)

There was a time when at the sound of the march of big Greek battalions the earth trembled. Vanished from off the face of the earth, with not even a tale left behind to tell, gone is that ancient land of the Greeks. There was a time when the Roman Eagle floated over everything worth having in this world; everywhere Rome's power was felt and pressed on the head of humanity; the earth trembled at the name of Rome. But the Capitoline Hill is a mass of ruins, the spider weaves its web where the Caesars ruled. There have been other nations

equally glorious that have come and gone, living a few hours of exultant and exuberant dominance and of a wicked national life, and then vanishing like ripples on the face of the waters. Thus have these nations made their mark on the face of humanity. But we live, and if Manu came back today he would not be bewildered, and would not find himself in a foreign land. (3:106-7)

7. What is the basis of social life?

Two attempts have been made in the world to found social life: the one was upon religion, and the other was upon social necessity. The one was founded upon spirituality, the other upon materialism; the one upon transcendentalism, the other upon realism. The one looks beyond the horizon of this little material world and is bold enough to begin life there, even apart from the other. The other, the second, is content to take its stand on the things of the world and expects to find a firm footing there. Curiously enough, it seems that at times the spiritual side prevails, and then the materialistic side—in wave-like motions following each other. In the same country there will be different tides. At one time the full flood of materialistic ideas prevails, and everything in this life—prosperity, the education which procures more pleasures, more

food — will become glorious at first and then that will degrade and degenerate. Along with the prosperity will rise to white heat all the inborn jealousies and hatreds of the human race. Competition and merciless cruelty will be the watchword of the day. To quote a very commonplace and not very elegant English proverb, 'Everyone for himself, and the devil take the hindmost', becomes the motto of the day. Then people think that the whole scheme of life is a failure. And the world would be destroyed had not spirituality come to the rescue and lent a helping hand to the sinking world. Then the world gets new hope and finds a new basis for a new building, and another wave of spirituality comes, which in time again declines. As a rule, spirituality brings a class of men who lay exclusive claim to the special powers of the world. The immediate effect of this is a reaction towards materialism, which opens the door to scores of exclusive claims, until the time comes when not only all the spiritual powers of the race, but all its material powers and privileges are centred in the hands of a very few; and these few, standing on the necks of the masses of the people, want to rule them. Then society has to help itself, and materialism comes to the rescue. (3:156-57)

... love alone is the fittest thing to survive and not hatred, ... it is gentleness that has the

strength to live on and to fructify, and not mere brutality and physical force. (3:188)

We, therefore, as true children of Manu, must obey his commands and be ready to learn the lessons of this life or the life hereafter from any one who can teach us. At the same time we must not forget that we have also to teach a great lesson to the world. (3:272)

On planes physical, ethical, and spiritual, an ever-broadening generalization — leading up to a concept of Unity Eternal — is in the air; and this being so, all the movements of the time may be taken to represent, knowingly or unknowingly, the noblest philosophy of the unity man ever had — the Advaita Vedanta. (8:347)

There is but one basis of well-being, social, political or spiritual — to know that I and my brother are *one*. This is true for all countries and all people. (8:350)

8. How does a society lose its vitality?

... Each nation has its own part to play, and naturally, each nation has its own peculiarity and individuality with which it is born. Each represents, as it were, one peculiar note in this harmony of nations, and this is its very life, its vitality. In it is the backbone, the foundation, and the bed-rock of the national life ... (3:147-48)

Just as in the case of individuals, if the principle of life is undisturbed, if the principal function of that individual life is present, any injuries received as regards other functions are not serious, do not kill the individual, so, as long as this principal function of our life is not disturbed, nothing can destroy our nation. (3:153)

With every man, there is an idea; the external man is only the outward manifestation, the mere language of this idea within. Likewise, every nation has a corresponding national idea. This idea is working for the world and is necessary for its preservation. The day when the necessity of an idea as an element for the preservation of the world is over, that very day the receptacle of that idea, whether it be an individual or a nation, will meet destruction. (5:443)

The degeneration of India came not because the laws and customs of the ancients were bad, but because they were not allowed to be carried to their legitimate conclusions. (4:324)

Why did she [China] become disorganized?

Because she could not produce men equal to the system. (5:200)

But gradually the idea is being formed in the minds of the English public that the passing away of the Indian Empire from their sway will end in imminent peril to the English nation, and be their ruin. So, by any means whatsoever, the

supremacy of England must be maintained in India. The way to effect this, they think, is by keeping uppermost in the heart of every Indian the mighty prestige and glory of the British nation. It gives rise to both laughter and tears simultaneously to observe how this ludicrous and pitiful sentiment is gaining ground among the English, and how they are steadily extending their *modus operandi* for the carrying out of this sentiment into practice. It seems as if the Englishmen resident in India are forgetting that so long as that fortitude, that perseverance, and that intense national unity of purpose, by which Englishmen have earned this Indian Empire — and that ever wide-awake commercial genius aided by science, which has turned even India, the mother of all riches, into the principal mart of England — so long as these characteristics are not eliminated from their national life, their throne in India is unshakable. So long as these qualities are inherent in the British character, let thousands of such Indian Empires be lost, thousands will be earned again. But if the flow of the stream of those qualities be retarded, shall an Empire be governed by the mere emblazoning of British prestige and glory? (4:474-75)

Their extreme poverty is one of the causes why the Chinese and the Indians have remained

in a state of mummified civilization. To an ordinary Hindu or Chinese, everyday necessity is too hideous to allow him to think of anything else. (5:7)

However, the central fact is that the fall of our country, of which we hear so much spoken, is due to the utter want of this Dharma. If the whole nation practises and follows the path of Moksha, that is well and good; but is that possible? Without enjoyment, renunciation can never come; first enjoy and then you can renounce. Otherwise, if the whole nation, all of a sudden, takes up Sannyasa, it does not gain what it desires, but it loses what it had into the bargain—the bird in the hand is fled, nor is that in the bush caught. When, in the heyday of Buddhistic supremacy, thousands of Sannyasins lived in every monastery, then it was that the country was just on the verge of its ruin! The Bauddhas, the Christians, the Mussulmans, and the Jains prescribe, in their folly, the same law and the same rule for all. That is a great mistake; education, habits, customs, laws, and rules should be different for different men and nations, in conformity with their difference of temperament. What will it avail, if one tries to make them all uniform by compulsion? The Bauddhas declared, 'Nothing is more desirable in life than Moksha; whoever you are, come one

and all to take it.' I ask, 'Is that ever possible?' 'You are a householder, you must not concern yourself much with things of that sort; you do your Svadharma (natural duty)' — thus say the Hindu scriptures. Exactly so! He who cannot leap one foot, is going to jump across the ocean to Lanka in one bound! Is it reason? You cannot feed your own family or dole out food to two of your fellow-men, you cannot do even an ordinary piece of work for the common good, in harmony with others — and you are running after Mukti! The Hindu scriptures say, 'No doubt, Moksha is far superior to Dharma; but Dharma should be finished first of all.' The Bauddhas were confounded just there and brought about all sorts of mischief. Non-injury is right; 'Resist not evil' is a great thing — these are indeed grand principles; but the scriptures say, 'Thou art a householder; if anyone smites thee on thy cheek, and thou dost not return him an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, thou wilt verily be a sinner.' Manu says, 'When one has come to kill you, there is no sin in killing him, even though he be a Brahmin' (Manu, VIII.350). This is very true, and this is a thing which should not be forgotten. Heroes only enjoy the world. Show your heroism; apply, according to circumstances, the fourfold political maxims of conciliation, bribery, sowing dissensions, and open war, to win

over your adversary and enjoy the world — then you will be Dharmika (righteous). Otherwise, you live a disgraceful life if you pocket your insults when you are kicked and trodden down by anyone who takes it into his head to do so; your life is a veritable hell here, and so is the life hereafter. This is what the Shastras say. Do your Svadharma — this is truth, the truth of truths. This is my advice to you, my beloved co-religionists. Of course, do not do any wrong, do not injure or tyrannize over anyone, but try to do good to others as much as you can. But passively to submit to wrong done by others is a sin — with the householder. He must try to pay them back in their own coin then and there. The householder must earn money with great effort and enthusiasm, and by that must support and bring comforts to his own family and to others, and perform good works as far as possible. If you cannot do that, how do you profess to be a man? You are not a householder even — what to talk of Moksha for you!!

We have said before that Dharma is based on work. The nature of the Dharmika is constant performance of action with efficiency. Why, even the opinion of some Mimamsakas is that those parts of the Vedas which do not enjoin work are not, properly speaking, Vedas at all. One of the aphorisms of Jaimini runs thus:

आम्नायस्य क्रियार्थत्वादानर्थक्यमतदर्शानाम् — ‘The purpose of the Vedas being work, those parts of the Vedas that do not deal with work miss the mark.’

‘By constant repetition of the syllable Om and by meditating on its meaning, everything can be obtained’; ‘All sins are washed away by uttering the name of the Lord’; ‘He gets all, who resigns himself to the Will of God’ — yes, these words of the Shastras and the sages are, no doubt, true. But, do you see, thousands of us are, for our whole life, meditating on Om, are getting ecstatic in devotion in the name of the Lord, and are crying, ‘Thy Will be done, I am fully resigned to Thee!’ — and what are they actually getting in return? Absolutely nothing! How do you account for this? The reason lies here, and it must be fully understood. Whose meditation is real and effective? Who can really resign himself to the Will of God? Who can utter with power irresistible, like that of a thunderbolt, the name of the Lord? It is he who has earned Chitta-shuddhi, that is, whose mind has been purified by work, or in other words, he who is the Dharmika.

Every individual is a centre for the manifestation of a certain force. This force has been stored up as the resultant of our previous works, and each one of us is born with this force at his back. So long as this force has not worked

itself out, who can possibly remain quiet and give up work? Until then, he will have to enjoy or suffer according to the fruition of his good or bad work and will be irresistibly impelled to do work. Since enjoyment and work cannot be given up till then, is it not better to do good rather than bad works—to enjoy happiness rather than suffer misery? Shri Ramprasad used to say, ‘They speak of two works, “good” and “bad”; of them, it is better to do the good.’

Now what is that good which is to be pursued? The good for him who desires Moksha is one, and the good for him who wants Dharma is another. This is the great truth which the Lord Shri Krishna, the revealer of the Gita, has tried therein to explain, and upon this great truth is established the Varnashrama system and the doctrine of Svadharma etc. of the Hindu religion.

अद्वेष्टा सर्वभूतानां मैत्रः करुण एव च।
निर्ममो निरहंकारः समदुःखसुखः क्षमी ॥

—‘He who has no enemy, and is friendly and compassionate towards all, who is free from the feelings of “me and mine”, even-minded in pain and pleasure, and forbearing’ (Gita, XII.13) — these and other epithets of like nature are for him whose one goal in life is Moksha.

क्लैब्यं मा स्म गमः पार्थ नैतत्त्वय्युपपद्यते ।
क्षुद्रं हृदयदौर्बल्यं त्यक्त्वोत्तिष्ठ परन्तप ॥

— ‘Yield not to unmanliness, O son of Pritha! Ill doth it befit thee. Cast off this mean faint-heartedness and arise, O scorcher of thine enemies.’ (Gita, II.3)

तस्मात्त्वमुत्तिष्ठ यशो लभस्व
जित्वा शत्रून्भुङ्क्व राज्यं समृद्धम् ।
मयैवैते निहताः पूर्वमेव
निमित्तमात्रं भव सव्यसाचिन् ॥

— ‘Therefore do thou arise and acquire fame. After conquering thy enemies, enjoy unrivalled dominion; verily, by Myself have they been already slain; be thou merely the instrument, O Savyasachin (Arjuna).’ (Gita, XI.33)

In these and similar passages in the Gita the Lord is showing the way to Dharma. Of course, work is always mixed with good and evil, and to work, one has to incur sin, more or less. But what of that? Let it be so. Is not something better than nothing? Is not insufficient food better than going without any? Is not doing work, though mixed with good and evil, better than doing nothing and passing an idle and inactive life, and being like stones? The cow never tells a lie, and the stone never steals, but, nevertheless, the cow

remains a cow and the stone a stone. Man steals and man tells lies, and again it is man that becomes a god. With the prevalence of the Sattvika essence, man becomes inactive and rests always in a state of deep Dhyana or contemplation; with the prevalence of the Rajas, he does bad as well as good works; and with the prevalence of the Tamas again, he becomes inactive and inert. Now, tell me, looking from outside, how are we to understand, whether you are in a state wherein the Sattva or the Tamas prevails? Whether we are in the state of Sattvika calmness, beyond all pleasure and pain, and past all work and activity, or whether we are in the lowest Tamasika state, lifeless, passive, dull as dead matter, and doing no work, because there is no power in us to do it, and are, thus, silently and by degrees, getting rotten and corrupted within—I seriously ask you this question and demand an answer. Ask your own mind, and you shall know what the reality is. But, what need to wait for the answer? The tree is known by its fruit. That Sattva prevailing, the man is inactive, he is calm, to be sure; but that inactivity is the outcome of the centralization of great powers, that calmness is the mother of tremendous energy. That highly Sattvika man, that great soul, has no longer to work as we do with hands and feet—by his mere willing only, all his works are

immediately accomplished to perfection. That man of predominating Sattva is the Brahmin, the worshipped of all. Has he to go about from door to door, begging others to worship him? The Almighty Mother of the universe writes with Her own hand, in golden letters on his forehead, 'Worship ye all, this great one, this son of Mine', and the world reads and listens to it and humbly bows down its head before him in obedience. That man is really —

अद्वेष्टा सर्वभूतानां मैत्रः करुण एव च ।
निर्ममो निरहंकारः समदुःखसुखः क्षमी ॥

— 'He who has no enemy, and is friendly and compassionate towards all, who is free from the feelings of "me and mine", even-minded in pain and pleasure, and forbearing.' (Gita, XII.13) And mark you, those things which you see in pusillanimous, effeminate folk who speak in nasal tone chewing every syllable, whose voice is as thin as of one who has been starving for a week, who are like a tattered wet rag, who never protest or are moved even if kicked by anybody — those are the signs of the lowest Tamas, those are the signs of death, not of Sattva — all corruption and stench. It is because Arjuna was going to fall into the ranks of these men that the Lord is explaining matters to him so elaborately in the Gita. Is that not the

fact? Listen to the very first words that came out of the mouth of the Lord, क्लैब्यं मा स्म गमः पार्थ नैतत्त्वय्युपपद्यते — ‘Yield not to unmanliness, O Partha! I’ll doth it befit thee!’ and then later, तस्मात्त्वमुत्तिष्ठ यशो लभस्व — ‘Therefore do thou arise and acquire fame.’ Coming under the influence of the Jains, Bauddhas, and others, we have joined the lines of those Tamasika people. During these last thousand years, the whole country is filling the air with the name of the Lord and is sending its prayers to Him; and the Lord is never lending His ears to them. And why should He? When even man never hears the cries of the fool, do you think God will? Now the only way out is to listen to the words of the Lord in the Gita, क्लैब्यं मा स्म गमः पार्थ — ‘Yield not to unmanliness, O Partha!’ तस्मात्त्वमुत्तिष्ठ यशो लभस्व — ‘Therefore do thou arise and acquire fame.’ (5:447-53)

9. How does a society become strong?

My ideal is growth, expansion, development on national lines. (3:195)

From the day when education and culture etc. began to spread gradually from patricians to plebeians, grew the distinction between the modern civilization as of Western countries, and the ancient civilization as of India, Egypt, Rome,

etc. I see it before my eyes, a nation is advanced in proportion as education and intelligence spread among the masses. ... Why has originality entirely forsaken the country? Why are our deft-fingered artisans daily becoming extinct, unable to compete with the Europeans? By what power again has the German labourer succeeded in shaking the many-century-grounded firm footing of the English labourer?

