in action it is the expense of the spirit in a waste of shame. It is all a realization of the sad refrain:

Enjoy’d no sooner but despised straight;
Past reason hunted; and no sooner had,
Past reason hated...

The Hindu felt this paradox no less than the Elizabethan, perhaps he felt it even more strongly, with greater fear. Yet his method of dealing with it was different not only from the post-Renaissance European’s, but also the ancient Greek’s. There is a passage in Plato, in which he gives an example of release from the sexual desire, that tyrant which is homicidal and suicidal at the same time. Cephalus is reported to have asked Sophocles in old age whether he still sought the pleasures of intercourse and was capable of it. Hush, replied the poet, my greatest joy is to have escaped from that fierce and savage master.

No Hindu would have called that joy. In his revulsion from sexual enjoyment he was capable of some very tortured psychological and physiological acrobatics, but to have complete freedom was the last thing he cared for, because to give up lust was for him to turn his back on life itself. So, even when he abandoned the world, his abnegation did not exclude an insidious and disguised lust. A peeping, pricking, tormenting naughty little thing had to keep up even the sadhu’s faith in spirituality.

The Hindu in the world would have none of this subterfuge, he would hold fast to lust openly, and would keep it enjoyable. So, when he saw that it would head inevitably for senility and exhaustion if left to itself, he tried, with a sure instinct for life so long as he had it, to keep lust fresh and strong by idealizing the woman’s part in it. It was like old David taking Abishag the Shunammite to his bosom. Woman is the eternal Abishag of ancient Hindu lust.

That accounts for the extraordinary fascination, amounting almost to infatuation, that the ancient
Hindus felt for coitus in the reversed position, i.e. with the woman as active partner, which they called *purushayita* or *vaparita rati*. All Sanskrit erotic poetry is full of the theme, and dwells on it with an amazing zest and tenderness. In this the Hindus stand in utter contrast to the Muslims. The latter attributed the most shameless and assertive lust to women, yet in Muslim erotic writings there is hardly any emphasizing or even reference to this role. The popular Muslim belief is that if conception takes place in this position the child is born squint-eyed. But the Muslim certainly was not deterred by this fear. In any case, squints are not more common among the Hindus than among the Muslims. To my thinking, the Muslim aversion came from a more fundamental source, a specific concept of virility. He must have felt that he had to ride and control the wild lust he attributed to his womenfolk just as he took pride in breaking his wild Arab horses. He could not allow the instrument of his pleasure to become its mistress, which for him would have been like being thrown off his mount.

The Hindus, on the other hand, were frightened by the idea of naked lust in women, and even when they knew that it existed up to a point, they tried desperately to turn the blind eye to it. Furthermore, they actually looked up to the woman to rescue their lust from its creeping paralysis. Therefore they would beg the woman’s desire as a favour, with grace and humility. There was in this Hindu begging something of the gallantry of the knight kneeling at the feet of his lady-love. Even when in the eighteenth century the old Hindu erotic tradition had become coarsened, a Bengali poet in a very famous poem made out of the pleading, a witty and tender argument between a prince and a princess.

But it should also be obvious that the Hindu man’s clinging dependence on the woman imposed too great a burden on her, and in the end it proved too heavy. In Sanskrit literature the fatigue of coitus is an ever-present
accompaniment to the feminine existence, sometimes as painful as travail, and in any case more continuous. Nevertheless, in the earlier ages, when chivalry and tenderness had not died in the Hindu, the burden was not as crushing as it finally became. It only charged things quotidian with the heaviness of para-erotic languor, and changed the day almost into a penumbra of the night. I might add that even now it is not easy to rouse young Hindu married women to any kind of liveliness in the morning; it is a listless waking for them until they sink into their siesta. They want to sleep as long as they can, and like the great cats are stirred to full animation only with the keen winds and falling shades of the evening.

But as time passed and the relentless climate wore away the capacity for delicate enjoyment among the Hindus, the strain on the women became worse and worse, and they were almost driven against the wall. The pain and fatigue became a constant smart, and the para-erotic languour was transformed into para-erotic smouldering. This curious transformation had, of course, its prototype in personal life. In fact, the evolution of the collective sexual life of the Hindus may be said to have reproduced the course of sexual life of an individual couple.

This is quite circumstantially described in Sanskrit literature. Hindu ethics and chivalry in regard to sexual intercourse made it obligatory for a husband to be extremely considerate to the young wife, who, of course, in that age was never an unresponsive child wife, and also to be respectful of her physical and mental delicacy. For instance, she was to be gradually reconciled to exposure. A bashful young wife would throw a handful of incense into the lamp and put it out, filling the room with the fragrance of her passion but extinguishing its light. Scratching and biting, which are almost as instinctive and severe in Hindu sexual intercourse as they are in the feline, had therefore to be completely eschewed
at the beginning. So, Kalidasa relates that when Parvati was newly married to Siva he spared her these, and Parvati’s mother felt infinitely happy to see her daughter beaming from the joy of scratchless and biteless coitus. But as married life advanced, sensibility declined and violence increased. This personal trend was recapitulated in collective life.

The later strain on the women may be said to be epitomized in one aspect of the regimen the women had to follow: namely, assuaging the physical pain of the violent caresses. (Another proof of the foolishness of those who say or believe that the Hindus practise Gandhian non-violence.) They massaged each other, rubbing the wounds with nard and oil.* Virtually, the whole day was spent in trying to recuperate from the previous night for the coming night, and even so by sunset there was only half-recuperation, because they were not made of stone.

In trying to relieve the physical pain they brought on a different kind of ache. As they saw their wounds they were again roused, and even when they were too tired to be psychologically stirred they were physiologically excited. So, seeing the relentless fury always treading on their heels, they fell on each other’s shoulder, and cried:

‘If thou wilt ease thine heart
Of lust and all its smart,
Then sleep, dear, sleep...’

‘Yes, yes,’ the other would sob:

‘But wilt thou cure thine heart
Of lust and all its smart,
Then die, dear, die.’

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* I have before me a bottle of Yardley’s lavender and a little home-made nard (nulada in Sanskrit), prepared from the fibrous roots of the Himalayan plant Nardostachys jatamansi. If human passions could be said to have their equivalents in smell, the one as truly wafts the fragrance of European love (pre-decadence), as the other does of the Hindu (equally pre-decadence).

—Amor sacro e Amor profano, both carnal though.
But sleep was not to be commanded, and life was too high a price to pay even for release from lust. So these women sat like Baudelaire’s damned women:

Comme un bétail pensif sur le sable couchées,
Elles tournent leurs yeux vers l’horizon des mers,
Et leurs pieds se cherchant et leurs mains rapprochées
Ont de douces langeurs et des frissons amers.

Seeing them thus, do you not, reader, feel like saying to them as I do?

Vous que dans votre enfer mon âme a poursuivies,
Pauvres sœurs, je vous aime autant que je vous plains,
Pour vos mornes douleurs, vos soifs inassouvies,
Et les urnes d’amour dont vos grands cœurs sont pleins!

The Hindu, by killing the woman’s response also killed the woman’s mercy, and his sexual life took a new turn. Anyone in his position, living in a world where the natural affections had not been withered by a cruel climate and the suffering inflicted by it, would have tried in bitter remorse. Not so the Hindu.

In the first place, he did not understand what it was that was making an extremist of him by steadily attenuating his sensibility. Still less was he able to see that the remedy for the growing insensibility was not to increase the dosage of pleasure but to reduce it. So, he pushed on, as a dipsomaniac goes from wine to spirits, from spirits to a mixture of spirits and opinion, and finally even to methylated spirit.

Next, he turned into an impossible egotist and forgot that a man gets from fellow men, women, and life itself, not what he demands, but only a part of what he himself is ready to give in the way of love. ‘From every man according to his capacity and to every man according to his need’ is not a promise which was ever held out by the God of Love, and let us be thankful for that. But the Hindu, baulked in his sensual appetite and brooding on
his deprivation, became capable of any selfishness. Driven by a sense of injury, he drifted into a current of anti-romance in sexual life. This in the end was to carry him to the Stygian pools.

The anti-romantic movement may be regarded as the third stage of the sexual life of the Hindus. But before describing it I should like to say a few words about what some at least of the women had to show when attacked by the self-seeking lust of their menfolk. It would be a mistake to think that all Hindu women acquiesced in the torture inflicted on them. Some took their revenge and sold their bodies dear, indeed far dearer than the most rapacious harpy in a brothel. If I were to speak about the price they extracted it would send a shiver through those who are given to deploring what man has made of man.