Education, education, education alone! Travelling through many cities of Europe and observing in them the comforts and education of even the poor people, there was brought to my mind the state of our own poor people, and I used to shed tears. What made the difference? Education was the answer I got. Through education comes faith in one's own Self, and through faith in one's own Self the inherent Brahman is waking up in them, while the Brahman in us is gradually becoming dormant. (4:482-83)

The whole difference between the West and the East is in this: They are nations, we are not, i.e. civilization, education here is general, it penetrates into the masses. The higher classes in India and America are the same, but the distance is infinite between the lower classes of the two countries. Why was it so easy for the English to conquer India? It was because they are a nation,

we are not. When one of our great men dies, we must sit for centuries to have another; they can produce them as fast as they die. (8:306)

Educate and raise the masses, and thus alone a nation is possible. ... The whole defect is here: The real nation who live in cottages have forgotten their manhood, their individuality. Trodden under the foot of the Hindu, Mussulman, or Christian, they have come to think that they are born to be trodden under the foot of everybody who has money enough in his pocket. They are to be given back their lost individuality. They are to be educated. ... Everyone must work out his own salvation. Our duty is to put the chemicals together, the crystallization will come through God's laws. Let us put ideas into their heads, and they will do the rest. (8:307)

Three things are necessary to make every man great, every nation great:

1. Conviction of the powers of goodness.
2. Absence of jealousy and suspicion.
3. Helping all who are trying to be and do good. (8:299)

'Liberty of thought and action is the only condition of life, of growth and well-being.' Where it does not exist, the man, the race, the nation must go down. ...

My whole ambition in life is to set in motion a machinery which will bring noble ideas to the door of everybody, and then let men and women settle their own fate. Let them know what our forefathers as well as other nations have thought on the most momentous questions of life. Let them see specially what others are doing now, and then decide. We are to put the chemicals together, the crystallization will be done by nature according to her laws. ...

Remember that the nation lives in the cottage. But, alas! nobody ever did anything for them. Our modern reformers are very busy about widow remarriage. Of course, I am a sympathizer in every reform, but the fate of a nation does not depend upon the number of husbands their widows get, but upon the *condition of the masses*. Can you raise them? Can you give them back their lost individuality without making them lose their innate spiritual nature? Can you become an occidental of occidentals in your spirit of equality, freedom, work, and energy, and at the same time a Hindu to the very backbone in religious culture and instincts? This is to be done and *we will do it*. You are all *born to do it*. Have faith in yourselves, great convictions are the mothers of great deeds. Onward for ever! Sympathy for the poor, the downtrodden, even unto death — this is our motto. (5:29-30)

10. What is an ideal society?

Each soul is potentially divine.

The goal is to manifest this Divinity within by controlling nature, external and internal. (1:124)

The Greek sought political liberty. The Hindu has always sought spiritual liberty. Both are one-sided. ... Liberty of both soul and body is to be striven for. (6:86)

11. What is true civilization?

You are philosophers, and you do not think that a bag of gold makes the difference between man and man. What is the value of all these machines and sciences? They have only one result: they spread knowledge. You have not solved the problem of want, but only made it keener. Machines do not solve the poverty question; they simply make men struggle the more. Competition gets keener. What value has nature in itself? Why do you go and build a monument to a man who sends electricity through a wire? Does not nature do that millions of times over? Is not everything already existing in nature? What is the value of your getting it? It is already there. The only value is that it makes this development. This universe is simply a gymnasium in which the soul is taking exercise;

and after these exercises we become gods. So the value of everything is to be decided by how far it is a manifestation of God. Civilization is the manifestation of that divinity in man. (5:308)

12. What are the contributions of Asia, Europe, and America in the march of civilization?

Asia laid the germs of civilization, Europe developed man, and America is developing the woman and the masses. (5:22)

II

HISTORY AND PROGRESS

1. What is the significance of history?

The history of civilization is the progressive reading of spirit into matter. (8:429)

Everything is conscious which rebels against nature; there, consciousness is manifested. Just try to kill a little ant, even it will once resist to save its life. Where there is struggle, where there is rebellion, there is the sign of life, there consciousness is manifested. (6:453)

Two forces seem to be working throughout nature. One of these is constantly differentiating, and the other is as constantly unifying; the one making more and more for separate

individuals, the other, as it were, bringing the individuals into a mass, bringing out sameness in the midst of all this differentiation. It seems that the action of these two forces enters into every department of nature and of human life. ...

From the days of the Upanishads, the Buddhas, and Christs, and all other great preachers of religion, down to our present day, in the new political aspirations, and in the claims of the oppressed and the downtrodden, and of all those who find themselves bereft of privileges — comes out the one assertion of this unity and sameness. But human nature asserts itself. Those who have an advantage want to keep it, and if they find an argument, however one-sided and crude, they must cling to it. This applies to both sides. (1:430-31)

2. How the history of a society is influenced?

The progress and civilization of the human race simply mean controlling this nature.

Different races take to different processes of controlling nature. (1:133)

As the same fire is manifesting itself in different forms, so the same one great Force is manifesting itself as political independence with the French, as mercantile genius and expansion of the sphere of equity with the English, and as

the desire for Mukti or spiritual independence with the Hindu. (5:459-60)

[Swamiji narrates the different forces which influence the societies—religion, nationalism, geographical condition, heroes, pragmatism, etc.]

You will find there also that, hidden under the ashes of apparent death, the fire of our national life is yet smouldering and that the life of this nation is religion, its language religion, and its idea religion; and your politics, society, municipality, plague-prevention work, and famine-relief work—all these things will be done as they have been done all along here, viz only through religion; otherwise all your frantic yelling and bewailing will end in nothing, my friend! (5:461)

Zealous love for one's own people and country, showing itself in bitter hatred against another—as of Greece against Persia, or Rome against Carthage, of the Arab against the Kafir, of Spain against the Moor, of France against Spain, of England and Germany against France, and of America against England—is undoubtedly one of the main causes which lead to the advancement of one nation over another, by way of uniting itself in hostilities against another. (4:471)

Society began to be formed and it varied

according to different countries. Those who lived on the sea-shore mostly earned their livelihood by fishing in the sea, those on the plains by agriculture. The mountaineers kept large flocks of sheep, and the dwellers in the desert tended goats and camels. Others lived in the forests and maintained themselves by hunting. The dwellers on the plain learnt agriculture; their struggle for existence became less keen; they had time for thought and culture, and thus became more and more civilized. ... The hunter, the shepherd, the fisherman, turned robbers or pirates whenever food became scarce, and plundered the dwellers in the plains. ...

But the marks of a bygone character persist and do not die out completely. Those who ... tended sheep or lived by fishing or the like take to habits of piracy, robbery, and similar occupations in their civilized incarnation also. With no forests to hunt in, no hills or mountains in the neighbourhood on which to tend the flocks—by the accident of birth in a civilized society, he cannot get enough opportunity for either hunting, fishing, or grazing cattle—he is obliged therefore to rob or steal, impelled by his own nature; what else can he do? (5:523, 525)

Read the history of the world, and you will find that a great soul stood as the central figure

in a certain period of a country. Animated by his ideas, hundreds of people did good to the world. (7:247)

It is not Christianity nor science, it is necessity, that is working underneath, the necessity that people must have to live or starve. (6:110)

3. What are the main forces of a society? What constitute society's basic structure?

[Knowledge, arms, money, and labour are the basic forces or powers of a society. These constitute the basic structure while ecology, tools, etc. are secondary.]

The Brahmin said, 'Learning is the power of all powers; that learning is dependent upon me, I possess that learning, so the society must follow my bidding.' ... The Kshatriya said, 'But for the power of my sword, where would you be, O Brahmin, with all your power of lore? You would in no time be wiped off the face of the earth. It is I alone that am the superior.' Out flew the flaming sword from the jingling scabbard—society humbly recognized it with bended head. ... The Vaishya is saying, 'You, madmen! what you call the effulgent all-pervading deity is here, in my hand, the ever-shining gold, the almighty sovereign. Behold, through its grace, I am also equally all-powerful. ...' (4:465)

Those uncared-for lower classes of India—the peasants and weavers and the rest, who have been conquered by foreigners and are looked down upon by their own people—it is they who from time immemorial have been working silently, without even getting the remuneration of their labours! ... Ye labouring classes of India, as a result of your silent, constant labours Babylon, Persia, Alexandria, Greece, Rome, Venice, Genoa, Baghdad, Samarqand, Spain, Portugal, France, Denmark, Holland, and England have successively attained supremacy and eminence! (7:358)

4. How these forces act in the process of history?

[See the next chapter]

5. Can we term all the changes in history as progressive?

[No.] Europe, once the land of Shudras enslaved by Rome, is now filled with Kshatriya valour. Even before our eyes, powerful China, with fast strides, is going down to Shudra-hood, while insignificant Japan, rising with the sudden start of a rocket, is throwing off her Shudra nature and is invading by degrees the rights of

the higher castes. The attaining of modern Greece and Italy to Kshatriya-hood and the decline of Turkey, Spain, and other countries, also, deserve consideration here. (4:468)

**6. When does a change become progressive?
What are the characteristics of a progressive
change?**

Accumulation of power is as necessary as its diffusion, or rather more so. The accumulation of blood in the heart is an indispensable condition for life; its non-circulation throughout the body means death. For the welfare of society, it is absolutely necessary at certain times to have all knowledge and power concentrated in certain families or castes to the exclusion of others, but that concentrated power is focussed for the time being, only to be scattered broadcast over the whole of society in future. If this diffusion be withheld, the destruction of that society is, without doubt, near at hand. (4:458)

From the day when education and culture etc. began to spread gradually from patricians to plebeians, grew the distinction between the modern civilization as of Western countries, and the ancient civilization as of India, Egypt, Rome, etc. I see it before my eyes, a nation is advanced in proportion as education and intelligence

spread among the masses. The chief cause of India's ruin has been the monopolizing of the whole education and intelligence of the land, by dint of pride and royal authority, among a handful of men. (4:482)

7. What are the obstacles men should try to overcome?

All the Shastras hold that the threefold misery that there is in this world is not natural, hence it is removable. (6:327)

[These three are Adhibhautika, Adhidaivika and Adhyatmika. The misery due to the external nature is the Adhibhautika—flood, draught, earthquake, etc. To win over these, help of science and technology is needed. Adhidaivika misery is social evils—inequality, injustice, etc. Political science, economics, sociology, etc. are needed to remove these. And Adhyatmika misery is one's unruly impulses and urges. Practice of spirituality is required to remove these. Thus Swamiji gave an all-comprehensive picture of Mukti. By Mukti he meant total emancipation.]

The Greek sought political liberty. The Hindu has always sought spiritual liberty. Both are one-sided. ... To care only for spiritual liberty and not for social liberty is a defect, but

the opposite is a still greater defect. Liberty of both soul and body is to be striven for. (6:86)

The eyes of the whole world are now turned towards this land of India for spiritual food; and India has to provide it for all the races. Here alone is the best ideal for mankind; and Western scholars are now striving to understand this ideal which is enshrined in our Sanskrit literature and philosophy, and which has been the characteristic of India all through the ages. (3:138)

Have we to learn anything else, have we to learn anything from the world? We have, perhaps, to gain a little in material knowledge, in the power of organization, in the ability to handle powers, organizing powers, in bringing the best results out of the smallest of causes. This perhaps to a certain extent we may learn from the West. (3:149)

You have not the capacity to manufacture a needle, and you dare to criticize the English! Fools! Sit at their feet and learn from them the arts, industries, and the practicality necessary for the struggle for existence. You will be esteemed once more when you will become fit. (7:147)

The more advanced a society or nation is in spirituality, the more is that society or nation civilized. No nation can be said to have become civilized only because it has succeeded in

increasing the comforts of material life by bringing into use lots of machinery and things of that sort. The present-day civilization of the West is multiplying day by day only the wants and distresses of men. On the other hand, the ancient Indian civilization, by showing people the way to spiritual advancement, doubtless succeeded, if not in removing once for all, at least in lessening, in a great measure, the material needs of men. In the present age, it is to bring into coalition both these civilizations that Bhagavan Shri Ramakrishna was born. In this age, as on the one hand people have to be intensely practical, so on the other hand they have to acquire deep spiritual knowledge. (6:462-63)

It is intended to extend the operations of the [Belur] Math, by educating in the Math as many young men as the funds can afford, in both Western science and Indian spirituality, so that in addition to the advantages of a University education, they will acquire a manly discipline by living in contact with their teachers. (5:435)

8. What is meant by 'classless society' ?

The absolute sameness of condition, if that be the aim of ethics, appears to be impossible. That all men should be the same, could never be, however we might try. Men will be born

differentiated; some will have more power than others; some will have natural capacities, others not; some will have perfect bodies, others not. We can never stop that. ...

But what can be attained is elimination of privilege. That is really the work before the whole world. In all social lives, there has been that one fight in every race and in every country. The difficulty is not that one body of men are naturally more intelligent than another, but whether this body of men, because they have the advantage of intelligence, should take away even physical enjoyment from those who do not possess that advantage. The fight is to destroy that privilege. That some will be stronger physically than others, and will thus naturally be able to subdue or defeat the weak, is a self-evident fact, but that because of this strength they should gather unto themselves all the attainable happiness of this life, is not according to law, and the fight has been against it. That some people, through natural aptitude, should be able to accumulate more wealth than others, is natural; but that on account of this power to acquire wealth they should tyrannize and ride roughshod over those who cannot acquire so much wealth, is not a part of the law, and the fight has been against that. The enjoyment of advantage over another is

privilege, and throughout ages, the aim of morality has been its destruction. This is the work which tends towards sameness, towards unity, without destroying variety. (1:434-35)

If there is inequality in nature, still there must be equal chance for all — or if greater for some and for some less — the weaker should be given more chance than the strong.

In other words, a Brahmin is not so much in need of education as a Chandala. If the son of a Brahmin needs one teacher, that of a Chandala needs ten. For greater help must be given to him whom nature has not endowed with an acute intellect from birth. (6:319)

It is in the nature of society to form itself into groups; and what will go will be these privileges. Caste is a natural order; I can perform one duty in social life, and you another; you can govern a country, and I can mend a pair of old shoes, but that is no reason why you are greater than I, for can you mend my shoes? Can I govern the country? I am clever in mending shoes, you are clever in reading Vedas, but that is no reason why you should trample on my head. Why if one commits murder should he be praised, and if another steals an apple why should he be hanged? This will have to go. Caste is good. That is the only natural way of solving life. Men must form themselves into groups, and you cannot get

rid of that. Wherever you go, there will be caste. But that does not mean that there should be these privileges. They should be knocked on the head. If you teach Vedanta to the fisherman, he will say, I am as good a man as you; I am a fisherman, you are a philosopher, but I have the same God in me as you have in you. And that is what we want, no privilege for any one, equal chances for all; let every one be taught that the divine is within, and every one will work out his own salvation.