I must explain, however, that I have no evidence for this from ancient times, except some hints that the moneyless husband’s was a hard lot. It is only the later Hindu moralists, especially the great popular preachers, who first gave a clear indication that the whip hand was passing from the man to the woman. I am not sure where I read it, to my recollection it is in Tulsidas, but the saying at all events is there, and it is a terrifying saying: ‘The charmer of the night is the tigress of the day, and yet every home has its pet tigress.’

The moralists must already have seen something like what I have been observing in Hindu married life since my boyhood. It would be grossly unfair to the women as well as to Hindu society to say that this state of affairs was or is general, but still it was and is widespread enough to constitute a serious moral situation. Whatever may have happened in Eden, here in any case women did bring about the fall of man. Let me set down only the main counts of the degradation.

First, after a certain age an extraordinary heartlessness began to appear in married life, which seems all the more extraordinary when one recalls the affection between a
Hindu man and wife in ancient times. I was hardly twelve years old when my brother came to me one day with Palgrave’s *Children’s Treasury of Lyrical Poetry* and read out ‘John Anderson, my jo, John . . .’ by Burns. Reciting and hearing it we nearly split with laughing, for we took it as a humorous poem. Its mellow tenderness was bound to escape us, for in our society whenever we saw a wife-conscious elderly man we asked in a malicious and gleeful undertone if she was the ‘second party’ (*dvitiya*), and felt more delighted if somebody informed us that she was really the third (*tritiya paksha*). It was considered most unbecoming, if not actually indecorous, to keep a corner for even a faded wraith of affection towards the wife of youth in the wrong half of married life.

In fact, the situation was much more *brutal* in the French sense. Even as a boy I could detect in ageing women, who had not been released from the mood by widowhood, not only indifference to the life’s partner, but almost passive hatred. The women threw about taunts, slighting remarks, and even darker innuendoes not fully understood by us when speaking of their husbands. Had we not been quite used to this kind of talk we should have been shocked. Yet in their nightly bed the two, who felt almost a loathing for each other, would oblige the respective bodies from the prickings of the most desiccated lust, and hate each other all the more for it. Throughout married life the drying up of the lust without its atrophy, and the growth of the repulsion marched step in step.

Secondly, no overseer in a galley could be more ruthless in making the wretched slaves row than these women were in prodding their husbands to earn money. The relentless sharpness of the tongues always lashed the unemployed husbands, and the home was no place for them. They trudged all day long in search of employment, and felt happy to think that they had still one recreation left. But the overseer’s whip was not hung up when after securing employment they began to
earn. They were expected to earn more and more, and most emphatically they were not encouraged to think that the money earned, or that even a part of it was theirs. Hindu society never arrived at the financial agreement that is usual between husbands and wives in the West. Among us financial power is concentrated, and so it is either wholly in the woman’s hand or in the man’s. In the homes of the salaried class the woman is normally the controller, and the higher the salary the more absolute is the control.

But economic servitude, of which so much is made in these days except when it is the husband’s, is not the worst conceivable degradation for a modern Hindu husband. The moral degradation was and is infinitely worse. Very early in married life the wife begins to trample on all the ideals and idealistic activities of the husband, and his books, more especially, are looked upon as if they were so many mothers-in-law. Every delicate sensibility is pricked into a wound and kept festering.

Last of all, any generous impulse or kindliness in a husband is considered almost as a sin against the marriage vow. He is not to help a mother, brother, or sister in distress, and the more capable he is to help the less will he be allowed to do so. Before he decides to send money to a needy relative, the man has to brace himself up to meet a she-bear deprived of her whelps. So those who cannot wholly forget that blood is thicker than water or law, often take recourse to tortuous subterfuges to help their relatives. I often notice a sort of besotted torpor on the faces of elderly Hindus who are doing well in life. At one time I attributed it wholly to the knout of the domestic Tartar, but now I think that it is partly due to the curses of unhappy mothers, brothers, and sisters.

When my feelings were still insufficiently trained, and when my irritation at particular experiences had not merged in a general sense of the tragedy of our people, I used to say impatiently that there were few among
my friends and acquaintances who had not been degraded by their wives. I no longer do so, because I can see that the wives who suffer in mute despair form the majority of the women. I would even put in a word for the women who give the painful impression of sordidness I have described. Though they seem to have a perverse determination to make their fight mercenary and would appear even to be ashamed to admit any other motive, actually they are driven not so much by avarice as revengefulness. Unable to protect themselves in their bodies, they assert their power in a different way.

Let me, however, revert to the story of the sexual life of the Hindus in ancient times. In the golden age of his civilization the Hindu adored and worshipped the naked body of his sweetheart as we today, standing before a Giorgione, Tintoretto, or Titian, worship and adore their nudes in every curve and swell, though with less personal interest. However, in the Hindu experience there was another important difference besides the absence of detachment: the soft flesh suddenly stepped down from the canvas of that open and veracious world, itself surrendered, and exacted surrender from the man, in such a clasp as sent a stream of hot lust coursing through the blood; yes, lust—but so transformed by its own fire that no Hindu felt ashamed to recall it even when he held the body of his dead love in an agonized embrace before she was torn away from him to be burnt on a pyre.

This Hindu lust was to die, it died, and the greatest poet of ancient India, in his famous lamentation of the goddess Rati for her dead husband, seems to have written an elegy not on the death of a lover only, but of Hindu lust itself:

Gata eva na te nivartate, sa sakha
dipa iva-nilahataḥ;
Ahām’asya das’eva pasya,
mam’avisahya-vyasanena dhūmitam!
He is gone, gone from you, not to return—
that friend, even as a lamp by gusts blown out;
See me like him, my plight is just the same—
smoking, burning, in unendurable pain.

But a vacuum is impossible to maintain and therefore, when he became incapable of experiencing lust in its old ennobling intensity, the Hindu stooped to amorous adventures of the kind sought, not even by Don Juan, but by Casanova. No doubt that too was vie amoureuse, but of a rottenness which could not be masked by the mincing preciosity of the words.

I have my images for the sexual life of the Hindus and its successive phases. Down to the epic age from the Vedic, we see an honest wood-fire, crackling, leaping, blazing: very homely, and yet redolent with the smell of burning pine logs. But in the age which followed, that of classical Hindu attitudes, a benevolent but erratic daemon threw a handful of magnesium into that yellow fire, to change the flames into a dazzling, blinding, and cascading mass of white light. Then it went out, and what was left behind were beds of dirty red cinders, smouldering and hissing, and there clung to them an obstinate odour of burnt flesh and hair which always lingers in the atmosphere of our burning ghats or crematoriums, which, of course, are open. It was a world of death, in which fire itself was death. An adventure which had started as an act of generation was ending as an act of dying.

In the anti-romantic or rather realistic phase of Hindu sexual life the first expedient to be adopted for keeping enjoyment alive was the variation of object, a step quite natural in those who lose the capacity to renovate it from the springs of life. In ancient India there were two institutions within which a man could satisfy his desire for variety in sexual matters without straying out of the four corners of respectability. These were polygamy and prostitution. Each was a sure standby. But their very dependability made them slightly insipid. In addi-
tion, both had positive disadvantages. Two or more wives meant so many more tyrants, and their rivalries and quarrels more than cancelled the gain in diversity. There is a well-known Bengali story in which the emulation between the two wives of an old man is illustrated by a vivid example: the elder wife plucked out two black hairs for every white one pulled out by the favourite younger one.

As to the prostitutes, whom in deference to their position and prestige in ancient India I should call courtesans, they were formidable persons, besides being expensive. Some were so majestic that to have a liaison with any of them was like being a lover of the imperious Virgin Queen or Empress Catherine the Great, and having to pay for it into the bargain.

Thus, in their different ways, the wives as well as the courtesans were far too institutional for those who sought adventure and piquancy. Naturally, the choice came to be restricted to one—the neighbour’s wife or parakiya, ‘belonging to the other fellow’, as she was called in Sanskrit. Behind her, on the lower bed—if I might coin a parallel to the phrase ‘lower table’—were the ‘ancilla-cohort’, maid-servants and working women of all sorts who were always available for incidental novelty. The devotion to the handmaiden, as everybody knows, existed at the time of Agamemnon. It certainly did so even before him, as it has also continued down the ages. In addition to these, the neighbour’s daughter was sometimes aimed at, but ancient Hindu society had its scruples in this respect and such adventures had to end in matrimony, which rather dampened the enthusiasm of those who were out for adventure only.