Liberty is the first condition of growth.
(3:245-46)

III

STATE AND CLASS-RULE

1. What are the classes and how do they rule the states?

Human society is in turn governed by the four castes — the priests, the soldiers, the traders, and the labourers. Each state has its glories as well as its defects. When the priest (Brahmin) rules, there is a tremendous exclusiveness on hereditary grounds; the persons of the priests and their descendants are hemmed in with all sorts of safeguards—none but they have any knowledge—none but they have the right to impart that knowledge. Its glory is that at this period is

laid the foundation of sciences. The priests cultivate the mind, for through the mind they govern.

The military (Kshatriya) rule is tyrannical and cruel, but they are not exclusive; and during that period arts and social culture attain their height.

The commercial (Vaishya) rule comes next. It is awful in its silent crushing and blood-sucking power. Its advantage is, as the trader himself goes everywhere, he is a good disseminator of ideas collected during the two previous states. They are still less exclusive than the military, but culture begins to decay.

Last will come the labourer (Shudra) rule. Its advantages will be the distribution of physical comforts—its disadvantages, (perhaps) the lowering of culture. There will be a great distribution of ordinary education, but extraordinary geniuses will be less and less. (6:380-81)

Among the Chinese, the Sumerians, the Babylonians, the Egyptians, the Chaldeans, the Aryas, the Iranians, the Jews, the Arabs—among all these ancient nations, the supreme power of guiding society is, in the first period of their history, in the hands of the Brahmin or the priest. In the second period, the ruling power is the Kshatriya, that is, either absolute monarchy or oligarchical government by a chosen body of men. Among the modern Western nations, with

England at their head, this power of controlling society has been for the first time, in the hands of the Vaishyas or mercantile communities, made rich through the carrying on of commerce.

Though Troy and Carthage of ancient times and Venice and similar other small commercial States of comparatively modern times, became highly powerful, yet, amongst them, there was not the real rising of the Vaishya power, in the proper sense of the term.

Correctly speaking, the descendants of the royal family had the sole monopoly of the commerce of those old days by employing the common people and their servants under them to carry on the trade; and they appropriated to themselves the profits accruing from it. Excepting these few men, no one was allowed to take any part or voice an opinion even in the government of the country and kindred affairs. In the oldest countries like Egypt, the priestly power enjoyed unmolested supremacy only for a short period, after which it became subjugated to the royal power and lived as an auxiliary to it. In China, the royal power, centralized by the genius of Confucius, has been controlling and guiding the priestly power, in accordance with its absolute will, for more than twenty-five centuries; and during the last two centuries, the all-absorbing Lamas of Tibet, though they are

the spiritual guides of the royal family, have been compelled to pass their days, being subject in every way to the Chinese Emperor.

In India, the royal power succeeded in conquering the priestly power and declaring its untrammelled authority long after the other ancient civilized nations had done so; and therefore the inauguration of the Indian Empire came about long after the Chinese, Egyptian, Babylonian, and other Empires had risen. It was only with the Jewish people that the royal power, though it tried hard to establish its supremacy over the priestly, had to meet a complete defeat in the attempt. Not even the Vaishyas attained the ruling power with the Jews. On the other hand, the common subject people, trying to free themselves from the shackles of priestcraft, were crushed to death under the internal commotion of adverse religious movements like Christianity and the external pressure of the mighty Roman Empire.

As in the ancient days the priestly power, in spite of its long-continued struggle, was subdued by the more powerful royal power, so, in modern times, before the violent blow of the newly-risen Vaishya power, many a kingly crown has to kiss the ground, many a sceptre is for ever broken to pieces. Only those few thrones which are allowed still to exercise some power in some of

the civilized countries and make a display of their royal pomp and grandeur are all maintained solely by the vast hordes of wealth of these Vaishya communities—the dealers in salt, oil, sugar, and wine—and kept up as a magnificent and an imposing front, and as a means of glorification to the really governing body behind, the Vaishyas.

That mighty newly-risen Vaishya power—at whose command, electricity carries messages in an instant from one pole to another, whose highway is the vast ocean, with its mountain-high waves, at whose instance, commodities are being carried with the greatest ease from one part of the globe to another, and at whose mandate, even the greatest monarchs tremble—on the white foamy crest of that huge wave the all-conquering Vaishya power, is installed the majestic throne of England in all its grandeur. (4:449-51)

2. How do the Brahmins capture power? How do they lose it?

The foundation of the priestly power rests on intellectual strength, and not on the physical strength of arms. Therefore, with the supremacy of the priestly power, there is a great prevalence of intellectual and literary culture. Every human

heart is always anxious for communication with, and help from, the supersensuous spiritual world. The entrance to that world is not possible for the generality of mankind; only a few great souls who can acquire a perfect control over their sense-organs and who are possessed with a nature preponderating with the essence of Sattva Guna are able to pierce the formidable wall of matter and come face to face, as it were, with the supersensuous—it is only they who know the workings of the kingdom that bring the messages from it and show the way to others. These great souls are the priests, the primitive guides, leaders, and movers of human societies.

The priest knows the gods and communicates with them; he is therefore worshipped as a god. Leaving behind the thoughts of the world, he has no longer to devote himself to the earning of his bread by the sweat of his brow. The best and foremost parts of all food and drink are due as offerings to the gods; and of these gods, the visible proxies on earth are the priests. It is through their mouths that they partake of the offerings. Knowingly or unknowingly, society gives the priest abundant leisure, and he can therefore get the opportunity of being meditative and of thinking higher thoughts. Hence the development of wisdom and learning originates first with the supremacy of the priestly

power. There stands the priest between the dreadful lion — the king — on the one hand, and the terrified flock of sheep — the subject people — on the other. The destructive leap of the lion is checked by the controlling rod of spiritual power in the hands of the priest. The flame of the despotic will of the king, maddened in the pride of his wealth and men, is able to burn into ashes everything that comes in his way; but it is only a word from the priest, who has neither wealth nor men behind him but whose sole strength is his spiritual power, that can quench the despotic royal will, as water the fire.

With the ascendancy of the priestly supremacy are seen the first advent of civilization, the first victory of the divine nature over the animal, the first mastery of spirit over matter, and the first manifestation of the divine power which is potentially present in this very slave of nature, this lump of flesh, to wit, the human body. The priest is the first discriminator of spirit from matter, the first to help to bring this world in communion with the next, the first messenger from the gods to man, and the intervening bridge that connects the king with his subjects. The first offshoot of universal welfare and good is nursed by his spiritual power, by his devotion to learning and wisdom, by his renunciation, the watchword of his life and, watered even by the flow of his

own life-blood. It is therefore that in every land it was he to whom the first and foremost worship was offered. It is therefore that even his memory is sacred to us!

There are evils as well. With the growth of life is sown simultaneously the seed of death. Darkness and light always go together. Indeed, there are great evils which, if not checked in proper time, lead to the ruin of society. The play of power through gross matter is universally experienced; everyone sees, everyone understands, the mighty manifestation of gross material force as displayed in the play of battle-axes and swords, or in the burning properties of fire and lightning. Nobody doubts these things, nor can there ever be any question about their genuineness. But where the repository of power and the centre of its play are wholly mental, where the power is confined to certain special words, to certain special modes of uttering them, to the mental repetition of certain mysterious syllables, or to other similar processes and applications of the mind, there light is mixed with shade, there the ebb and flow naturally disturb the otherwise unshaken faith, and there even when things are actually seen or directly perceived, still sometimes doubts arise as to their real occurrence. Where distress, fear, anger, malice, spirit of retaliation, and the like

passions of man, leaving the palpable force of arms, leaving the gross material methods to gain the end in view which every one can understand, substitute in their stead the mysterious mental processes like Stambhana, Uchchatana, Vashikarana, and Marana for their fructification — there a cloud of smoky indistinctness, as it were, naturally envelops the mental atmosphere of these men who often live and move in such hazy worlds of obscure mysticism. No straight line of action presents itself before such a mind; even if it does, the mind distorts it into crookedness. The final result of all this is insincerity — that very limited narrowness of the heart — and above all, the most fatal is the extreme intolerance born of malicious envy at the superior excellence of another.

The priest naturally says to himself: 'Why should I part with the power that has made the Devas subservient to me, has given me mastery over physical and mental illnesses, and has gained for me the service of ghosts, demons, and other unseen spirits? I have dearly bought this power by the price of extreme renunciation. Why should I give to others that to get which I had to give up my wealth, name, fame, in short, all my earthly comforts and happiness?' Again, that power is entirely mental. And how many opportunities are there of keeping it a perfect

secret! Entangled in this wheel of circumstances, human nature becomes what it inevitably would; being used to practise constant self-concealment, it becomes a victim of extreme selfishness and hypocrisy, and at last succumbs to the poisonous consequences which they bring in their train. In time, the reaction of this very desire to concealment rebounds upon oneself. All knowledge, all wisdom, is almost lost for want of proper exercise and diffusion, and what little remains is thought to have been obtained from some supernatural source; and, therefore, far from making fresh efforts to go in for originality and gain knowledge of new sciences, it is considered useless and futile to attempt even to improve the remnants of the old by cleansing them of their corruptions. Thus lost to former wisdom, the former indomitable spirit of self-reliance, the priest, now glorifying himself merely in the name of his forefathers, vainly struggles to preserve untarnished for himself the same glory, the same privilege, the same veneration, and the same supremacy as was enjoyed by his great forefathers. Consequently, his violent collision with the other castes.

According to the law of nature, wherever there is an awakening of a new and stronger life, there it tries to conquer and take the place of the old and the decaying. Nature favours the dying

out of the unfit and the survival of the fittest. The final result of such conflict between the priestly and the other classes has been mentioned already.

That renunciation, self-control, and asceticism of the priest which during the period of his ascendancy were devoted to the pursuance of earnest researches of truth, are on the eve of his decline employed anew and spent solely in the accumulation of objects of self-gratification and in the extension of privileged superiority over others. That power, the centralization of which in himself gave him all honour and worship, has now been dragged down from its high heavenly position to the lowest abyss of hell. Having lost sight of the goal, drifting aimless, the priestly power is entangled, like the spider, in the web spun by itself. The chain that has been forged from generation to generation with the greatest care to be put on others' feet is now tightened round its own in a thousand coils, and is thwarting its own movement in hundreds of ways. Caught in the endless thread of the net of infinite rites, ceremonies, and customs, which it spread on all sides as external means for purification of the body and the mind with a view to keeping society in the iron grasp of these innumerable bonds—the priestly power, thus hopelessly entangled from head to foot, is now

asleep in despair! There is no escaping out of it now. Tear the net, and the priesthood of the priest is shaken to its foundation! There is implanted in every man, naturally, a strong desire for progress; and those who, finding that the fulfilment of this desire is an impossibility so long as one is trammelled in the shackles of priesthood, rend this net and take to the profession of other castes in order to earn money thereby—they, the society immediately dispossesses of their priestly rights. Society has no faith in the Brahminhood of the so-called Brahmins who, instead of keeping the Shikha, part their hair, who, giving up their ancient habits and ancestral customs, clothe themselves in semi-European dress and adopt the newly introduced usages from the West in a hybrid fashion. ...

Those who lay the fault of attempting to bring down the supremacy of the priestly class at the door of any particular person or body of persons other than themselves ought to know that, in obedience to the inevitable law of nature, the Brahmin caste is erecting with its own hands its own sepulchre; and this is what ought to be. It is good and appropriate that every caste of high birth and privileged nobility should make it its principal duty to raise its own funeral pyre with its own hands. (4:452-58)

3. How is the Kshatriya-rule?

On the other side, the king is like the lion; in him are present both the good and evil propensities of the lord of beasts. Never for a moment his fierce nails are held back from tearing to pieces the heart of innocent animals, living on herbs and grass, to allay his thirst for blood when occasion arises; again, the poet says, though himself stricken with old age and dying with hunger, the lion never kills the weakest fox that throws itself in his arms for protection. If the subject classes, for a moment, stand as impediments in the way of the gratification of the senses of the royal lion, their death knell is inevitably tolled; if they humbly bow down to his commands, they are perfectly safe. Not only so. Not to speak of ancient days, even in modern times, no society can be found in any country where the effectiveness of individual self-sacrifice for the good of the many and of the oneness of purpose and endeavour actuating every member of the society for the common good of the whole have been fully realized. Hence the necessity of the kings who are the creations of the society itself. They are the centres where all the forces of society, otherwise loosely scattered about, are made to converge,

and from which they start and course through the body politic and animate society.

As during the Brahminical supremacy, at the first stage is the awakening of the first impulse for search after knowledge, and later the continual and careful fostering of the growth of that impulse still in its infancy—so, during the Kshatriya supremacy, a strong desire for pleasure pursuits has made its appearance at the first stage, and later have sprung up inventions and developments of arts and sciences as the means for its gratification. Can the king, in the height of his glory, hide his proud head within the lowly cottages of the poor? Or can the common good of his subjects ever minister to his royal appetite with satisfaction?

He whose dignity bears no comparison with anyone else on earth, he who is divinity residing in the temple of the human body—for the common man, to cast even a mere glance at his, the king's, objects of pleasure is a great sin; to think of ever possessing them is quite out of the question. The body of the king is not like the bodies of other people, it is too sacred to be polluted by any contamination; in certain countries it is even believed never to come under the sway of death. A halo of equal sacredness shines around the queen, so she is scrupulously guarded from the gaze of common folk, not even

the sun may cast a glance on her beauty! Hence the rising of magnificent palaces to take the place of thatched cottages. The sweet harmonious strain of artistic music, flowing as it were from heaven, silenced the disorderly jargon of the rabble. Delightful gardens, pleasant groves, beautiful galleries, charming paintings, exquisite sculptures, fine and costly apparel began to displace by gradual steps the natural beauties of rugged woods and the rough and coarse dress of the simple rustic. Thousands of intelligent men left the toilsome task of the ploughman and turned their attention to the new field of fine arts, where they could display the finer play of their intellect in less laborious and easier ways. Villages lost their importance; cities rose in their stead; ...

As the priest is busy about centralizing all knowledge and learning at a common centre, to wit, himself, so the king is ever up and doing in collecting all the earthly powers and focussing them in a central point, i.e. his own self. ...

Kings are like parents to their subjects, and the subjects are the kings' children. The subjects should, in every respect, look up to the king and stick to their king with unreserved obedience, and the king should rule them with impartial justice and look to their welfare and bear the same affection towards them as he would

towards his own children. But what rule applies to individual homes applies to the whole society as well, for society is only the aggregate of individual homes. 'When the son attains the age of sixteen, the father ought to deal with him as his friend and equal' — if that is the rule, does not the infant society ever attain that age of sixteen? It is the evidence of history that at a certain time every society attains its manhood, when a strong conflict ensues between the ruling power and the common people. The life of the society, its expansion and civilization, depend on its victory or defeat in this conflict. ...

Wisdom, knowledge, wealth, men, strength, prowess, and whatever else nature gathers and provides us with, are all only for diffusion, when the moment of need is at hand. We often forget this fact, put the stamp of '*mine only*' upon the entrusted deposits, and *pari passu*, we sow the seed of our own ruin!

The king, the centre of the forces of the aggregate of his subjects, soon forgets that those forces are only stored with him so that he may increase and give them back a thousandfold in their potency, so that they may spread over the whole community for its good. Attributing all Godship to himself, in his pride, like the king Vena, he looks upon other people as wretched specimens of humanity who should grovel

before him; any opposition to his will, whether good or bad, is a great sin on the part of his subjects. Hence oppression steps into the place of protection—sucking their blood in place of preservation. If the society is weak and debilitated, it silently suffers all ill-treatment at the hands of the king, and as the natural consequence, both the king and his people go down and down and fall into the most degraded state, and thus become an easy prey to any nation stronger than themselves. Where the society is healthy and strong, there soon follows a fierce contest between the king and his subjects, and, by its reaction and convulsion, are flung away the sceptre and the crown; and the throne and the royal paraphernalia become like past curiosities preserved in the museum galleries. (4:458-65)

4. What are the characteristics of Vaishya-rule?

As the result of this contest—as its reaction—is the appearance of the mighty power of the Vaishya, before whose angry glance the crowned heads, the lords of heroes, tremble like an aspen leaf on their thrones—whom the poor as well as the prince humbly follow in vain expectation of the golden jar in his hands, that like Tantalus's fruit always recedes from the grasp.

... The Vaishya is saying, 'You, madmen! what you call the effulgent all-pervading deity is here, in my hand, the ever-shining gold, the almighty sovereign. Behold, through its grace, I am also equally all-powerful. O Brahmin! even now, I shall buy through its grace all your wisdom, learning, prayers, and meditation. And, O great king! your sword, arms, valour, and prowess will soon be employed, through the grace of this, my gold, in carrying out my desired objects. Do you see those lofty and extensive mills? Those are my hives. See, how, swarms of millions of bees, the Shudras, are incessantly gathering honey for those hives. Do you know for whom? For me, this me, who in due course of time will squeeze out every drop of it for my own use and profit.'

As during the supremacy of the Brahmin and the Kshatriya, there is a centralization of learning and advancement of civilization, so the result of the supremacy of the Vaishya is accumulation of wealth. The power of the Vaishya lies in the possession of that coin, the charm of whose clinking sound works with an irresistible fascination on the minds of the four castes. The Vaishya is always in fear lest the Brahmin swindles him out of this, his only possession, and lest the Kshatriya usurps it by virtue of his superior strength of arms. For self-preservation, the Vaishyas as a body are,

therefore, of one mind. The Vaishya commands the money; the exorbitant interest that he can exact for its use by others, as with a lash in his hand, is his powerful weapon which strikes terror in the heart of all. By the power of his money, he is always busy curbing the royal power. That the royal power may not anyhow stand in the way of the inflow of his riches, the merchant is ever watchful. But, for all that, he has never the least wish that the power should pass on from the kingly to the Shudra class.

To what country does not the merchant go? ... he carries on his trade and transplants ... by the arteries of commerce to the different market-places of the Vaishya. But for the rising of this Vaishya power, who would have carried today the culture, learning, acquirements, and articles of food and luxury of one end of the world to the other? (4:465-66)

It is awful in its silent crushing and blood-sucking power. Its advantage is, as the trader himself goes everywhere, he is a good disseminator of ideas collected during the two previous states. They are still less exclusive than the military, but culture begins to decay. (6:381)

5. What was Swamiji's prophecy about the coming Shudra-rule?

You take it from me, this rising of the Shudras will take place first in Russia, and then in China. (*Swami Vivekananda: Patriot-Prophet: A Study*, by Bhupendranath Datta, 1954, p. 335)

Yet, a time will come when there will be the rising of the Shudra class, *with their Shudrahood*; that is to say, not like that as at present when the Shudras are becoming great by acquiring the characteristic qualities of the Vaishya or the Kshatriya, but a time will come when the Shudras of every country, with their inborn Shudra nature and habits — not becoming in essence Vaishya or Kshatriya, but remaining as Shudras — will gain absolute supremacy in every society. The first glow of the dawn of this new power has already begun to break slowly upon the Western world, and the thoughtful are at their wits' end to reflect upon the final issue of this fresh phenomenon. Socialism, Anarchism, Nihilism, and other like sects are the vanguard of the social revolution that is to follow. (4:468-69)

Last will come the labourer (Shudra) rule. Its advantages will be the distribution of physical comforts — its disadvantages, (perhaps) the lowering of culture. There will be a great distribution of ordinary education, but extraordinary geniuses will be less and less. (6:381)

6. Which one is the ideal state?

If it is possible to form a state in which the knowledge of the priest period, the culture of the military, the distributive spirit of the commercial, and the ideal of equality of the last can all be kept intact, minus their evils, it will be an ideal state. (6:381)

7. In ancient India why did the Kshatriya-kings obey the Brahmins?

Now commanding the king to be engaged in affairs fraught with death and ruin, now standing by him as his fastest friend with kind and wise counsels, now spreading the net of subtle, diplomatic statesmanship in which the king is easily caught — the priest is seen, oftentimes, to make the royal power totally subservient to him. Above all, the worst fear is in the knowledge that the name and fame of the royal forefathers and of himself and his family lie at the mercy of the priest's pen. He is the historian. The king might have paramount power; attaining a great glory in his reign, he might prove himself as the father and mother in one to his subjects; but if the priest is not appeased, his sun of glory goes down with his last breath for ever; all his worth and usefulness deserving of universal approbation

are lost in the great womb of time, like unto the fall of gentle dew on the ocean. Others who inaugurated the huge sacrifices lasting over many years, the performers of the Ashvamedha and so on — those who showered, like incessant rain in the rainy season, countless wealth on the priests — their names, thanks to the grace of priests, are emblazoned in the pages of history. The name of Priyadarshi Dharmashoka, the beloved of the gods, is nothing but a name in the priestly world, while Janamejaya, son of Parikshit, is a household word in every Hindu family. (4:438-39)

In the Vedic and the adjoining periods, the royal power could not manifest itself on account of the grinding pressure of the priestly power. ... during the Buddhistic revolution, resulting in the fall of the Brahminical supremacy, the royal power in India reached its culminating point. In the interval between the fall of the Buddhistic and the establishment of the Mohammedan empire, ... the royal power was trying to raise its head through the Rajputs in India, and ... it failed in its attempt. At the root of this failure, too, could be traced the same old endeavours of the Vedic priestly class to bring back and revive with a new life their original (ritualistic) days. (4:447)

8. How could the Buddhist and the Mohammedan Kshatriyas become strong ?

With the deluge which swept the land at the advent of Buddhism, the priestly power fell into decay and the royal power was in the ascendant. Buddhist priests are renouncers of the world, living in monasteries as homeless ascetics, unconcerned with secular affairs. They have neither the will nor the endeavour to bring and keep the royal power under their control through the threat of curses or magic arrows. Even if there were any remnant of such a will, its fulfilment has now become an impossibility. For Buddhism has shaken the thrones of all the oblation-eating gods and brought them down from their heavenly positions. The state of being a Buddha is superior to the heavenly positions of many a Brahma or an Indra, who vie with each other in offering their worship at the feet of the Buddha, the God-man! And to this Buddhahood, every man has the privilege to attain; it is open to all even in this life. From the descent of the gods, as a natural consequence, the superiority of the priests who were supported by them is gone.

Accordingly, the reins of that mighty sacrificial horse—the royal power—are no longer held in the firm grasp of the Vedic priest;

and being now free, it can roam anywhere by its unbridled will. The centre of power in this period is neither with the priests chanting the Sama hymns and performing the Yajnas according to the Yajur-Veda; nor is the power vested in the hands of Kshatriya kings separated from each other and ruling over small independent states. But the centre of power in this age is in emperors whose unobstructed sway extend over vast areas bounded by the ocean, covering the whole of India from one end to the other. The leaders of this age are no longer Vishvamitra or Vasishtha, but emperors like Chandragupta, Dharmashoka, and others. There never were emperors who ascended the throne of India and led her to the pinnacle of her glory such as those lords of the earth who ruled over her in paramount sway during the Buddhistic period. The end of this period is characterized by the appearance of Rajput power on the scene and the rise of modern Hinduism. With the rise of Rajput power, on the decline of Buddhism, the sceptre of the Indian empire, dislodged from its paramount power, was again broken into a thousand pieces and wielded by small powerless hands. At this time, the Brahminical (priestly) power again succeeded in raising its head, not as an adversary as before, but this time as an auxiliary to the royal supremacy.

During this revolution, that perpetual struggle for supremacy between the priestly and the royal classes, which began from the Vedic times and continued through ages till it reached its climax at the time of the Jain and Buddhist revolutions, has ceased for ever. Now these two mighty powers are friendly to each other; but neither is there any more the glorious Kshatra (warlike) valour of the kings, nor that spiritual brilliance which characterized the Brahmins; each has lost his former intrinsic strength. As might be expected, this new union of the two forces was soon engaged in the satisfaction of mutual self-interests, and became dissipated by spending its vitality on extirpating their common opponents, especially the Buddhists of the time, and on similar other deeds. Being steeped in all the vices consequent on such a union, e.g. the sucking of the blood of the masses, taking revenge on the enemy, spoliation of others' property, etc., they in vain tried to imitate the Rajasuya and other Vedic sacrifices of the ancient kings, and only made a ridiculous farce of them. The result was that they were bound hand and foot by a formidable train of sycophantic attendance and its obsequious flatteries, and being entangled in an interminable net of rites and ceremonies with flourishes of Mantras and the like, they soon

became a cheap and ready prey to the Mohammedan invaders from the West.

That priestly power which began its strife for superiority with the royal power from the Vedic times and continued it down the ages, that hostility against the Kshatra power, Bhagavan Shri Krishna succeeded by his superhuman genius in putting a stop to, at least for the time being, during his earthly existence. That Brahmanya power was almost effaced from its field of work in India during the Jain and Buddhist revolutions, or, perhaps, was holding its feeble stand by being subservient to the strong antagonistic religions. That Brahmanya power, since the appearance of Rajput power, which held sway over India under the Mihira dynasty and others, made its last effort to recover its lost greatness; and in its effort to establish that supremacy, it sold itself at the feet of the fierce hordes of barbarians newly come from Central Asia, and to win their pleasure introduced in the land their hateful manners and customs. Moreover, it, the Brahmanya power, solely devoting itself to the easy means to dupe ignorant barbarians, brought into vogue mysterious rites and ceremonies backed by its new Mantras and the like; and in doing so, itself lost its former wisdom, its former vigour and vitality, and its own chaste habits of long

acquirement. Thus it turned the whole Aryavarta into a deep and vast whirlpool of the most vicious, the most horrible, the most abominable, barbarous customs; and as the inevitable consequence of countenancing these detestable customs and superstitions, it soon lost all its own internal strength and stamina and became the weakest of the weak. What wonder that it should be broken into a thousand pieces and fall at the mere touch of the storm of Mussulman invasions from the West! That great Brahmanya power fell—who knows, if ever to rise again?

The resuscitation of the priestly power under the Mussulman rule was, on the other hand, an utter impossibility. The Prophet Mohammed himself was dead against the priestly class in any shape and tried his best for the total destruction of this power by formulating rules and injunctions to that effect. Under the Mussulman rule, the king himself was the supreme priest; he was the chief guide in religious matters; and when he became the emperor, he cherished the hope of being the paramount leader in all matters over the whole Mussulman world. To the Mussulman, the Jews or the Christians are not objects of extreme detestation; they are, at the worst, men of little faith. But not so the Hindu. According to him, the Hindu is

idolatrous, the hateful Kafir; hence in this life he deserves to be butchered; and in the next, eternal hell is in store for him. The utmost the Mussulman kings could do as a favour to the priestly class—the spiritual guides of these Kafirs—was to allow them somehow to pass their life silently and wait for the last moment. This was again sometimes considered too much kindness! If the religious ardour of any king was a little more uncommon, there would immediately follow arrangements for a great Yajna by way of Kafir-slaughter!

On one side, the royal power is now centred in kings professing a different religion and given to different customs. On the other, the priestly power has been entirely displaced from its influential position as the controller and lawgiver of the society. The Koran and its code of laws have taken the place of the Dharma Shastras of Manu and others. The Sanskrit language has made room for the Persian and the Arabic. The Sanskrit language has to remain confined only to the purely religious writings and religious matters of the conquered and detested Hindu, and, as such, has since been living a precarious life at the hands of the neglected priest. The priest himself, the relic of the Brahmanya power, fell back upon the last resource of conducting only the comparatively

unimportant family ceremonies, such as the matrimonial etc., and that also only so long and as much as the mercy of the Mohammedan rulers permitted.

In the Vedic and the adjoining periods, the royal power could not manifest itself on account of the grinding pressure of the priestly power. ... during the Buddhistic revolution, resulting in the fall of the Brahminical supremacy, the royal power in India reached its culminating point. In the interval between the fall of the Buddhistic and the establishment of the Mohammedan empire, ... the royal power was trying to raise its head through the Rajputs in India, and ... it failed in its attempt. At the root of this failure, too, could be traced the same old endeavours of the Vedic priestly class to bring back and revive with a new life their original (ritualistic) days.

Crushing the Brahminical supremacy under his feet, the Mussulman king was able to restore to a considerable extent the lost glories of such dynasties of emperors as the Maurya, the Gupta, the Andhra, and the Kshatrapa.

Thus the priestly power—which sages like Kumarila, Shankara, and Ramanuja tried to re-establish, which for some time was supported by the sword of the Rajput power, and which tried to rebuild its structure on the fall of its Jain and Buddhist adversaries—was under

Mohammedan rule laid to sleep for ever, knowing no awakening. In this period, the antagonism or warfare is not between kings and priests, but between kings and kings. At the end of this period, when Hindu power again raised its head, and, to some extent, was successful in regenerating Hinduism through the Mahrattas and the Sikhs, we do not find much play of the priestly power with these regenerations. (4:443-47)

9. What happened to other countries?

Among the Chinese, the Sumerians, the Babylonians, the Egyptians, the Chaldeans, the Aryas, the Iranians, the Jews, the Arabs — among all these ancient nations, the supreme power of guiding society is, in the first period of their history, in the hands of the Brahmin or the priest. In the second period, the ruling power is the Kshatriya, that is, either absolute monarchy or oligarchical government by a chosen body of men. ...

In the oldest countries like Egypt, the priestly power enjoyed unmolested supremacy only for a short period, after which it became subjugated to the royal power and lived as an auxiliary to it. In China, the royal power, centralized by the genius of Confucius, has been controlling and

guiding the priestly power, in accordance with its absolute will, for more than twenty-five centuries; and during the last two centuries, the all-absorbing Lamas of Tibet, though they are the spiritual guides of the royal family, have been compelled to pass their days, being subject in every way to the Chinese Emperor.