The gay dogs had to be on the look-out for an accessible person—the sadhya, as she was elegantly described in Sanskrit, which meant exactly what the English word ‘practicable’ does. The amateur of intrigues was called upon to develop le sens du praticable as thoroughly as any military commander. He observed the signs keenly.
of these, a mild one, was the frequent appearance of a woman at the window. A more positive one was to be noted if a girl took a flower from her hair and threw it at a pair of billing-and-cooing pigeons. A third and rather conclusive sign was recognized when in the course of a ramble in a wood or park a man noticed his companion look innocently but fixedly into the water of a clear pool, and, following her gaze, saw a frog-couple in tight embrace. There was a whole cue-sheet of similar indications, and it was by these that a man had to feel his way forward cautiously and intelligently.

The lover pursued his quest at two levels—that of an ‘affair’ and of an ‘incident’. Now, those who have read Boswell’s *London Journal* will recall that the scamp was on the look-out for an affair just after coming to London, but for some time had to make shift with incidents, which were frankly recognized as coarse even by him. The Hindu, on the other hand, preferred incidents to affairs, especially if the latter had to be sustained to the point of boredom. So, the maidservant sent with a letter of assignation often came back in such a condition that the lady in question could plainly see that her lover had inverted the proverb into ‘Like mistress, like maid’. But she always had the good sense to remain satisfied with giving a sound rating to the maid, and shrugging her shoulders at the real offender. It was a world in which ‘cheat’, ‘liar’, ‘hypocrite’, or ‘rogue’ had become terms of endearment for a lover. The Western reader will be reminded by all this of the society of Ovid or of the Restoration comedy. But the Hindu world was much more light-hearted.

That might be called its saving grace. There was no loophole whatever in it for tragedy, no question of any betrayal of innocence. There was no need in it for any lovely woman to die after stooping to folly, in order to make the lover repent. Everybody concerned understood the game, knew its rules, and played it fairly. In it defeat and victory were taken with grace, in a sportsmanlike spirit. This was having the satisfaction of seeing that wild
beast, lust, put in a zoo like Whipsnade, and the old Hindu order was too blasé, too weary, and too worldly to mind a little unavoidable sexual subpromiscuity.

The second expedient which the Hindus tried was the variation in method, that is, those elaborations of posture and movement in which the outside world has shown and is showing a quite unnecessary interest, an interest which has not done anybody any good, nor will. This expedient, too, is natural in those who have lost vitality, and it cannot also be denied that recourse to it, to the tricks devised by it, can give a certain kind of satisfaction to certain people in certain states of mind. After all, it has to be admitted that sexual intercourse is a psychological experience founded on a muscular and neural event. But here also is a mistake and diversion, and a very apt example of being thrown off the real scent by the red herring.

The analogy on which the mind worked in hitting upon these methods should be plain. It was offered by those pastimes which depend on muscular or neural virtuosity, and a combination of both, for instance, wrestling, boxing, or fencing, and if nothing more was wanted than sensations, especially sensations with a neural backwash, these trivialities promised something. But sexual intercourse is not and cannot be the same thing as boxing or wrestling. Curiously enough, as a purely physical pleasure, it cannot be transformed and has not been transformed as eating has been into gastronomy. On the contrary, once the act is reduced to a means of mere physical satisfaction, it becomes a paradoxical combination of atrophy in one direction and hypertrophy in another. As a resource of happiness—and a canting hypocrite alone will deny that sexual intercourse can and should be treated as a means of happiness (note that I say happiness, not pleasure) it becomes completely sterile; and, on the other hand, as a drug habit among many drug habits, it shows an almost uncheckable capacity for increase. That this particular drug habit is widespread does not make it anything better than a drug habit.
In the first place, it creates its meaningless amplification and motive power, which become a perpetuum mobile, creating an intolerable strain without satisfaction. In any case it forges its unbreakable fetters, and what is even worse creates its own disease. Whether smoking is or is not a cause of cancer may still be a subject of dispute, but there can be no room for doubt that the sexual drug habit brings on its own cancer, which is something like a dry rot of life. There is only one formula for remaining immune to it: Du cœur, encore du cœur, toujours du cœur: two hearts, which makes it all the more difficult. As to cure of a sort, there is only one—and even that for only a very strong-minded person: to break the enslavement by shrugging one’s shoulders and treating the prick as a periodic impulse to defaecate—a dreary remedy, but perhaps better than the drug habit.

It did not take the Hindus a long time after the full development of their civilization to reach this barren phase, and they also took the path which could only lead to still greater barrenness. Out of this waste of sexual aberration and false appetite there arose in course of time their equally barren and repulsive correlative—the sex-obsessed chastity of the Hindu, which is perhaps the most despicable ethical notion ever created in the moral evolution of any people. The only thing which may be said for the worldly Hindu in the barren and heartless cycle of sexual enjoyment is that even at his worst he did not have any opinion of the most degraded form of sexual perversity, homosexuality. I cannot understand how after St Paul in Romans (Ch. I, 26-28) the Western world, which professes to have a Christian civilization, can have second thoughts on this subject. The Hindus at least did not have them. Though homosexuality was not absent among them, they had still enough instinct of life left to treat it as a fraud.*

* I have heard intelligent Europeans who personally would never dream of being homosexual but live in fear of contemporary ideas, defending homosexuality in the name of aesthetic
This is the world of Hindu sexual realism which is partly reflected in the Sanskrit erotic manuals and pornographic books. The two overlap, but they do not coincide. It must never be imagined that any real existence, however decayed, can be identical with the picture presented in this literature. The naïveté with which it is nowadays taken, a naïveté which certainly is not without its hidden motive, compels me to give the warning that there is no greater mistake than to think that the absurd systematization, heartless elaboration, and crude sensationism of the Hindu erotic manuals correspond to anything possible in real life. It is only a set of men who had become completely dead to life who could have prescribed modes of kissing, embracing, copulating, et cetera, in exact multiples of four. I have read and heard clever but unintelligent Hindus bragging that in order to practise sexual intercourse à la Kamasutra a man has to develop a body of steel. It should have occurred to these superlatively smart intellectuals that men who have bodies of steel do not stand in need of the sexual satisfaction.

The Western reaction to these books irritates me in my serious moods, and amuses me in my cynical. Till recently they provoked a dolorous and peevish moral cackle except in crochety circles. Nowadays, in contrast, they
constitute one of the titles of the Hindus to the reverence of the world, at least in ‘psychologically’ exalted coteries. If the new admirers could meet the old denunciators there would be an argument worth hearing, yet neither would like me to say that the quarrel notwithstanding, there is an unseen bond between the two—a secret lecherous interest, sheepish in one case and puppyish in another. I am not one of those Anglicized Hindus who would take the new Western appreciation of our erotic manuals as a compliment, and if I had anything to do with the matter I would certainly not have provided air transport to Khajuraho, which, among the other evils it has brought into existence, is responsible for a continual insult to these sculptures. It was an evil day for them when the Frenchman Burnier was allowed to photograph them, and throw a veil of art on the iconography of Hindu lust.

As I see the matter, the new attitude is another expression of the tag—ex Oriente lux, and behind it stands an urge which is a doublet of the inclination to seek spiritual enlightenment in India just as the exhausted spirituality of the West is prompting some misled and partly foolish Westerners to come to India in order to renovate it from Hindu springs, in the same way the exhausted fleshly vitality is turning to India in the hope that it will be rejuvenated by Hindu sexual life. For me, both the sets of seekers, the Vedantizing Occidentals and Kamasutrazing Occidentals, stand in the same limbo. I can hardly say how strongly I felt when I heard as a young man that the German writer on sexual psychology, Magnus Hirschfeldt, had come to India to collect material for his researches. His collection was afterwards burnt by the Nazis, and that was the only act of the Nazis with which I found myself in some sort of tune. I sympathized with Dr. Hirschfeldt, but I could not regard him as a better scientist than the mediaeval alchemists. The seekers of spiritual enlightenment in India do not know that the Hindus do not even possess a word of their own for spirituality, and the seekers of sexual potency do not know that
the greatest shadow that hangs over the very private life of modern Hindus is the fear of impotence of all kinds.

Judging by the practical effect of this new admiration I have an even stronger grouse against those who are its preachers. Their admiration of the supposed superior sexual knowledge and dexterity of the Hindus is putting ideas in the heads of a particularly depraved set of Occidentals, who are coming to India and working havoc with what sexual sanity or even virtue of necessity we still have left in us. One of these creatures was responsible, at least in part, for a long fast of purification by Mahatma Gandhi and the abandonment by him of the Sabarmati Ashram, and it does not call for much power of observation to recognize today foreigners of this type, whom unfortunately we cannot deport. But I pray that some day the rules of international travel will require inoculation for certain propensities and appetites as they do for cholera or yellow fever.

What do the Hindu erotic manuals then stand for? The answer is fairly simple. Partially, they were written to provide what might be described as adventitious aid, added impetus, and assisted take-off to people who were going out of the flowing river of sexual life into its dead waters, and could not discharge a biological function naturally. This literature, like many other artificial aids, is produced spontaneously at certain stages of all civilizations, but is to be regarded, none the less, as one of the diseases of civilization. It is an application of cerebration to a field where cerebration is not applicable.

Next, and that in my opinion is the main motivation, there is the desire for vicarious satisfaction for people who have no life left in them to extract satisfaction from the reality. There are, as is far too well known, many forms of vicarious satisfaction in matters of sex, and the most common is the traffic in verbal smut. There is also found, among elderly men especially, a frigid uncleanness of mind which, if the man has the courage to be shameless, can take delight in the sexual experiences and aberrations
of young acquaintances. The more squeamish of these seek the same satisfaction at second-hand from books. There are also lecherous elderly men who wish to cure their wives of frigidity, or whet them to putinrie by reading out the books to them.

It is because, as a Hindu, I know a little of the barren and stony path down which we have travelled to an arid hell that I am both saddened and angered by the appearance of the same type of literature of adventitious aid in the West. When even an Anglican clergyman, writing presumably for churchmen and churchwomen, grows unctuous over such a subject I say that the hour has struck for calling a spade a spade: St Paul, thou hast been forgotten! Venus has always been called a perilous goddess, and in this chorus Dante and Swinburne have both joined. In her most degraded form she used to be euphemistically called Vénus de carrefour. But was any Vénus de carrefour so bad as the Venus de paperasserie, sister of the politics of paperasserie?

It must, however, be pointed out that behind all sophisticated sexual experience, living or dead, crisp or sapless, there always stood, and was bound to stand, a wholly natural and gross sphere of sexual activity. At the highest development of the civilization cultured Hindus invariably made a distinction between their own sexual pleasures and those of the common herd. The latter they regarded as rustic, and had they been more democratic they would probably have called them ‘under-developed’ and tried to develop them. But being, on the other hand, wholly undemocratic they called the rustic sexual life gramya dharma in Sanskrit, which means ‘the ways or activities of villagers’. They even drew a line between what they called ‘artistic sexual intercourse’—chitra-rati, and common sexual intercourse.

This rustic world never dies, and in one sense so much the better for mankind, for it is by this that human communities are saved from civilization. But the rustic sexual life, too, had two aspects in India as it has everywhere.
The first of these was direct satisfaction, and the other evocative satisfaction. The direct does not call for any explanation, but the evocative, even at that low level, had again two faces: a lascivious face in private and solitary reminiscence, and a ribald and clownish face in retrospect in company. The natural man has an invincible shyness in exposing his lasciviousness to any but the sharer, and he covers up its existence by stirring up a good deal of smoke and ashes in the way of jocose obscenity, as if he was unconsciously trying to divert the Evil Eye from his treasured fire. Thus, in regard to sex, the common man always appears more dirty than he really is.

At this point I have to take note of an expression of Hindu sexual life which has attracted a good deal of attention. I mean, of course, the erotic sculptures on the temple walls, and I sincerely wish less nonsense had been talked about them. In this case, as in most Hindu things, the most direct and natural explanation is the best. To put it briefly, this erotic sculpture takes its place in the entire gamut of sexual life just described, from the most romantic down to the most ribald and rustic. It is a great mistake to apply only one interpretative formula to this sculpture and to examine it, so to say, under one spotlight, because it is itself not one. It is equally wrong to try to explain it with the help of extraneous ideas, for the simple reason that it represents many, though not all the aspects of an activity which obeys no laws but its own.

I can see that it may be easy to distinguish the different levels of feeling in this sculpture, and that, in any case, it may be difficult to find the romance. But these difficulties are inherent in the understanding of all graphic representation of erotic themes. In literature the erotic mood is set going from a feeling, and the physical fact may or may not be made explicit. Even when it is, the reader's reaction can be controlled by the mood created by the writer. This psychological control of the erotic sensation lies in a large measure outside the power of the artist, because he has to begin with a visible fact, and
there are not many minds which can start at this point and go up to higher sensations or feelings. So, when a genuine romantic element is actually present in such works, it can be swamped by coarser sensations. Therefore erotic sculpture and painting, even when they aim to be genuine art and not mere pornography, appear to be far more crude than they really are.

This applies to Hindu erotic sculpture all the more forcefully because it is so frank and open, and he who would interpret it must be able to check the natural gravitation of the mind, so that he may respond to all the effects intended. These effects, as I have just indicated, comprise nearly the whole range of the sexual life of the Hindus as it had evolved down to the age of the sculptures.

I have also said that it is a self-contained artistic expression to which no external formula is applicable. In saying this I had and have specially in mind the religious formula, which in my opinion is wholly irrelevant to these sculptures. This does not mean, however, that the Hindus did not mix up sex and religion. They did, and I shall come to that presently. What I wish to make clear here is that, except in northern Buddhism and Tantricism, this mixture is not reflected in Hindu art. I think that the erotic sculptures in the temples of India proper, especially at Khajuraho and Konarak, have no religious significance and are to be regarded as works of art meant for decoration and ornament. I might add that even in northern Buddhism or Tantricism only the divine images in erotic postures have religious significance. By and large the erotic representations are profane.

I know, of course, that one of the reasons for which the interpreters fall back on the religious interpretation is that these representations are found on temple walls. But this association is itself based on a serious misunderstanding of the nature of the temple cult and image worship in Hinduism. Neither is known to Brahmanic Hinduism, which is Hinduism strictly so-called. No ancient
text refers to a temple, and it is no part of a Hindu’s compulsory religious duties to go to a temple and worship an image. Both temples and images were taken over by the Hindus from the Greeks and adapted in their way.

The Hindus did not look upon the gods they worshipped in temples as divinities in the Christian or even Greek and Roman sense. These gods were supernatural kings, created in the image of earthly kings. The whole liturgy of worship in temples even now is ministration to the daily needs and daily life of a king. He holds his lever, bathes, dresses, eats, sleeps, gives audience, hears petitions and praise, looks on dances, has amusements, and even goes out on excursions. The erotic sculptures are only ancillary to this routine and pageant, for the royal palaces contained these. Why should not a divine king have them?

Moreover, the word *mandira*, which is the commonest word for a temple in Sanskrit and the modern Indian languages, originally had no sacred association whatever: it simply meant a house, a room, or even anything that could figuratively be taken for a house or room. The exact sense was conveyed by adding a prefix to the simple *mandira*. For instance, *deva-mandira* was a temple, *sayana-mandira* was a bedroom, *rati-mandira* could mean either a room for sexual pleasures or the vulva itself. The famous Sanskrit dictionary *Amarakosha* includes the word in the ‘city group’ and makes the series of words *griha, nikitana, sadana, bhavana, agara, mandira* synonymous. So, to think that erotic sculptures are a sacrilege in temples unless they can be given a religious explanation, however forced, is to raise a fictitious scandal, of which the makers of the temples were blissfully unconscious.

But prurience is resourceful, and even after all this I have to answer the objection that *qua* art the pieces are obscene. If, however, this chapter has not been written wholly in vain there should be no difficulty in realizing that the Hindus simply could not have any such feeling, and were quite capable of enjoying them openly and natur-
ally. If they could do all the things I have described, I suppose they could also stare at a few stones which represented the same interest. It should also not be forgotten that the temples were places of popular gathering and entertainment, and people expected all kinds of amusement in them. It is well known that even now the places of pilgrimage and religious fairs are looked upon by prostitutes as particularly profitable centres for their profession.