In India, the royal power succeeded in conquering the priestly power and declaring its untrammelled authority long after the other ancient civilized nations had done so; and therefore the inauguration of the Indian Empire came about long after the Chinese, Egyptian, Babylonian, and other Empires had risen. It was only with the Jewish people that the royal power, though it tried hard to establish its supremacy over the priestly, had to meet a complete defeat in the attempt. Not even the Vaishyas attained the ruling power with the Jews. On the other hand, the common subject people, trying to free themselves from the shackles of priestcrafts, were crushed to death under the internal commotion of adverse religious movements like Christianity and the external pressure of the mighty Roman Empire. (4:449-51)

10. In ancient India there were many benevolent kings. 'Government under benevolent king' or 'Self-government' — which is preferable?

Neither under the Hindu kings, nor under the Buddhist rule, do we find the common subject-people taking any part in expressing their voice in the affairs of the state. True, Yudhishtira visits the houses of Vaishyas and even Shudras when he is in Varanavata; true, the subjects are praying for the installation of Ramachandra to the regency of Ayodhya; nay, they are even criticizing the conduct of Sita and secretly making plans for the bringing about of her exile; but as a recognized rule of the state they have no direct voice in the supreme government. The power of the populace is struggling to express itself in indirect and disorderly ways without any method. The people have not as yet the conscious knowledge of the existence of this power. There is neither the attempt on their part to organize it into a united action, nor have they got the will to do so; there is also a complete absence of that capacity, that skill, by means of which small and incoherent centres of force are united together, creating insuperable strength as their resultant.

Is this due to want of proper laws? — no, that is not it. There are laws, there are methods, separately and distinctly assigned for the guidance of different departments of government, there are laws laid down in the minutest detail for everything, such as the collection of revenue,

the management of the army, the administration of justice, punishments and rewards. But at the root of all, is the injunction of the Rishi—the word of divine authority, the revelation of God coming through the inspired Rishi. The laws have, it can almost be said, no elasticity in them. Under the circumstances, it is never possible for the people to acquire any sort of education by which they can learn to combine among themselves and be united for the accomplishment of any object for the common good of the people, or by which they can have the concerted intellect to conceive the idea of popular right in the treasures collected by the king from his subjects, or even such education by which they can be fired with the aspiration to gain the right of representation in the control of state revenues and expenditure. Why should they do such things? Is not the inspiration of the Rishi responsible for their prosperity and progress?

Again, all those laws are in books. Between laws as codified in books and their operation in practical life, there is a world of difference. One Ramachandra is born after thousands of Agnivarnas pass away! Many kings show us the life of Chandashoka; Dharmashokas are rare! The number of kings like Akbar, in whom the subjects find their life, is far less than that of

kings like Aurangzeb who live on the blood of their people!

Even if the kings be of as godlike nature as that of Yudhishtira, Ramachandra, Dharma-shoka, or Akbar, under whose benign rule the people enjoyed safety and prosperity, and were looked after with paternal care by their rulers, the hand of him who is always fed by another gradually loses the power of taking the food to his mouth. His power of self-preservation can never become fully manifest who is always protected in every respect by another. Even the strongest youth remains but a child if he is always looked after as a child by his parents. Being always governed by kings of godlike nature, to whom is left the whole duty of protecting and providing for the people, they can never get any occasion for understanding the principles of self-government. Such a nation, being entirely dependent on the king for everything and never caring to exert itself for the common good or for self-defence, becomes gradually destitute of inherent energy and strength. If this state of dependence and protection continues long, it becomes the cause of the destruction of the nation, and its ruin is not far to seek.

Of course, it can be reasonably concluded that, when the government of a country is guided by codes of laws enjoined by Shastras which are

the outcome of knowledge inspired by the divine genius of great sages, such a government must lead to the unbroken welfare of the rich and the poor, the wise and the ignorant, the king and the subjects alike. But we have seen already how far the operation of those laws was, or may be, possible in practical life. The voice of the ruled in the government of their land—which is the watchword of the modern Western world, and of which the last expression has been echoed with a thundering voice in the Declaration of the American Government, in the words, 'That the government of the people of this country must be by the people and for the good of the people'—cannot however be said to have been totally unrecognized in ancient India. The Greek travellers and others saw many independent small states scattered all over this country, and references are also found to this effect in many places of the Buddhistic literature. And there cannot be the least doubt about it that the germ of self-government was at least present in the shape of the village Panchayat, which is still to be found in existence in many places of India. But the germ remained for ever the germ; the seed though put in the ground never grew into a tree. This idea of self-government never passed beyond the embryo state of the village Panchayat system and never spread into society at large.

In the religious communities, among Sannyasins in the Buddhist monasteries, we have ample evidence to show that self-government was fully developed. Even now, one wonders to see how the power of the Panchayat system, of the principles of self-government, is working amongst the Naga Sannyasins—what deep respect the ‘Government by the Five’ commands from them, what effective individual rights each Naga can exercise within his own sect, what excellent working of the power of organization and concerted action they have among themselves! (4:439-43)

11. Did the Vaishya-rule in India evolve as a natural process, or was it imposed?

From very ancient times, the fame of India's vast wealth and her rich granaries has enkindled in many powerful foreign nations the desire for conquering her. She has been, in fact, again and again conquered by foreign nations. Then why should we say that the occupation of India by England was something new and foreign to the Indian mind?

From time immemorial Indians have seen the mightiest royal power tremble before the frown of the ascetic priest, devoid of worldly desire, armed with spiritual strength—the power of

Mantras (sacred formulas) and religious lore — and the weapon of curses. They have also seen the subject people silently obey the commands of their heroic all-powerful suzerains, backed by their arms and armies, like a flock of sheep before a lion. But that a handful of Vaishyas (traders) who, despite their great wealth, have ever crouched awe-stricken not only before the king but also before any member of the royal family, would unite, cross for purposes of business rivers and seas, would, solely by virtue of their intelligence and wealth, by degrees make puppets of the long-established Hindu and Mohammedan dynasties; not only so, but that they would buy as well the services of the ruling powers of their own country and use their valour and learning as powerful instruments for the influx of their own riches — this is a spectacle entirely novel to the Indians, as also the spectacle that the descendants of the mighty nobility of a country, of which a proud lord, sketched by the extraordinary pen of its great poet, says to a common man, 'Out, dunghill! darest thou brave a nobleman?' would, in no distant future, consider it the zenith of human ambition to be sent to India as obedient servants of a body of merchants, called The East India Company — such a sight was, indeed, a novelty unseen by India before! ...

Therefore the conquest of India by England is not a conquest by Jesus or the Bible as we are often asked to believe. Neither is it like the conquest of India by the Moguls and the Pathans. But behind the name of the Lord Jesus, the Bible, the magnificent palaces, the heavy tramp of the feet of armies consisting elephants, chariots, cavalry, and infantry, shaking the earth, the sounds of war trumpets, bugles, and drums, and the splendid display of the royal throne, behind all these, there is always the virtual presence of England—that England whose warflag is the factory chimney, whose troops are the merchantmen, whose battlefields are the market place of the world, and whose Empress is the shining Goddess of Fortune herself! It is on this account I have said before that it is indeed an unseen novelty, this conquest of India by England. What new revolution will be effected in India by her clash with the new giant power, and as the result of that revolution what new transformation is in store for future India, cannot be inferred from her past history. (4:448-49, 452)

12. Why could not the Shudra-power come up earlier though the Shudras were in majority?

The poor, the low, the sinner in India have no

friends, no help — they cannot rise, try however they may. They sink lower and lower every day, they feel the blows showered upon them by a cruel society, and they do not know whence the blow comes. They have forgotten that they too are men. And the result is slavery. (5:14)

As the result of grinding pressure and tyranny, from time out of mind, the Shudras, as a rule, are either meanly servile, licking dog-like the feet of the higher class, or otherwise are as inhuman as brute beasts. Again, at all times their hopes and aspirations are baffled; hence a firmness of purpose and perseverance in action they have none.

In spite of the spread of education in the West, there is a great hindrance in the way of the rising of the Shudra class, and that is the recognition of caste as determined by the inherence of more or less good or bad qualities. By this very qualitative caste system which obtained in India in ancient days, the Shudra class was kept down, bound hand and foot. In the first place, scarcely any opportunity was given to the Shudra for the accumulation of wealth or the earning of proper knowledge and education; to add to this disadvantage, if ever a man of extraordinary parts and genius were born of the Shudra class, the influential higher sections of the society forthwith showered titular honours on him and lifted him up to their own circle. His

wealth and the power of his wisdom were employed for the benefit of an alien caste — and his own caste-people reaped no benefits of his attainments; and not only so, the good-for-nothing people, the scum and refuse of the higher castes, were cast off and thrown into the Shudra class to swell their number. Vasishtha, Narada, Satyakama Jabala, Vyasa, Kripa, Drona, Karna, and others of questionable parentage were raised to the position of a Brahmin or a Kshatriya, in virtue of their superior learning or valour; but it remains to be seen how the prostitute, maidservant, fisherman, or the charioteer class was benefited by these upliftings. Again, on the other hand, the fallen from the Brahmin, the Kshatriya, or the Vaishya class were always brought down to fill the ranks of the Shudras. (4:469-70)

The Shudras of countries other than India have become, it seems, a little awake; but they are wanting in proper education and have only the mutual hatred of men of their own class — a trait common to Shudras. What avails it if they greatly outnumber the other classes? That unity, by which ten men collect the strength of a million, is yet far away from the Shudra; hence, according to the law of nature, the Shudras invariably form the subject race.

But there is hope. (4:468)

The only service to be done for our lower classes is to give them education, *to develop their lost individuality*. That is the great task between our people and princes. Up to now nothing has been done in that direction. Priest-power and foreign conquest have trodden them down for centuries, and at last the poor of India have forgotten that they are human beings. (4:362)

IV

EXPLOITATION: VARIOUS FORMS

1. What is the root of exploitation?

Ignorance, inequality, and desire are the three causes of human misery, and each follows the other in inevitable union. Why should a man think himself above any other man, or even an animal? It is the same throughout:

त्वं स्त्री त्वं पुमानसि त्वं कुमार उत वा कुमारी ।

— ‘Thou art the man, Thou the woman, Thou art the young man, Thou the young woman.’

Many will say, ‘That is all right for the

Sannyasins, but we are householders.' No doubt, a householder having many other duties to perform, cannot as fully attain to this sameness; yet this should be also their ideal, for it is the ideal of all societies, of all mankind, all animals, and all nature, to attain to this sameness. But alas! they think inequality is the way to attain equality, as if they could come to right by doing wrong!

This is the bane of human nature, the curse upon mankind, the root of all misery—this inequality. This is the source of all bondage, physical, mental, and spiritual.

समं पश्यन् हि सर्वत्र समवस्थितमीश्वरम्।
न हिनस्त्यात्मनात्मानं ततो याति परां गतिम् ॥

—'Since the Lord equally existent everywhere, he injures not Self by self, and so goes to the Highest Goal.' (Gita, XIII.28) This one saying contains, in a few words, the universal way to salvation. (4:328-29)

The individual's life is in the life of the whole, the individual's happiness is in the happiness of the whole; apart from the whole, the individual's existence is inconceivable—this is an eternal truth and is the bed-rock on which the universe is built. To move slowly towards the infinite whole, bearing a constant feeling of intense sympathy and sameness with it, being happy with its

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happiness and being distressed in its affliction, is the individual's sole duty. Not only is it his duty, but in its transgression is his death, while compliance with this great truth leads to life immortal. This is the law of nature and who can throw dust into her ever-watchful eyes? None can hoodwink society and deceive it for any length of time. However much there may have accumulated heaps of refuse and mud on the surface of society—still, at the bottom of those heaps the life-breath of society is ever to be found pulsating with the vibrations of universal love and self-denying compassion for all. Society is like the earth that patiently bears incessant molestations; but she wakes up one day, however long that may be in coming, and the force of the shaking tremors of that awakening hurls off to a distance the accumulated dirt of self-seeking meanness, piled up during millions of patient and silent years!

We ignore this sublime truth; and though we suffer a thousand times for our folly, yet, in our absurd foolishness, impelled by the brute in us, we do not believe in it. We try to deceive, but a thousand times we find we are deceived ourselves, and yet we do not desist! Mad that we are, we imagine we can impose on nature! With our shortsighted vision we think ministering to the self at any cost is the be-all and end-all of life.

Wisdom, knowledge, wealth, men, strength, prowess, and whatever else nature gathers and provides us with, are all only for diffusion, when the moment of need is at hand. We often forget this fact, put the stamp of '*mine only*' upon the entrusted deposits, and *pari passu*, we sow the seed of our own ruin! (4:463-64)

Accumulation of power is as necessary as its diffusion, or rather more so. The accumulation of blood in the heart is an indispensable condition for life; its non-circulation throughout the body means death. For the welfare of society, it is absolutely necessary at certain times to have all knowledge and power concentrated in certain families or castes to the exclusion of others, but that concentrated power is focussed for the time being, only to be scattered broadcast over the whole of society in future. If this diffusion be withheld, the destruction of that society is, without doubt, near at hand. (4:458)

Kings are like parents to their subjects, and the subjects are the king's children. The subject should, in every respect, look up to the king and stick to their king with unreserved obedience, and the king should rule them with impartial justice and look to their welfare and bear the same affection towards them as he would towards his own children. But what rule applies to individual homes applies to the whole society

as well, for society is only the aggregate of individual homes. 'When the son attains the age of sixteen, the father ought to deal with him as his friend and equal' — if that is the rule, does not the infant society ever attain that age of sixteen? It is the evidence of history that at a certain time every society attains its manhood, when a strong conflict ensues between the ruling power and the common people. The life of the society, its expansion and civilization, depend on its victory or defeat in this conflict. (4:461-62)

2. How does exploitation take place during Brahmin-rule?

The Brahmin said, 'Learning is the power of all powers; that learning is dependent upon me, I possess that learning, so the society must follow my bidding.' For some days such was the case. (4:465)

When the priest (Brahmin) rules, there is a tremendous exclusiveness on hereditary grounds; the persons of the priests and their descendants are hemmed in with all sorts of safeguards — none but they have any knowledge — none but they have the right to impart that knowledge. (6:380-81)

Now commanding the king to be engaged in affairs fraught with death and ruin, now standing

by him as his fastest friend with kind and wise counsels, now spreading the net of subtle, diplomatic statesmanship in which the king is easily caught — the priest is seen, oftentimes, to make the royal power totally subservient to him. Above all, the worst fear is in the knowledge that the name and fame of the royal forefathers and of himself and his family lie at the mercy of the priest's pen. He is the historian. (4:438-39)

That renunciation, self-control, and asceticism of the priest which during the period of his ascendancy were devoted to the pursuance of earnest researches of truth are on the eve of his decline employed anew and spent solely in the accumulation of objects of self-gratification and in the extension of privileged superiority over others. (4:456)

Thus lost to former wisdom, the former indomitable spirit of self-reliance, the priest, now glorifying himself merely in the name of his forefathers, vainly struggles to preserve untarnished for himself the same glory, the same privilege, the same veneration, and the same supremacy as was enjoyed by his great forefathers. Consequently, his violent collision with the other castes. (4:455-56)

3. How do the Kshatriyas exploit?

As the priest is busy about centralizing all knowledge and learning at a common centre, to wit, himself, so the king is ever up and doing in collecting all the earthly powers and focussing them in a central point, i.e. his own self. (4:461)

The Kshatriya said, 'But for the power of my sword, where would you be, O Brahmin, with all your power of lore? You would in no time be wiped off the face of the earth. It is I alone that am the superior.' Out flew the flaming sword from the jingling scabbard—society humbly recognized it with bended head. Even the worshipper of learning was the first to turn into the worshipper of the king. (4:465)

To protect the state, to meet the expenses of the personal comforts and luxuries of himself and his long retinue, and, above all, to fill to overflowing the coffers of the all-powerful priesthood for its propitiation, the king is continually draining the resources of his subjects, even as the sun sucks up moisture from the earth. His especial prey—his milch cows—are the Vaishyas. (4:439)

The military (Kshatriya) rule is tyrannical and cruel ... (6:381)

4. What are the characteristics of exploitation by the Vaishyas?

As during the supremacy of the Brahmin and the Kshatriya, there is a centralization of learning and advancement of civilization, so the result of the supremacy of the Vaishya is accumulation of wealth. The power of the Vaishya lies in the possession of that coin, the charm of whose clinking sound works with an irresistible fascination on the minds of the four castes. The Vaishya is always in fear lest the Brahman swindles him out of this, his only possession, and lest the Kshatriya usurps it by virtue of his superior strength of arms. For self-preservation, the Vaishyas as a body are, therefore, of one mind. The Vaishya commands the money; the exorbitant interest that he can exact for its use by others, as with a lash in his hand, is his powerful weapon which strikes terror in the heart of all. By the power of his money, he is always busy curbing the royal power. That the royal power may not anyhow stand in the way of the inflow of his riches, the merchant is ever watchful. But, for all that, he has never the least wish that the power should pass on from the kingly to the Shudra class. (4:466)

The Vaishya is saying, 'You, madmen! what you call the effulgent all-pervading deity is here, in my hand, the ever-shining gold, the almighty sovereign. Behold, through its grace, I am also equally all-powerful. O Brahmin! even now, I

shall buy through its grace all your wisdom, learning, prayers, and meditation. And, O great king! your sword, arms, valour, and prowess will soon be employed, through the grace of this, my gold, in carrying out my desired objects. Do you see those lofty and extensive mills? Those are my hives. See, how, swarms of millions of bees, the Shudras, are incessantly gathering honey for those hives. Do you know for whom? For me, this me, who in due course of time will squeeze out every drop of it for my own use and profit.' (4:465-66)

5. How do the Shudras exploit?

As the result of grinding pressure and tyranny, from time out of mind, the Shudras, as a rule, are either meanly servile, licking dog-like the feet of the higher class, or otherwise are as inhuman as brute beasts. (4:469)

[Swami Vivekananda emphasized the four fundamental social forces, viz knowledge, arms-power, money, and physical labour. He related these forces to four classes respectively. Exploitation starts when a class starts centralizing its own force. Brahmin-rule does this with knowledge, Kshatriya-rule exploits by the help of arms-power, Vaishyas centralize money, and during the Shudra-rule the rulers centralize

the labour. At present we have a Brahmin-rule in the middle-east states along with Pakistan (knowledge or ideology centralized by the religious leaders), a Kshatriya-rule in the Latin American states (being ruled by military men), a Vaishya-rule in Europe and USA, and a Shudra-rule in China, USSR, etc.

How do the Shudra rulers exploit? As said earlier, they centralize the labour power. Let us take the case of Russia after revolution. Though before the October revolution Lenin raised the slogan 'All power to the Soviets' (a soviet was the free cooperative of the farmers), on 28.8.1918 he issued order to bring all the soviets under the state government. Party leaders were asked to form 'revolutionary committees' to head those soviets. Similarly, the workers unions were also brought under the government and the Party chose the men who would head those unions. Thus the farmers and labourers were brought under and guided by the government, the labour forces were made centralized under the rulers of the state.]

6. How do the rulers become weak?

Whether the leadership of society be in the hands of those who monopolize learning or wield the power of riches or arms, the source of

its power is always the subject masses. By so much as the class in power severs itself from this source, by so much is it sure to become weak. But such is the strange irony of fate, such is the queer working of Maya, that they from whom this power is directly or indirectly drawn, by fair means or foul — by deceit, stratagem, force, or by voluntary gift — they soon cease to be taken into account by the leading class. When in course of time, the priestly power totally estranged itself from the subject masses, the real dynamo of its power, it was overthrown by the then kingly power taking its stand on the strength of the subject people; again, the kingly power, judging itself to be perfectly independent, created a gaping chasm between itself and the subject people, only to be itself destroyed or become a mere puppet in the hands of the Vaishyas, who now succeeded in securing a relatively greater co-operation of the mass of the people. The Vaishyas have now gained their end; so they no longer deign to count on help from the subject people and are trying their best to dissociate themselves from them; consequently, here is being sown the seed of the destruction of this power as well. (4:470-71)

7. Does the society change immediately if the rulers become weak ?

Though themselves the reservoir of all powers, the subject masses, creating an eternal distance between one another, have been deprived of all their legitimate rights; and they will remain so as long as this sort of relation continues. (4:471)

The king, the centre of the forces of the aggregate of his subjects, soon forgets that those forces are only stored with him so that he may increase and give them back a thousandfold in their potency, so that they may spread over the whole community for its good. Attributing all Godship to himself, in his pride, like the king Vena, he looks upon other people as wretched specimens of humanity who should grovel before him; any opposition to his will, whether good or bad, is a great sin on the part of his subjects. Hence oppression steps into the place of protection—sucking their blood in place of preservation. If the society is weak and debilitated, it silently suffers all ill-treatment at the hands of the king, and as the natural consequence, both the king and his people go down and down and fall into the most degraded state, and thus become an easy prey to any nation stronger than themselves. Where the society is healthy and strong, there soon follows a fierce contest between the king and his subjects, and, by its reaction and convulsion, are flung away the

sceptre and the crown; and the throne and the royal paraphernalia become like past curiosities preserved in the museum galleries. (4:464-65)

It is the evidence of history that at a certain time every society attains its manhood, when a strong conflict ensues between the ruling power and the common people. The life of the society, its expansion and civilization, depend on its victory or defeat in this conflict. (4:461-62)

8. What happens when two different classes try to capture power? Please cite an illustration.

Ancient India had for centuries been the battlefield for the ambitious projects of two of her foremost classes—the Brahmins and the Kshatriyas.

On the one hand, the priesthood stood between the lawless social tyranny of the princes over the masses, whom the Kshatriyas declared to be their legal food. On the other hand, the Kshatriya power was the one potent force which struggled with any success against the spiritual tyranny of the priesthood and the ever-increasing chain of ceremonials which they were forging to bind down the people with.

The tug of war began in the earliest periods of the history of our race, and throughout the Shrutis it can be distinctly traced. A momentary

hull came when Shri Krishna, leading the faction of Kshatriya power and of Jnana, showed the way to reconciliation. The result was the teachings of the Gita—the essence of philosophy, of liberality, of religion. Yet the causes were there, and the effect must follow.

The ambition of these two classes to be the masters of the poor and ignorant was there, and the strife once more became fierce. The meagre literature that has come down to us from that period brings to us but faint echoes of that mighty past strife, but at last it broke out as a victory for the Kshatriyas, a victory for Jnana, for liberty—and ceremonial had to go down, much of it for ever. This upheaval was what is known as the Buddhistic reformation. On the religious side, it represented freedom from ceremonial; on the political side, overthrow of the priesthood by the Kshatriyas.

It is a significant fact that the two greatest men ancient India produced, were both Kshatriyas—Krishna and Buddha—and still more significant is the fact that both of these God-men threw open the door of knowledge to everyone, irrespective of birth or sex.

In spite of its wonderful moral strength, Buddhism was extremely iconoclastic; and much of its force being spent in merely negative attempts, it had to die out in the land of its birth,

and what remained of it became full of superstitions and ceremonials, a hundred times cruder than those it was intended to suppress. Although it partially succeeded in putting down the animal sacrifices of the Vedas, it filled the land with temples, images, symbols, and bones of saints.

Above all, in the medley of Aryans, Mongols, and aborigines which it created, it unconsciously led the way to some of the hideous Vamacharas. This was especially the reason why this travesty of the teaching of the great Master had to be driven out of India by Shri Shankara and his band of Sannyasins.

Thus even the current of life, set in motion by the greatest soul that ever wore a human form, the Bhagavan Buddha himself, became a miasmatic pool, and India had to wait for centuries until Shankara arose, followed in quick succession by Ramanuja and Madhva.

By this time, an entirely new chapter had opened in the history of India. The ancient Kshatriyas and the Brahmins had disappeared. ...

In the Buddhistic movement, the Kshatriyas were the real leaders, and whole masses of them became Buddhists. In the zeal of reform and conversion, the popular dialects had been almost exclusively cultivated to the neglect of Sanskrit, and the larger portion of Kshatriyas had become disjointed from the Vedic literature

and Sanskrit learning. Thus this wave of reform, which came from the South, benefited to a certain extent the priesthood, and the priests only. For the rest of India's millions, it forged more chains than they had ever known before.

The Kshatriyas had always been the backbone of India, so also they had been the supporters of science and liberty, and their voices had rung out again and again to clear the land from superstitions; and throughout the history of India they ever formed the invulnerable barrier to aggressive priestly tyranny.

When the greater part of their number sank into ignorance, and another portion mixed their blood with savages from Central Asia and lent their swords to establish the rules of priests in India, her cup became full to the brim, and down sank the land of Bharata, not to rise again, until the Kshatriya rouses himself, and making himself free, strikes the chains from the feet of the rest. (4:325-27)

9. Did religion play the main role in India for social change?

Such changes, revolutionizing society, have been happening in India again and again, only in this country they have been effected in the name of religion, for religion is the life of India, religion is the language of this country, the

symbol of all its movements. The Charvaka, the Jain, the Buddhist, Shankara, Ramanuja, Kabir, Nanak, Chaitanya, the Brahmo Samaj, the Arya Samaj—of all these and similar other sects, the wave of religion, foaming, thundering, surging, breaks in the front, while in the rear follows the filling-up of social wants. (4:462)

The different tribes of the same race worship similar gods, under a generic name as the Baals of the Babylonians, the Molochs of the Hebrews.

The attempt in Babylonia of making all the Baals merge in Baal-Merodach—the attempt of the Israelites to merge all the Molochs in the Moloch Yavah or Yahu.

The Babylonians destroyed by the Persians; and the Hebrews who took the Babylonian mythology and adapted it to their own needs, succeeded in producing a strict monotheistic religion.

Monotheism like absolute monarchy is quick in executing orders, and a great centralization of force, but it grows no farther, and its worst feature is its cruelty and persecution. All nations coming within its influence perish very soon after a flaring up of a few years.

In India the same problem presented itself—the solution found—एकं सद्दिप्रा बहुधा वदन्ति ।

This is the keynote to everything which has succeeded, and the keystone of the arch.

The result is that wonderful toleration of the Vedantist. (4:310)

Did India ever stand in want of reformers? Do you read the history of India? Who was Ramanuja? Who was Shankara? Who was Nanak? Who was Chaitanya? Who was Kabir? Who was Dadu? Who were all these great preachers, one following the other, a galaxy of stars of the first magnitude? Did not Ramanuja feel for the lower classes? Did he not try all his life to admit even the Pariah to his community? Did he not try to admit even Mohammedans to his own fold? Did not Nanak confer with Hindus and Mohammedans, and try to bring about a new state of things? (3:219)

Shankaracharya and others, were the great caste-makers. I cannot tell you all the wonderful things they fabricated, and some of you may resent what I have to say. But in my travels and experiences I have traced them out, and have arrived at most wonderful results. They would sometimes get hordes of Baluchis and at once make them Kshatriyas, also get hold of hordes of fishermen and make them Brahmins forthwith. (3:296)

We have seen throughout the history of India, a spiritual upheaval is almost always succeeded by a political unity extending over more or less area of the continent, which in its turn helps to

strengthen the spiritual aspiration that brings it to being. (6:166)

10. Earlier the nature of exploitation by the Vaishyas was described. How was it in India during the British period ?

British rule in modern India has only one redeeming feature, though unconscious; it has brought India out once more on the stage of the world; it has forced upon it the contact of the outside world. If it had been done with an eye to the good of the people concerned, as circumstances favoured Japan with, the results could have been more wonderful for India. No good can be done when the main idea is blood-sucking. ...

A few hundred, modernized, half-educated, and denationalized men are all the show of modern English India—*nothing else*. ...

In spite of the centuries of anarchy that reigned during the struggles of the English to conquer, the terrible massacre the English perpetrated in 1857 and 1858, and the still more terrible famines that have become the inevitable consequence of British rule (there never is a famine in a native state) and that take off millions, there has been a good increase of population, but not yet what it was when the

country was entirely independent—that is, before the Mohammedan rule. Indian labour and produce can support five times as many people as there are now in India with comfort, if the whole thing is not taken off from them.

This is the state of things—even education will no more be permitted to spread; freedom of the press stopped already, (of course we have been disarmed long ago), the bit of self-government granted to them for some years is being quickly taken off. We are watching what next! For writing a few words of innocent criticism, men are being hurried to *transportation for life*, others imprisoned without *any trial*; and nobody knows when his head will be off.

There has been a reign of terror in India for some years. English soldiers are killing our men and outraging our women—only to be sent home with passage and pension at our expense. We are in a *terrible* gloom—where is the Lord? Mary, you can afford to be optimistic, can I? Suppose you simply publish this letter—the law just passed in India will allow the English Government in India to drag me from here to India and kill me without trial. And I know all your Christian governments will only rejoice, because we are heathens. Shall I also go to sleep and become optimistic? Nero was the greatest optimistic person! They don't think it worth

while to write these terrible things as news items even! If necessary, the news agent of *Reuter* gives the exactly opposite news fabricated to order! Heathen-murdering is only a legitimate pastime for the Christians! Your missionaries go to preach God and dare not speak a word of truth for fear of the English, who will kick them out the next day.

All property and lands granted by the previous governments for supporting education have been swallowed up, and the present Government spends even less than Russia in education. And what education?

The least show of originality is throttled. ...

As for religious sects—the Brahmo Samaj, the Arya Samaj, and other sects have been useless mixtures; they were only voices of apology to our English masters to allow us to live! We have started a *new India*—a *growth*—waiting to see what comes. We believe in new ideas only when the nation wants them, and what will be true for us. The test of truth for this Brahmo Samaj is ‘what our masters approve’; with us, what the Indian reasoning and experience approve. The struggle has begun—not between the Brahmo Samaj and us, for they are gone already, but a harder, deeper, and more terrible one. (8:475-78)

11. How does exploitation hamper progress?

There cannot be any growth without liberty. Our ancestors freed religious thought, and we have a wonderful religion. But they put a heavy chain on the feet of society, and our society is, in a word, horrid, diabolical. In the West, society always had freedom, and look at them. On the other hand, look at their religion.