As it happens, there is still another possible objection to dispose of. It may be said that images showing divinities in erotic postures must necessarily have a religious symbolism. I would reply, not necessarily. Normally, the erotic sculptures do not represent divinities, but even when they do there can be nothing to outrage Hindu sensibilities. We Hindus are quite used to reading about the amorous adventures of our gods as pure amorous adventures, and see no blasphemy or profanation in the descriptions. The epics and classical Sanskrit poetry offer no apologies for these, and indeed in these stories the gods and goddesses are figures of mythology, not objects or subjects of cults. This distinction between the two aspects of the gods was made by the Greeks and Romans as it also was by the Hindus.

To clinch this long argument—it is no more necessary to seek an eponymous ancestor for the erotic sculptures in primitive fertility cults than it is for the descriptions in Sanskrit literature. If, despite this, far-fetched and even absurd explanations are given for the sculptures when they are not thought necessary for the descriptions, the reason is obvious. For every fifty thousand people who can see the graphic representations perhaps only one can read the descriptions in Sanskrit. The Hindus of ancient times took both in the same spirit, considering them to be the expressions of the same subject in two mediums. The moral sensibility which professes to be shocked by these pieces and yet is not proof against looking at them out of the corners of the eyes and nudging the wife, is not a
Hindu heritage. The British had to come to India to bring it into existence. With the other legacies of British imperialism the prudery has been taken over by our lower middle-class politicians.

The erotic sculptures rouse a good deal of interest which should have been, but usually is not, dragged out into the open. They have a connection with Hindu sexual life, and have been misunderstood. For these reasons I have thought it necessary to introduce this excursus, which I hope will not be regarded as superfluous. I shall now pass on to my main topic—and complete my account of the sexual life of the Hindus down to the points to which I wish to take the story. There is yet another phase of it to describe, and it is the lowest phase reached by the ancient Hindus.

If anyone were to assume that after reaching the two dead ends I have described, namely, the futile elaboration and the empty vicariousness, the Hindus would throw up the sponge in their fight for sensual enjoyment, he would be seriously underestimating the desperation of their urge. It made them try every means of keeping their sexual pleasures alive as long as any strength was left in them. In the very last phase they resorted to a new dodge to double the exhaustion which was always at their heels, and dashed straight into sacrilege without, however, perceiving that it was so.

It is common knowledge that those rakes who are most jaded take a perverted delight in evoking sacred symbolisms for the sex act, and in violating things which are holy. Casanova relates a story which illustrates this vividly. He had a liaison in Venice with a nun, who after coming to an assignation with him wanted to change from her robe of religieuse. But Casanova purposely asked her to keep it on, so that he might feel the piquancy of it. The nun with even greater depravity and blasphemy replied: Fiat voluntas tua. In the same way, particularly depraved Romans went after the Vestal Virgins.
The Hindus did something like that, but with far greater thoroughness and in a wholly different spirit. They brought sexual life into their religion, or religion into their sexual life—in effect both were the same: but there was neither jest nor ribaldry in their sacrilege, only solemnity, which was the most dreadful thing about it.

I wish I could say that this was the lowest point of descent in the Hindu search for sexual enjoyment. Unfortunately, it was not. As the centuries passed by their sexual life lost even the fascination of perversity, and became chokingly commonplace and squalid. Its all-pervasive degradation at the beginning of the nineteenth century, especially in the towns, so shocked the Bengali Hindu reformers, who were inspired by European moral ideas, that they made it as much a part of their reforming campaign to rescue their countrymen from this slime as to preach the new monotheism. I know of this phase partly from my historical reading and partly from my observation of the survivals in my young days.

The reformers succeeded to a remarkable degree, particularly in the higher strata of their society. In this they were, however, helped by another force, an emotional impact which was the real power behind the appearance of a new conception of the sexual relationship that appeared in Bengal in the nineteenth century. It was a revelation of the passion life of Europe through English literature which took the Bengali Hindus by storm, and its impact led them to recast the love of Europe in a Bengali Hindu mould, and bring into existence one of the most beautiful passionall creations in literature and life ever seen in history.*

* In order to give an indication of the nature of the impact I would mention that my parents told me the story of Dante and Beatrice when I was only a boy, in connexion with two illustrations published in a Bengali literary magazine. One of these was a reproduction of Rossetti's painting *Dante's Dream*, and the other of Harry Halliday's *Meeting of Dante and Beatrice*. My father liked the pictures so much that in later life he hung two large reproductions of these paintings in sepia in his room.
But this also was to die and die even in Bengal. Today the Hindus are at the beginning of another phase of their sexual life. As in all other things connected with their personal life, here too, there is a reversion to the traditional Hindu attitudes and habits with a reassertion of the old commonplace, arid, and degrading sensuality, made even worse by the addition to it of an imported sensuality of the most offensively shallow Western type.

I shall not discuss any of these later phases in this book, for they will form the subject-matter of another book dealing with the modern life of the Hindus. I am leaving even the analysis of the mixture of sex and religion for that work, because though this began in late Hindu times, evidence for it comes mostly from writings and practice from the fifteenth century downwards. In this essay I set myself the aim of describing the sexual life of the ancient Hindus only.

But I cannot close it without putting on record what I feel about the contemporary situation in India. To anyone who has any respect for life, or any feeling for the extraordinary filigree of sensibility which men and women as children of love and life have woven round the sex act, any reverence for it as the fountain of life, this contemporary discharge of low, cheap, and unceasing smut and rut is agony. Yet there is no escape from it, because on every pavement and in every street this filth is oozing out of the eyes, and even dripping from the tongues, which somehow unconsciously loll out.

This degradation, which is regarded as smartness by those who are wallowing in it, should not be called an abyss. That would be to give it an undeserved verbal dignity. It is gutter, and the foulest part of it is the Westernized stretch, on which float soggy copies of *Lolita*, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, illustrated books on Hindu erotic sculpture, and *basse vulgarisation* of the Kamasutra in

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My mother did not know English, and my father had only a school education.
even baser English; and also the oily smiles and sniggers of the Anglicized Hindus who read these books.

Seeing and hearing all this a man feels like recalling the old Hindu sexual life, wild and tortured as it was, with all the passion that is evoked for the gods of Greece by the famous opening of the Schubert-Schiller song: ‘Schöne Welt, wo bist du?—Beautiful world! Where art thou?’

Chapter 11

THE HINDU ACEDIA

So their great anodyne also failed the Hindus. But that did not make them discontinue its use, for it is only one step from the sedative to the drug. That is to say, their excessive sexual commerce continued as a futile and meaningless indulgence, enfeebling the body and even more the mind, sapping the capacity for enjoyment, and yet making the enslavement stronger and stronger. Nevertheless, it would be underestimating the yearning for forgetfulness of the Hindus to think that they would stop at this and not seek other remedies for their sorrow. They did, and some of them even discovered another solace which was absolutely fool-proof, because it was dependent only on self-deception induced by continuous auto-suggestion. I do not think that I have to say in so many words that this sedative was religious. If anywhere, it is among the Hindus that one finds decisive proof of the saying that religion is the opium of the people.

The most pathetic form of this consolation, which is to be seen everywhere even now, is an inexplicable devotion to an unresponsive material object, for instance, a brass image of the crawling baby Krishna, or a crude and garish print, on which women and at times even men will shower all the love and adoration of which they are cap-
able. They will clothe and offer food to it, carry it about in their journeys, hold it in their lap, and lament, even if one feed had to be omitted in a train, that Gopal is suffering from hunger.

What is frightening in this is the stability of the hallucination. Ectoplasmic images disappear, the brass ghost never. It should also be pointed out that the Hindus never take to religion with this whole-hearted abandon until they are 'broke' morally and intellectually, also emotionally. Whenever any obvious or assertive religious inclination is to be seen in a Hindu always say: 'Cherchez le chagrin', for failure of mental and bodily strength may then be safely assumed. In my young days I used to parade my anti-religious opinions, and the elders before whom I liked to show off in this way always remarked contemptuously, 'Let the hot blood of youth cool, and you will come to heel.' Nothing abashed I would reply, 'Yes, I shall also have a bent spine, and I shall walk with a stick. What does that prove?' Today, as an old man I would say that I have seen so much of this feckless tragedy of Hindu life on this green earth and under the blue sky, that the moment I see any sign of the Hindu dementia in me, I shall cry out, 'Nunc dimittis...'.

But of course, given the natural clinging to life and hope of all human beings, which even the Hindus have not been able to wear out, this falling back on self-delusion as a means of relief from the strain of living in the Indian environment could never become universal, even though it could be seen frequently. The majority were bound to pursue their ends in life as a matter of habit and obey the discipline of the biological prison into which they had converted their existence. But even when successful in the worldly way, they have never been able to overcome a sense of hollowness in living. So they have a continuous feeling of boredom as a contrapuntal line to the main tune of their existence. The modern educated Hindu in a high position in the bureaucracy, who is absolutely spherical, thanks to the creature comforts that he can enjoy, has
this no less than the Hindu who is lean and has a hungry look. Those who know English and are fashionable call the gnawing sense of failure ‘frustration’, taking recourse to the modish word. It is astonishing to hear this word perpetually repeated even by students and by young men who have just entered life. I have, however, called this inescapable accompaniment of Hindu life its *acedia*.

But it is not really the *acedia* of which the monks spoke. It is *acedia* mingled with a more positive feeling—irritation and bad temper, which makes it a dangerously active form of ennui. The ancient Hindu moralists had already discovered it, though still as a mental state which was paralysed rather than irritated. They called it *klaivya*, which meant impotence in the physiological sense in the first instance, and was afterwards employed to cover all forms of mental inertia. This paralysis of the will is so universal among modern Hindus that even the old idea that it is something to be ashamed of has disappeared from their mind, and they have forgotten the stern warning of their own moralists that it is a deadly sin. On the other hand, they have made an addition of their own to it, and supplemented the inertia with a continuous but inactive bad temper and a corrosive sense of grievance. In its existing form what I have called Hindu *acedia* is something like an acid.

This *acedia* in its quiescent form is always observable in the lifeless expression of men and women in public places, and the impassivity is most pronounced in places and situations in which one would expect the greatest display of energy and alertness, for example, in shops, post-offices, or railway stations. The grave shopkeeper does not condescend to answer a customer until the inquiry is repeated at least three times, and not infrequently he does not respond to it at all, and the buyer moves on to the next shop. At a railway station the prospective travellers always stand or sit as if they had taken a vow not to move a limb. At a bus stop women and sometimes even men squat on the pavement. At the counter of a post-
office the clerk fills in the few blanks that are left in the forms with a stately leisureliness that ignores a queue of fifty people before him.

But it is near or in the courts of law that one sees most of this staticity, although it would seem to be so utterly inconsistent with the mission on which people come to such a place. You may watch crowds of hundreds of men, but you will never detect in their faces any sign of the ravening greed for money or revenge which brings them to the courts. On the contrary there is an ineffable unworldliness. I watch this with fascination at the bus terminus from which I travel and which is adjacent to the new courts of Delhi. The litigants do not seem to be in a hurry even to get down from the bus, and in descending the three steps with which the Delhi transport authorities provide their vehicles, these men alternately grasp the right and the left handle, and literally brachiate down like the Two-toed Sloth.

Over and above, there is something which is even more awe-inspiring. Since the craze for litigation seizes men late in life and increases with age, this slow procession of human beings creates a collective impression of senility to see which is to feel senile oneself. At first I used to get irritated by the spectacle and was repelled by it. But now I have learnt to see differently, with comprehension and also a passing sympathy.

I shall describe my impression by quoting a favourite author of mine, who puts the words in the mouth of a character of one of his stories. This man finds himself through a strange mischance in the company of a ghostly crew of a ghostly ship, and as he sees them he writes:

They all bore about them the marks of a hoary old age. Their knees trembled with infirmity; their shoulders were bent double with decrepitude; their shrivelled skins rattled in the wind; their voices were low, tremulous, and broken; their eyes glistened with the rheum of years; and their gray hairs streamed terribly in the tempest.
Next, about the impression made by the captain: ‘It is the intense, the wonderful, the thrilling evidence of old age, so utter, so extreme, which excites within my spirit a sense—a sentiment ineffable.’ Finally, the over-all effect is summed up:

The crew glide to and fro like the ghosts of buried centuries; their eyes have an eager and uneasy meaning; and when their fingers fall athwart my path in the wild glare of the battle-lanterns, I feel as I have never felt before, although I have been all my life a dealer in antiquities, and have imbibed the shadows of fallen columns at Baalbec, and Tadmor, and Persepolis, until my very soul has become a ruin.

Do you know where these lines are from? From Poe’s tale *MS Found in a Bottle*, in which the ghost ship ends by plunging madly within the grasp of the whirlpool—and by going down amid a roaring, and bellowing, and thundering of ocean and tempest.

I, too, have been a dealer in antiquities in the sense of being a student of archaeology and ancient history, and this reading has plunged the greater part of my consciousness into the dark, deep, dank, and warm soil of the past with a little shoot, a green plumule, trying to raise its head into the air and sun of the future. But seeing this preternatural exhibition of age near my house that little shoot seems to wither, and I am frightened into crying out, ‘Geron, Vuzurk, Maha-sthavira! I renounce life!’

This massive staticity has even succeeded in taking away the impression of motion from movement from place to place which is the distinguishing mark of life at the animal level as distinct from plant life. Even when these men walk it seems as if rooted trees were waving in the wind, hardly anything else. It is normally impossible to have any feeling that they are going towards any goal and are not just somnambulists. Conversely, anyone who walks briskly is not only stared at, but actually jeered at. In a Hindu environment I have acquired the un-Hindu
habit of walking in the European manner, that is to say, quickly and with a sense of the goal towards which I am going. So I hear even elderly people shouting after me, ‘Left, right; left, right.’ Street urchins march alongside of me with long strides, and giving it up go into peals of laughter. Older boys, and occasionally even grown-ups, call out, ‘Johnnie Walker!’ I naturally do not seem to hear them, and walk along. Then they come up to me at times, and waving their arms about, jeer in a ribald manner, putting their slogan in Hindi, ‘Are Jhuny.’ I learned to my mortification that it was not even the Johnnie Walker of whisky that they referred to, but a caricature of him by an Indian film-star.

Friends ask me why I do not go for these impertinent young fellows. I reply that I retain my common sense at least to the point of forcing myself to bear all this philosophically. But being also a naturally irascible man, I sometimes breathe a wish that I possessed a flamethrower and was free to use it. In my conduct and behaviour, however, I never betray this lack of charity. I maintain the realism which always reminds me that if to the un-Hindu habit of walking briskly I had added the still more un-Hindu inclination to resent impertinence, my non-conformism, instead of being tolerated with good humour, would have been squashed. Moreover, I never forget that my ways are utterly inconsistent with the spirit of the milieu and with the culture shaped by it, and that I give deliberate provocation to ridicule. At my age I should have shown not only the external stolidity of the Hindu, but also the crumbling, moth-eaten, internal hollowness.

But the impression of motionlessness which the Hindus generally give is instantly broken and dispelled as soon as a transaction is on and mouths are opened. The behaviour of the Hindus in public places tends to be extraordinary, unnaturally, and very often illegally quarrelsome. Tempers are lost at the most trifling provocation. One day my hand (which is six inches at its
longest and three and a half inches at its widest) brushed against that of a fellow-pedestrian. He glared back at me and roared, 'Do you think your hand is a pat of butter?' One night, returning home from a dinner, I went to a taxi stand where two were waiting. Both wanted to take me, and the drivers started a loud altercation, which developed into filthy, reciprocal abuse. Wishing to put an end to it, I stepped into one of the taxis, and told the driver to go ahead. At once the other man came flying at him with the starting handle, and a scuffle began. As a final effort, I stepped down, declared that even if I had to walk five miles I would not take either taxi, and moved off. I had not gone more than a furlong when the more aggressive driver overtook me and picked me up. In these street brawls violence always gets the better of non-violence in our Gandhian society.

Indeed, these quarrels are such common sights in all Indian cities that everybody takes them as natural. There are fights between conductors and passengers as well as passengers and passengers in buses, between customers and shop-keepers, in the shops, between creditors and debtors either at the front door or in the streets—the creditors usually waylay and insult a defaulting debtor in the streets. Children of neighbours quarrel and almost invariably involve the parents. I see fights between two husbands, in which the respective wives station themselves behind the other woman’s husband and scratch or pummel the helpless backs. When after getting used to such sights in India Tagore for the first time went to Japan, what struck him was the quiet behaviour of the Japanese people. The absence of shouting and quarrelling made him write:

There is one thing here which strikes the eye in all public places. It is that there are crowds in the streets, but no noise whatever. It was as if the Japanese had not learnt to shout. It is said that in Japan even the babies do not cry. Till now I have not seen one child crying. When motoring in the streets, one finds push-
carts and the like creating obstructions occasionally, the driver of the car waits quietly, and neither pours out abuse nor shouts. In the street, all of a sudden, a cycle looked like hitting against a car, the driver in our country would not have stopped short of unnecessary abuse of the cyclist, but that man did not even cast a glance. I have heard from the Bengalis here that if in a collision between two cycles or a cycle and a car even bleeding is seen, the two parties neither scream nor abuse each other, but shake off the dust and go their way.