Liberty is the first condition of growth. (4:367)

Your ancestors gave every liberty to the soul, and religion grew. They put the body under every bondage, and society did not grow. The opposite is the case in the West — every liberty to society, none to religion. Now are falling off the shackles from the feet of Eastern society as from those of Western religion. (5:47)

12. What about casteism?

With all the criticism of the Westerners against our caste, they have a worse one — that of money. The almighty dollar, as the Americans say, can do anything here. (4:361)

I have seen castes in almost every country in the world, but nowhere is their plan and purpose so glorious as here. If caste is thus unavoidable, I would rather have a caste of purity and culture and self-sacrifice, than a caste of dollars. (3:199)

13. Does Vedanta recognize caste?

The caste system is opposed to the religion of the Vedanta. Caste is a social custom, and all our great preachers have tried to break it down. From Buddhism downwards, every sect has preached against caste, and every time it has only riveted the chains. Caste is simply the outgrowth of the political institutions of India; it is a hereditary trade guild. Trade competition with Europe has broken caste more than any teaching. (5:311)

14. Did caste-system help us? Is it necessary now?

What caste really is, not one in a million understands. There is no country in the world without caste. In India, from caste we reach to the point where there is no caste. Caste is based throughout on that principle. The plan in India is to make everybody a Brahmin, the Brahmin being the ideal of humanity. If you read the history of India you will find that attempts have always been made to raise the lower classes. Many are the classes that have been raised. Many more will follow till the whole will become Brahmin. That is the plan. We have only to raise them without bringing down anybody. And this has mostly to be done by the Brahmins

themselves, because it is the duty of every aristocracy to dig its own grave; and the sooner it does so, the better for all. No time should be lost. Indian caste is better than the caste which prevails in Europe or America. I do not say it is absolutely good. Where would you be if there were no caste? Where would be your learning and other things, if there were no caste? There would be nothing left for the Europeans to study if caste had never existed! The Mohammedans would have smashed everything to pieces. Where do you find the Indian society standing still? It is always on the move. Sometimes, as in the times of foreign invasions, the movement has been slow, at other times quicker. This is what I say to my countrymen. I do not condemn them. I look into their past. I find that under the circumstances no nation could do more glorious work. I tell them that they have done well. I only ask them to do better. (5:214)

We are, in spite of our various castes, and in spite of the modern custom of marriage restricted within the subdivisions of a caste (though this is not universal), a mixed race in every sense of the word. ...

The super-arrogated excellence of birth of any caste in India is only pure myth, and in no part of India has it, we are sorry to say, found

such congenial soil, owing to linguistic differences, as in the South. (4:298-99)

Beginning from Buddha down to Ram Mohan Roy, everyone made the mistake of holding caste to be a religious institution and tried to pull down religion and caste all together, and failed. But in spite of all the ravings of the priests, caste is simply a crystallized social institution, which after doing its service is now filling the atmosphere of India with its stench, and it can only be removed by giving back to the people their lost social individuality. Every man born here knows that he is a *man*. Every man born in India knows that he is a slave of society. Now, freedom is the only condition of growth; take that off, the result is degeneration. With the introduction of modern competition, see how caste is disappearing fast! No religion is now necessary to kill it. The Brahmana shopkeeper, shoemaker, and wine-distiller are common in Northern India. And why? Because of competition. No man is prohibited from doing anything he pleases for his livelihood under the present Government, and the result is neck and neck competition, and thus thousands are seeking and finding the highest level they were born for, instead of vegetating at the bottom. (5:22-23)

15. Should all get equal opportunity ?

If there is inequality in nature, still there must be equal chance for all — or if greater for some and for some less — the weaker should be given more chance than the strong.

In other words, a Brahmin is not so much in need of education as a Chandala. If the son of a Brahmin needs one teacher, that of a Chandala needs ten. For greater help must be given to him whom nature has not endowed with an acute intellect from birth. It is a madman who carries coals to Newcastle. The poor, the downtrodden, the ignorant, let these be your God. (6:319)

V

DEMOCRACY AND SOCIALISM

1. What is the basic difference between so-called democracy and so-called socialism?

The aggregate of many individuals is called Samashti (the whole), and each individual is called Vyashti (a part). You and I—each is Vyashti, society is Samashti. ... Whether or not Vyashti has individual freedom, and if it has, what should be its measure, whether or not Vyashti should completely sacrifice its own will, its own happiness for Samashti—are the perennial problems before every society. Society everywhere is busy finding the solution of these problems. These, like big waves, are agitating

modern Western society. The doctrine which demands the sacrifice of individual freedom to social supremacy is called socialism, while that which advocates the cause of the individual is called individualism. (4:488)

2. What is the positive side of democracy?

In the West, society always had freedom, and look at them. ... Liberty is the first condition of growth. (4:367)

We want that energy, that love of independence, that spirit of self-reliance, that immovable fortitude, that dexterity in action, that bond of unity of purpose, that thirst for improvement. (4:404)

3. What are the defects with democracy?

In Europe, it is everywhere victory to the strong and death to the weak. (5:537)

On one side, rank materialism, plenitude of fortune, accumulation of gigantic power, and intense sense-pursuits have, through foreign literature, caused a tremendous stir; ... celestial drinks, costly well-served food, splendid apparel, magnificent palaces, new modes of conveyance, new manners, new fashions dressed in which moves about the well-educated girl in

shameless freedom — all these are arousing unfelt desires. ... Of the West, the goal is individual independence, the language money-making education, the means, politics; ... (4:476)

... That class of people who, in the name of politics, rob others and fatten themselves by sucking the very life-blood of the masses in all European countries. If you ever saw ... that shocking sight behind the scene of acting of these politicians — that revelry of bribery, that robbery in broad daylight, that dance of the Devil in man, which are practised on such occasions — you would be hopeless about man! ... They that have money have kept the government of the land under their thumb, are robbing the people and sending them as soldiers to fight and be slain on foreign shores, so that, in case of victory, their coffers may be full of gold bought by the blood of the subject-people on the field of battle. And the subject-people? Well, theirs is only to shed their blood. This is politics! Don't be startled, ... don't be lost in its mazes. (5:461-62)

The Western world is governed by a handful of Shylocks. All those things that you hear about — constitutional government, freedom, liberty, and parliaments — are but jokes. (3:158)

4. What is good with socialism?

The good point is that men can do one or two things well with very little effort, having practised them every day through generations. (4:489)

Its advantages will be the distribution of physical comforts ... There will be a great distribution of ordinary education ... (6:381)

[The society runs smoothly. See 4:488-89]

5. What is the negative side of socialism?

But all these things are done by people guided like lifeless machines. There is no mental activity, no unfoldment of the heart, no vibration of life, no flux of hope; there is no strong stimulation of the will, no experience of keen pleasure, nor the contact of intense sorrow; there is no stir of inventive genius, no desire for novelty, no appreciation of new things. Clouds never pass away from this mind, the radiant picture of the morning sun never charms this heart. It never even occurs to this mind if there is any better state than this; where it does, it cannot convince; in the event of conviction, effort is lacking; and even where there is effort, lack of enthusiasm kills it out.

If living by rule alone ensures excellence, if it be virtue to follow strictly the rules and customs

handed down through generations, say then, who is more virtuous than a tree, who is a greater devotee, a holier saint, than a railway train? Who has ever seen a piece of stone transgress a natural law? Who has ever known cattle to commit sin?

The huge steamer, the mighty railway engine—they are non-intelligent; they move, turn, and run, but they are without intelligence. And yonder tiny worm which moved away from the railway line to save its life, why is it intelligent? There is no manifestation of will in the machine, the machine never wishes to transgress law; the worm wants to oppose law—rises against law whether it succeeds or not; therefore it is intelligent. Greater is the happiness, higher is the Jiva, in proportion as this will is more successfully manifest. (4:489-90)

6. Was Swamiji a socialist?

I am a socialist not because I think it is a perfect system, but half a loaf is better than no bread. (6:381)

7. If socialism is half-a-loaf, what then are the suggestions?

This is the work which tends towards sameness, towards unity, without destroying variety. (1:435)

If it is possible to form a state in which the knowledge of the priest period, the culture of the military, the distributive spirit of the commercial, and the ideal of equality of the last can all be kept intact, minus their evils, it will be an ideal state. (6:381)

8. Should a country be guided by a group of benevolent leaders as we find in the socialist states, or should the people elect the leaders by casting vote?

Even if the kings be of as godlike nature as that of Yudhishtira, Ramachandra, Dharma-shoka, or Akbar, under whose benign rule the people enjoyed safety and prosperity, and were looked after with paternal care by their rulers, the hand of him who is always fed by another gradually loses the power of taking the food to his mouth. His power of self-preservation can never become fully manifest who is always protected in every respect by another. Even the strongest youth remains but a child if he is always looked after as a child by his parents. Being always governed by kings of godlike nature, to whom is left the whole duty of protecting and providing for the people, they can never get any occasion for understanding the principles of self-government. Such a nation, being entirely

dependent on the king for everything and never caring to exert itself for the common good or for self-defence, becomes gradually destitute of inherent energy and strength. If this state of dependence and protection continues long, it becomes the cause of the destruction of the nation, and its ruin is not far to seek. (4:441)

I refer repeatedly to election, accounts, and discussion so that everybody may be prepared to shoulder the work. If one man dies, another — why another only, ten if necessary — should be ready to take it up. Secondly, if a man's interest in a thing is not roused, he will not work whole-heartedly; all should be made to understand that everyone has a share in the work and property, and a voice in the management. (8:456)

9. What should be the objective of economic planning — raising the per capita income, GNP, etc. ?

Remember that the nation lives in the cottage. ... the fate of a nation [depends] upon the *condition of the masses*. Can you raise them? ... This is to be done and *we will do it*. (5:29-30)

[According to Swamiji, plan should be aimed at the development of the lower strata of the people. Mere increase in per capita income or

GNP will not help the people at large if a handful of them enjoy the wealth. This is warned by Swamiji in the next saying.]

Indian labour and produce can support five times as many people as there are now in India with comfort, if the whole thing is not taken off from them. (8:476)

[Self-reliance]

All the wealth of the world cannot help one little Indian village if the people are not taught to help themselves. (7:507-8)

The Japanese seem now to have fully awakened themselves to the necessity of the present times. They have now a thoroughly organized army equipped with guns which one of their own officers has invented and which is said to be second to none. Then, they are continually increasing their navy. I have seen a tunnel nearly a mile long, bored by a Japanese engineer.

The match factories are simply a sight to see, and they are bent upon making everything they want in their own country. There is a Japanese line of steamers plying between China and Japan, which shortly intends running between Bombay and Yokohama. (5:9)

10. What should be the priorities for economic planning ?

I consider that the great national sin is the neglect of the masses, and that is one of the causes of our downfall. No amount of politics would be of any avail until the masses in India are once more well educated, well fed, and well cared for. (5:222-23)

What we need ... is to study, independent of foreign control, different branches of the knowledge that is our own, and with it the English language and Western science; we need technical education and all else that may develop industries so that men, instead of seeking for service, may earn enough to provide for themselves, and save something against a rainy day. (5:368-69)

Open your eyes and see what a piteous cry for food is rising in the land of Bharata, proverbial for its wealth! Will your education fulfil this want? Never. With the help of Western science set yourselves to dig the earth and produce food-stuffs — not by means of mean servitude of others — but by discovering new avenues to production, by your own exertions aided by Western science. (7:182-83)

In this fertile country with abundant water-supply, where nature produces wealth and harvest a thousand times more than in others, you have no food for your stomach, no clothes to

cover your body! In this country of abundance, the produce of which has been the cause of the spread of civilization in other countries, you are reduced to such straits! Your condition is even worse than that of a dog. And you glory in your Vedas and Vedanta! A nation that cannot provide for its simple food and clothing, which always depends on others for its subsistence — what is there for it to vaunt about? ... be first prepared for the struggle for existence. People of foreign countries are turning out such golden results from the raw materials produced in your country, and you, like asses of burden, are only carrying their load. The people of foreign countries import Indian raw goods, manufacture various commodities by bringing their intelligence to bear upon them, and become great; whereas you have locked up your intelligence, thrown away your inherited wealth to others, and roam about crying piteously for food. (7:145)

11. What should be the outlook behind the strategy of economic planning?

... educate our people, so that they may be able to solve their own problems. ... The new order of things is the salvation of the people by the people ... (5:215)

All the wealth of the world cannot help one

little Indian village if the people are not taught to help themselves. (7:507-8)

12. What will be the role of religion in the new system of society ?

... the basis of all systems, social or political, rests upon the goodness of men. No nation is great or good because Parliament enacts this or that, but because its men are great and good. ... Christ saw that the basis is not law, that morality and purity are the only strength. (5:192-93)

Your spirituality, in a certain sense, will have to form the basis of the new order of society. (3:161)

At the same time we must not forget that what I mean by the conquest of the world by spiritual thought is the sending out of the life-giving principles, not the hundreds of superstitions that we have been hugging to our breasts for centuries. ... In our sight, here in India, there are several dangers. Of these, the two, Scylla and Charybdis, rank materialism and its opposite arrant superstition, must be avoided. (3:277-78)

We can teach the world only what it is waiting for. The whole of Western civilization will crumble to pieces in the next fifty years if there is no spiritual foundation. It is hopeless and

perfectly useless to attempt to govern mankind with the sword. ...

Apart from the different sects, philosophies, and scriptures, there is one underlying doctrine—the belief in the soul of man, the Atman—common to all our sects; and that can change the whole tendency of the world. (3:159)

All the social upheavalists, at least the leaders of them, are trying to find that all their communistic or equalizing theories must have a spiritual basis, and that spiritual basis is in the Vedanta only. I have been told by several leaders, who used to attend my lectures, that they required the Vedanta as the basis of the new order of things. (5:212-13)

13. The basis of all systems rests upon the goodness of men. Please cite an illustration to explain this idea.

‘What is the key to Japan’s sudden greatness?’