I sometimes wonder which manner is really unnatural. Living in India I am hardly entitled to say that ours is.*

In the homes, too, the quarrelsomeness is universal and persistent. The general atmosphere of a Hindu home is one of heavy and listless dullness, which drives the inmates out into the streets at all times of the day. People are always gadding about, putting an intolerable extra burden on the inadequate public transport of the cities. But how could it be helped when the home just chokes? Staying quietly at home of an evening is not therefore one of the pleasures of life in Hindu society, and among the well-to-do the possession of cars has made running away from home not only easy but also fashionable. If owing to circumstances anyone is compelled to stay at home, that is looked upon as a form of imprisonment. So, in the buses I see women with newborn babies, whose red and wrinkled skin can be seen through the folds of the towels in which they are wrapped. It would seem that in

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* In this connexion one extraordinary instance of loss of temper might be recalled. Dr Gopal, son of the President of India and himself a high official, was travelling from Jakarta to Delhi by air. In the aeroplane, while at a meal, he was having a conversation with a fellow-passenger who was described as an 'employee' of the Indian Embassy in Indonesia. The conversation developed into an argument and it became so heated that the man attacked Dr Gopal with the knife and wounded him. The injury was minor, but Dr Gopal had to go to a hospital on his arrival in Delhi.
India human beings are motile like protozoa, though not mobile in the metazoic animal fashion.

Such dullness would make any change welcome, and people would say, 'Anything rather than this.' But when the change does come, it is seen to be more frightening and unendurable, for it is always for the worse—dullness giving place to personal clashes ranging from bickerings to the most sordid and indecent explosions. When there is any conversation in the family beyond the routine exchange of words necessary for living together, it is normally either an arid discussion of money matters, or a peevish airing of grievances against relatives, or—if the family is exceptionally united—a wailing in chorus about wants which cannot be removed.

Dwelling on and sorrowing for conditions which cannot be helped is as common in Hindu society as is the want itself. It never occurs to these people that the best way to deal with financial troubles about which nothing can be done for the time being is not to talk about them. On the contrary, if a family is seen to be cheerful in poverty and trying to put a brave face on a hard lot, that is set down, not to courage or fortitude, but to the secret possession of money combined with a hypocritical pretence of poverty, which is taken as a heartless mockery of real poverty. If, over and above, a family in difficulty tries to keep up its self-respect by maintaining appearances outwardly by a kind of expense which is not usual in Hindu society its poverty is cast in its teeth in the most brutal manner.

For some years after my marriage my wife and I with two children had to go through very great want, for I was then unemployed. Still, to keep up our spirits, we tried to live in pleasant surroundings and once we bought some silk net for curtaining our windows. Even though made in England they were not very expensive in those days. It was very soon brought to our ears that our neighbours were saying with cutting sarcasm: 'They have no money for food, and they buy silk curtains.' To be
gay and cheerful is looked upon as inhumanity towards one’s less fortunate fellow-creatures. The resentment, even when not put in words, is always implied in the looks. The reproachful eyes seem to say: ‘It is all very well for you to look so happy, but we . . .’; and the hand is pressed to the heart. You can make things very much worse by inviting someone to see your flowers or plants. The shrill and bitter reply would be, ‘As if I am in the mood for such frivolities!’

Seeing long faces day in day out, at one time I used to call our world the world of the Mock-Turtle. At times I even sent forth the scream ‘Hjckrrh!’ and chuckled, ‘It’s all his fancy, that: he hasn’t got no sorrow, you know.’ But with age I have given up that flippancy. I realize that one should not go on playing the fool in a sob-chamber if one has to live in it till the end of life. One should try to understand why our world has become a sob-chamber, and, so far as one can, give everybody sympathy. Thus it happens that though even today I can see no real sorrow in the lives of most fellow-Hindus I can perceive all the sorrow of their delusion of sorrow.

But the Hindu world is not even an unmixed Mock-Turtle’s world. For most of the time a toxic peevishness simmers in it, and when it breaks out in personal feuds the outpourings of pent-up hate and anger are awful to see. Most Hindu families, especially the joint, develop and retain chronic maladjustments, which are of three kinds: monetary clashes which take place between fathers and sons, brothers and brothers, mothers and sons, and of course between uncles and nephews and cousins and cousins; clashes for power are mostly seen between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law but also between the wives of two brothers; the emotional stresses and explosions, on the other hand, are confined to mothers and sons, and husbands and wives. In these quarrels all the parties get equally mauled.

Even after such abnormal mutual relations have become permanent, the relatives live together, always tread-
ing on smouldering volcanoes, which erupt from time to time in smoke, fire, and brimstone. In the course of the quarrels all reticence and reserve is thrown to the winds, and the grossest abuse and even blows are exchanged. The weak are beaten, equals hurt one another, until the other members of the family and at times even neighbours separate the parties. Otherwise kind, decent, honourable, and educated men do things which remain in the mind like unwashable stains of shame, and are felt as unhealed festering sores. All, men as well as women, show a perverse genius in discovering words which will wound most.

Such unrestrained outbursts would certainly have led to a total disruption of family and social life if the environment which was responsible for them had not also generated another faculty of the mind which could neutralize their effect. Somehow an alkali is always present with the acid of Hindu life: it is a marvellous and boundless tolerance of bad language and blows, which is some sort of a conditioned reflex of forgiveness. The Hindu possess a faculty of callous charity. Two passengers in a railway compartment who have fought with shameless selfishness for seats, will, as soon as they have cooled off, offer betel, cigarettes, and even sweets to each other, and be friends for the rest of a long journey of, say, eight hundred miles. In the families the sun hardly ever rises on anger. After a brawl lasting till midnight not only peace but even harmony seems to be restored the next morning.*

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* I might add that the tolerance of bad temper was extended to the man who attacked Dr Gopal. The matter was raised in the Indian parliament, and Mr Nehru himself gave the information that the man was not normal and that he had previously assaulted the Indian ambassador in Teheran. Asked why the man was not dismissed, the Prime Minister of India replied that disciplinary action had been taken. One wonders what kind of disciplinary action it was which left in the service a man who had assaulted an ambassador and his superior and did not cure him of his habit of assault. For the assault on Dr Gopal the man got a short term in jail, though.
But such alterations of conflict and co-existence cannot go on without leaving some permanent effects on the personality and mind. The first effect is the creation of a double consciousness, each complete and coherent, but capable of shutting out the other when one is dominant. The parallel mental states are seen particularly in married life, and naturally the wife exhibits the split personality most typically. In one of her personalities she does not seem to remember any grievance, and goes about quietly doing her work, and even shows affection to the husband. But once a quarrel has begun, it does not remain limited to the occasion; every quarrel since the day of wedding is recalled; all the grievances become connected; in retrospect the sorrows gain a cumulative fury, and the anger is poured out in red-hot streams of lava. Listening to the words, one would naturally imagine that a resumption of married life could not take place, and as long as the fit lasts both the husband and wife also think so. But, in actual fact, no such calamity comes about, because the Nature of Things in India sees to it that this does not happen. So, one might say that for most Hindu husbands the wife is a beautiful bath of gleaming porcelain, with both cold and hot water taps, with this difference, however, that the taps are not under control but flow as they list, and by turns the husband is bathed in a cool spray of love or scalded in a geyser of anger.

But the more serious permanent effect is the settling down of an unbroken pall of gloom and dejection on personal life, which is like grey mists on a marsh. I have already given some indication of it, and from that its whole nature can be guessed. But remarkable as the gloom is by itself, it is made more so by three special and peculiar features it presents. The first of these is a gloating on troubles of a personal character and on sorrow, which makes not only a virtue but even a glory of necessity. People talk about their troubles, poverty, and disappointments as if these were things to brag about. They do not want to outgrow even the painful grief of
bereavement, and keep it alive by every artificial means they can think of. That is their idea of loyalty to the dead, and they never suspect that it is really the luxury of self-pity.