‘The faith of the Japanese in themselves, and their love for their country. When you have men who are ready to sacrifice their everything for their country, sincere to the backbone—when such men arise, India will become great in every respect. It is the men that make the country! What is there in the country? If you catch the social morality and the political morality of the

Japanese, you will be as great as they are. The Japanese are ready to sacrifice everything for their country, and they have become a great people. ...' (5:210)

No nation, not Greek or another, has ever carried patriotism so far as the Japanese. They don't talk, they act—give up all for country. There are noblemen now living in Japan as peasants, having given up their principedoms without a word to create the unity of the empire. And not one traitor could be found in the Japanese war. Think of that! (*The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita*, Vol. 1, 1982, p. 342)

There, in Japan, you find a fine assimilation of knowledge, and not its indigestion, as we have here. They have taken everything from the Europeans, but they remain Japanese all the same, and have not turned European; while in our country, the terrible mania of becoming Westernized has seized upon us like a plague. (5:372)

The world has never seen such a patriotic and artistic race as the Japanese, and one special feature about them is this that while in Europe and elsewhere Art generally goes with dirt, Japanese Art is Art *plus* absolute cleanliness. I would wish that every one of our young men could visit Japan once at least in his lifetime. (5:209)

VI

REVOLUTION FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

1. What sort of social change is needed?

Most of the reforms that have been agitated for during the past century have been ornamental. Every one of these reforms only touches the first two castes, and no other. The question of widow marriage would not touch seventy per cent of the Indian women, and all such questions only reach the higher castes of Indian people who are educated, mark you, at the expense of the masses. Every effort has been spent in cleaning their own houses. But that is no

reformation. You must go down to the basis of the thing, to the very root of the matter. That is what I call radical reform. (3:216)

2. Revolution — for whom?

Remember that the nation lives in the cottage. ... the fate of a nation ... [depends] upon the *condition of the masses*. Can you raise them? Can you give them back their lost individuality without making them lose their innate spiritual nature? (5:29)

... where are they through whose physical labour only are possible the influence of the Brahmin, the prowess of the Kshatriya, and the fortune of the Vaishya? What is their history, who, being the real body of society, are designated at all times in all countries as 'base-born'? ... the Shudras, what is their lot in life? (4:466-67)

3. Who will launch and lead the revolution?

The new order of things is the salvation of the people by the people ... (5:215)

My faith is in the younger generation, the modern generation, out of them will come my workers. They will work out the whole problem, like lions. I have formulated the idea and have

given my life to it. If I do not achieve success, some better one will come after me to work it out, and I shall be content to struggle. The one problem you have is to give to the masses their rights. ... Our masses are gods as compared with those of other countries. ... they have lost faith in themselves. They think they are born slaves. Give them their rights, and let them stand on their rights. (5:223-24)

It is the young men that will do it. 'The young, the energetic, the strong, the well-built, the intellectual' — for them is the task. (3:318)

You, young men ... do not look up to the rich and great men who have money. The poor did all the great and gigantic work of the world. You, poor men ... , come up, you can do everything, and you must do everything. Many will follow your example, poor though you are. Be steady, and, above all, be pure and sincere to the backbone. Have faith in your destiny. You, young men ... , [you] are to work out the salvation of India. Mark that, whether you believe it or not, do not think that it will be done today or tomorrow. I believe in it as I believe in my own body and my own soul. Therefore my heart goes to you — young men ... It depends upon you who have no money; because you are poor, therefore you will work. Because you have nothing, therefore you will be sincere. Because you are

sincere, you will be ready to renounce all. That is what I am just now telling you. Once more I repeat this to you. This is your mission in life, this is my mission in life. (3:445)

4. What should be the initial step?

Here in India, we have always been governed by kings; kings have made all our laws. Now the kings are gone, and there is no one left to make a move. The government dare not; it has to fashion its ways according to the growth of public opinion. It takes time, quite a long time, to make a healthy, strong, public opinion which will solve its own problems; and in the interim we shall have to wait. The whole problem of social reform, therefore, resolves itself into this: where are those who want reform? Make them first. Where are the people? The tyranny of a minority is the worst tyranny that the world ever sees. A few men who think that certain things are evil will not make a nation move. Why does not the nation move? First educate the nation, create your legislative body, and then the law will be forthcoming. First create the power, the sanction from which the law will spring. The kings are gone; where is the new sanction, the new power of the people? Bring it up. Therefore, even for social reform, the first duty is to educate

the people, and you will have to wait till that time comes. (3:215-16)

The power of the populace is struggling to express itself in indirect and disorderly ways, without any method. The people have not as yet the conscious knowledge of the existence of this power. There is neither the attempt on their part to organize it into a united action, nor have they got the will to do so; there is also a complete absence of that capacity, that skill, by means of which small and incoherent centres of force are united together, creating insuperable strength as their resultant. (4:440)

There has been enough of criticism, there has been enough of fault-finding, the time has come for the rebuilding, the reconstructing; the time has come for us to gather all our scattered forces, to concentrate them into one focus, and through that, to lead the nation on its onward march, which for centuries almost has been stopped. (3:367)

Teach some boys and girls of the peasant classes the rudiments of learning and infuse a number of ideas into their brains. Afterwards the peasants of each village will collect funds and have one of these in their village. 'उद्धरेदात्मनात्मानम्'—one must raise oneself by one's own exertions—this holds good in all spheres. We help them to help themselves. That

they are supplying you with your daily bread is a real bit of work done. The moment they will come to understand their own condition and feel the necessity of help and improvement, know that your work is taking effect and is in the right direction ... Then leave the peasants and labourers to look to their own problem, to grapple with and solve it. (6:427-28)

My whole ambition in life is to set in motion a machinery which will bring noble ideas to the door of everybody, and then let men and women settle their own fate. Let them know what our forefathers as well as other nations have thought on the most momentous questions of life. Let them see specially what others are doing now, and then decide. We are to put the chemicals together, the crystallization will be done by nature according to her laws. (5:29)

5. When does revolution take place ?

Wisdom, knowledge, wealth, men, strength, prowess, and whatever else nature gathers and provides us with, are all only for diffusion, when the moment of need is at hand. We often forget this fact, put the stamp of '*mine only*' upon the entrusted deposits, and *pari passu*, we sow the seed of our own ruin!

... Hence oppression steps into the place of protection—sucking their blood in place of

preservation. If the society is weak and debilitated, it silently suffers all ill-treatment at the hands of the king, and as the natural consequence, both the king and his people go down and down and fall into the most degraded state, and thus become an easy prey to any nation stronger than themselves. Where the society is healthy and strong, there soon follows a fierce contest between the king and his subjects, and, by its reaction and convulsion, are flung away the sceptre and the crown; and the throne and the royal paraphernalia become like past curiosities preserved in the museum galleries. (4:464-65)

Though themselves the reservoir of all powers, the subject masses, creating an eternal distance between one another, have been deprived of all their legitimate rights; and they will remain so as long as this sort of relation continues.

A common danger, or sometimes a common cause of hatred or love, is the bond that binds people together. (4:471)

6. Should the social change be violent or peaceful?

Strength is the medicine which the poor must have when tyrannized over by the rich. (2:201)

The lower classes are gradually awakening to this fact and making a united front against this,

determined to exact their legitimate dues. The masses of Europe and America have been the first to awaken and have already begun the fight. Signs of this awakening have shown themselves in India, too, as is evident from the number of strikes among the lower classes nowadays. The upper classes will no longer be able to repress the lower, try they ever so much. The well-being of the higher classes now lies in helping the lower to get their legitimate rights.

Therefore I say, set yourselves to the task of spreading education among the masses. Tell them and make them understand, 'You are our brothers — a part and parcel of our bodies, and we love you and never hate you. If they receive this sympathy from you, their enthusiasm for work will be increased a hundredfold. Kindle their knowledge with the help of modern science. Teach them history, geography, science, literature, and along with these the profound truths of religion. In exchange for that teaching, the poverty of the teachers will also disappear. By mutual exchange both parties will become friendly to each other. ...

But without that there is no well-being for your upper classes. You will be destroyed by internecine quarrels and fights — which you have been having so long. When the masses will wake up, they will come to understand your

oppression of them, and by a puff of their mouth you will be entirely blown away! It is they who have introduced civilization amongst you; and it is they who will then pull it down. Think how at the hands of the Gauls the mighty ancient Roman civilization crumbled into dust! Therefore I say, try to rouse these lower classes from slumber by imparting learning and culture to them. When they will awaken—and awaken one day they must—they also will not forget your good services to them and will remain grateful to you. (7:149-50)

7. How should the masses be educated for the change?

Teach the masses in the vernaculars, give them ideas; they will get information, but something more is necessary; give them culture. Until you give them that, there can be no permanence in the raised condition of the masses. (3:291)

Especially do I regret that in modern times there should be so much dissension between the castes. This must stop. It is useless on both sides, especially on the side of the higher caste, the Brahmin, because the day for these privileges and exclusive claims is gone. The duty of every aristocracy is to dig its own grave, and the sooner

it does so, the better. The more it delays, the more it will fester and the worse death it will die. It is the duty of the Brahmin, therefore, to work for the salvation of the rest of mankind in India. If he does that, and so long as he does that, he is a Brahmin, but he is no Brahmin when he goes about making money. ...

To the non-Brahmin castes I say, wait, be not in a hurry. Do not seize every opportunity of fighting the Brahmin, because, as I have shown, you are suffering from your own fault. Who told you to neglect spirituality and Sanskrit learning? What have you been doing all this time? Why have you been indifferent? Why do you now fret and fume because somebody else had more brains, more energy, more pluck and go, than you? Instead of wasting your energies in vain discussions and quarrels in the newspapers, instead of fighting and quarrelling in your own homes — which is sinful — use all your energies in acquiring the culture which the Brahmin has, and the thing is done. (3:297- 98)

Being of one mind is the secret of society. And the more you go on fighting and quarrelling about all trivialities such as 'Dravidian' and 'Aryan', and the question of Brahmins and non-Brahmins and all that, the further you are off from that accumulation of energy and power which is going to make the future India. For

mark you, the future India depends entirely upon that. That is the secret — accumulation of will-power, co-ordination, bringing them all, as it were, into one focus. Each Chinaman thinks in his own way, and a handful of Japanese all think in the same way, and you know the result. That is how it goes throughout the history of the world. You find in every case, compact little nations always governing and ruling huge unwieldy nations, and this is natural, because it is easier for the little compact nations to bring their ideas into the same focus, and thus they become developed. And the bigger the nation, the more unwieldy it is. Born, as it were, a disorganized mob, they cannot combine. All these dissensions must stop. (3:299-300)

The problem assumes a twofold aspect, not only spiritualization but assimilation of the various elements of which the nation is composed. The assimilation of different races into one has been the common task in the life of every nation. (4:316)

Men can never be united unless there is a bond of common interest. You can never unite people merely by getting up meetings, societies, and lectures if their interests be not one and the same. Guru Govind made it understood everywhere that the men of his age, be they Hindus or Mussulmans, were living under a regime of

profound injustice and oppression. He did not create any common interest, he only pointed it out to the masses. And so both Hindus and Mussulmans followed him. (6:514-15)

... educate our people, so that they may be able to solve their own problems. Until that is done all these ideal reforms will remain ideals only. (5:215)

Teach some boys and girls of the peasant classes the rudiments of learning and infuse a number of ideas into their brains. Afterwards the peasants of each village will collect funds and have one of these in their village. 'उद्धरेदात्मनात्मानम् — one must raise oneself by one's own exertions' — this holds good in all spheres. We help them to help themselves. That they are supplying you with your daily bread is a real bit of work done. The moment they will come to understand their own condition and feel the necessity of help and improvement, know that your work is taking effect and is in the right direction ... (6:427)

The one problem you have is to give to the masses their rights. ... they have lost faith in themselves. They think they are born slaves. Give them their rights, and let them stand on their rights. (5:223-24)

'Where will it end?'

'It will certainly end in the working out of India's homogeneity, in her acquiring what we may call democratic ideas. Intelligence must not remain the monopoly of the cultured few; it will be disseminated from higher to lower classes. Education is coming, and compulsory education will follow. The immense power of our people for work must be utilized. India's potentialities are great and will be called forth.' (5:199)

Kings having gone, the power is the people's. We have, therefore, to wait till the people are educated, till they understand their needs and are ready and able to solve their problems. (5:215)

'What will you propose for the improvement of our masses?'

'We have to give them secular education. We have to follow the plan laid down by our ancestors, that is, to bring all the ideals slowly down among the masses. Raise them slowly up, raise them to equality. Impart even secular knowledge through religion.' (5:213)

8. How will 'equal rights for all' be established? The rich people may not like to share their wealth with the poor. Have they no right over their wealth?

It is as if a man after forcibly taking possession of another's property cries through the nose

when that man tries to regain it — and preaches the doctrine of the sanctity of human right! (4:358-59)

9. What are the characteristics of a revolutionary?

I believe in patriotism, and I also have my own ideal of patriotism. Three things are necessary for great achievements. First, feel from the heart. What is in the intellect or reason? It goes a few steps and there it stops. But through the heart comes inspiration. Love opens the most impossible gates; love is the gate to all the secrets of the universe. Feel, therefore, my would-be reformers, my would-be patriots! Do you feel? Do you feel that millions and millions of the descendants of gods and of sages have become next-door neighbours to brutes? Do you feel that millions are starving today, and millions have been starving for ages? Do you feel that ignorance has come over the land as a dark cloud? Does it make you restless? Does it make you sleepless? Has it gone into your blood, coursing through your veins, becoming consonant with your heartbeats? Has it made you almost mad? Are you seized with that one idea of the misery of ruin, and have you forgotten all about your name, your fame, your wives, your

children, your property, even your own bodies? Have you done that? That is the first step to become a patriot, the very first step. I did not go to America, as most of you know, for the Parliament of Religions, but this demon of a feeling was in me and within my soul. I travelled twelve years all over India, finding no way to work for my countrymen, and that is why I went to America. Most of you know that, who knew me then. Who cared about this Parliament of Religions? Here was my own flesh and blood sinking every day, and who cared for them? This was my first step.

You may feel, then; but instead of spending your energies in frothy talk, have you found any way out, any practical solution, some help instead of condemnation, some sweet words to soothe their miseries, to bring them out of this living death?

Yet that is not all. Have you got the will to surmount mountain-high obstructions? If the whole world stands against you, sword in hand, would you still dare to do what you think is right? If your wives and children are against you, if all your money goes, your name dies, your wealth vanishes, would you still stick to it? Would you still pursue it and go on steadily towards your own goal? As the great King Bhartrihari says, 'Let the sages blame or let them praise; let the

goddess of fortune come or let her go wherever she likes; let death come today, or let it come in hundreds of years; he indeed is the steady man who does not move one inch from the way of truth.' Have you got that steadfastness? If you have these three things, each one of you will work miracles. (3:225-26)

10. Is revolution a time-bound job or should it go on always?

An objective heaven or millennium therefore has existence only in the fancy — but a subjective one is already in existence. The musk-deer, after vain search for the cause of the scent of the musk, at last will have to find it in himself.

Objective society will always be a mixture of good and evil — objective life will always be followed by its shadow, death, and the longer the life, the longer will also be the shadow. ... In objective life, however, every bullet has its billet — evil goes with every good as its shadow. Every improvement is coupled with an equal degradation. ...

The other great mistake we often make is that good is taken as an ever-increasing item, whilst evil is a fixed quantity. From this it is argued that evil being diminished every day, there will come a time when good alone will remain. The fallacy lies in the assumption of a false premiss. (6:379)

Two forces seem to be working throughout nature. One of these is constantly differentiating, and the other is as constantly unifying; the one making more and more for separate individuals, the other, as it were, bringing the individuals into a mass, bringing out sameness in the midst of all this differentiation. ... Since the time when society began, these two forces have been at work, differentiating and unifying. Their action appears in various forms, and is called by various names, in different places, and at different times. (1:430)

From the days of the Upanishads, the Buddhas, and Christs, and all other great preachers of religion, down to our present day, in the new political aspirations, and in the claims of the oppressed and the downtrodden, and of all those who find themselves bereft of privileges—comes out the one assertion of this unity and sameness. (1:431)

The whole universe is a play of unity in variety, and of variety in unity. The whole universe is a play of differentiation and oneness; the whole universe is a play of the finite in the Infinite. (1:433)

But what can be attained is elimination of privilege. That is really the work before the whole world. In all social lives, there has been that one fight in every race and in every country.

The difficulty is not that one body of men are naturally more intelligent than another, but whether this body of men, because they have the advantage of intelligence, should take away even physical enjoyment from those who do not possess that advantage. The fight is to destroy that privilege. (1:435)

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