Conversely, they get angry, and in any case are hurt, if anybody says to any one of them that he, or especially she, is looking well and happy. ‘I, happy?’—will be the exclamation in an injured tone. Therefore, in speaking to a woman in our society one has to be particularly careful about such faux pas. On the other hand, one of the surest ways to appeal to her heart is to remark how ill, poorly, emaciated, or miserable she is looking. A lady I know, and who works in a school, was not well during a vacation. So, when she went back to work, her colleagues and pupils noticed her ailing appearance. She came home with a bursting heart and told me triumphantly, ‘At home nobody even believed that I was ill, but whoever saw me at school said that I had become unrecognizable.’

It follows from this that amongst us there is a keen competition in feeling unhappy, and in trying to prove that oneself is the most unhappy. Everybody is therefore ready to dispute everybody else’s title to be miserable. If a woman claims a record share of sorrows the woman to whom she is speaking will at once treat her to a longer tale. In this rivalry one will say that everyone is a stealer of his own happiness, and the other will retort that he is also a hoarder of his own sorrows.

The third accompaniment to the gloom of life is an insatiable craving for sympathy, even from strangers, or rather mostly from strangers. One woman meeting another casually will very soon begin a story of woe, especially if she has been spoken to or even looked at kindly. These confessions are made in the course of railway journeys and even very short bus trips. But the explanation for this unreserve is really simple. It is only strangers who can give sympathy liberally without incurring the responsibility of following it up by practical action. Besides, it is a natural human impulse to have a kind look
for anybody who appears to be suffering, and the cases are in their great majority genuinely pathetic. In any case, the large, liquid, black, and sad eyes do draw out one’s deepest compassion. As Emerson put it, ‘the effect of the indulgence of this human affection is a certain cordial exhilaration’.

On their part, the recipients feel genuinely grateful and relieved to have only lip sympathy. In their unwavering fatalism the Hindus do not believe that unless a kind fate does something, fellow-men can do anything for them: the most precious service from man to man is therefore only commiseration. This deep-seated private disposition of the Hindus explains why during the fighting with China the Government of India addressed all and sundry for sympathy, and why the people of India found the sympathy when it was given so soothing, instead of being insulting.

The last special feature of the Hindu gloom is less well known because it can be observed only within the family. It is the impulse, which gradually grows into a habit, of one of the members of a family, generally a wife, to injure herself by neglecting health in every conceivable way, out of an imaginary grievance that nobody cares for her. So, in order to punish the husband, who is guilty in her eye without having any awareness of his guilt, she would overwork, partly starve, and suppress disorders, until one day a sudden serious illness startles the man and puts a heavy and at times unbearable financial burden on him. Even then the woman would at times only pretend to take the medicines and secretly throw them away. Before the calamity bursts on him the husband most often has no inkling of what is happening without his knowledge, and even when a woman is robust enough to take all this without serious harm, every meal omitted or not fully enjoyed and every headache is entered against the husband in a mentally maintained charge-sheet for the final day of reckoning. When that day comes woe to the man who takes the plea that he was ignorant.
In extreme cases this sense of grievance leads to a strange readiness to commit suicide, which is very pronounced in Hindu women. This is due to a general and overpowering conviction of the futility of living in everlasting suffering. The immediate incidents that provoke these acts of madness are in most cases only the pulling of the trigger. In these fits of monomania certain material objects become symbols of release and exercise a dangerous attraction. For instance, some plant supposed to be poisonous, or a pond, a roof, a high window, a railway line becomes an irresistible temptation. Even the Qutb Minar of Delhi was made to play this role. For some years there were so many suicides by jumping from its top that the Archaeological Survey stopped the going up of people singly. When this proved ineffectual, the Department disfigured the monument by putting up a high wire fence round the balconies. These have, however, been recently taken down.

The situation is tragic, not only pathetic, when seen in its eternal twilight. If any world had and has the right to put up this inscription:

Through me you pass into the City of Woe:
Through me you pass into eternal pain;
Through me among the people lost for aye.

All hope abandon, ye who enter here.

the Hindu world has and had that right.

But the Hindus have by their own behaviour made their tragedy pitiful. Deadened by their slow, dull, and benumbed palsy of suffering they have become unheroic, and their absorption in self-pity has made them incapable of analysing their sorrow. They have become even more incapable of perceiving and admitting that any action of theirs might be responsible for it. They will always throw the blame on others. I would, however, say that the obstinate self-righteousness that they exhibit amounts
to unconscious wisdom, for their sorrows and suffering are created by a power in whose hands they are only pup-
pets. Even their own incredible follies, by means of
which they bring untold but unnecessary troubles on them-
selves, are due to a sort of predestination ordained by
the same power. So, if they disavow their moral respon-
sibility for their sad lot, they are not as wrong and
perverse as anyone nourished on the doctrine of free will
might feel inclined to think.

But where they do go wrong is in not recognizing the
operation of the same determination in those whom they
hold responsible for their sorrows—be they father, bro-
thor, husband, wife, friend, neighbour, countrymen, gov-
ernment, or Nehru: all of whom are as helpless puppets
in inflicting the suffering as they are themselves in being
victims of it. All are equal instruments in the hands of
our collective destiny, of which they have no inkling. It
is this destiny which I would ask fellow-Hindus to become
aware of. Listen then to the voice of your Lord, O
Hindus:

Tell ye your children of it, and let your children tell
their children, and their children another generation.

That which the palmerworm hath left hath the locust
eaten; and that which the locust hath left hath the can-
kerm Worm eaten; and that which the cankerworm hath left
hath the caterpillar eaten.

Awake, ye drunkards, and weep; and howl, all ye drink-
ers of wine, because of the new wine; for it is cut off
from your mouth.

Chapter 12

THE LEAST OF THE MINORITIES

In India today all non-Hindus are called minorities, and
this in itself is an indication of their political status. The
most significant thing about this usage is that it was introduced and is being continued precisely by those who swear that there is only a single nation in the country. The same men, however, accepted a partition of India whose only justification in principle was that the Hindus and the Muslims constituted two nations.

The Muslims of India are indeed a minority. The Hindus regard them as such, and they themselves do not think differently, though their leaders do at times declare that they are as good ‘Indians’ as the Hindus. I think it was a Bengali-Brahmin-Hindu professor of history and political science who first put forward the suggestion that the Hindu-Muslim differences in India should be settled on the lines of the recommendations for the protection of minorities put forward by the League of Nations.

But in terms of absolute numbers the Muslims are not a small minority, being just under forty-seven million in a population of 439 million. But judged by the position they hold in relation to their numerical strength they might be said to be the least of the minorities. Perhaps in the eye of their Hindu rulers they have even less importance than the Goanese Christians with Portuguese names.

Whenever in the streets of Delhi I see a Muslim woman in a burqa, the Islamic veil, I apostrophize her mentally: ‘Sister! you are the symbol of your community in India.’ The entire body of the Muslims are under a black veil.

The strongest impression that I got of their eclipse was at an evening party given by the ambassador of a European country. There was a very large number of guests, and, of course, there was the usual forgathering of Hindu politicians, officials, and diplomats, who were either in the Islamic sherwani and pajama, or in the new buttoned-up coat and trousers. I recognized among the company a Muslim nobleman who in the British days had held very high office. Had it been old times everyone in that Hindu crowd, many of whom must have known him,
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would have gone up to him, made a deep salaam, and inquired if the Nawab Sahib’s mizaz (mind or mood) was sharif (pure, untroubled). But that evening no one was talking to him. At least, whenever I saw him, I found him standing alone.

After chatting with some Arabs from Syria on the lawn I came back to the loggia, and found the Nawab standing against a pilaster with his arms folded on his chest. He was looking intently in front of him. At first I thought it was the laughing and gesticulating Arabs who were holding his attention with their exuberance. But it was not so, for his eyes were very much farther away—seemingly on the dark shrubbery behind the lawn which was shining under electric light. I wondered whether he was seeing the revenants of the former Sultans and Padishas of Delhi, for that site, before the British built their new capital on it, was an immense cemetery. That, too, was not the case, for the Nawab’s eyes were completely vacant.

Then I remembered a cartoon in Punch. A vicar’s wife had gone to see an old and crippled parishioner who was illiterate, and she kindly asked him how he managed to occupy the time, since he could neither get about nor read. The man replied: ‘Well, Mum, sometimes I sits and thinks; and then again I just sits.’ I thought the Nawab was trying to ‘just sits’.

One thinks of the Poles as an unhappy people, whom history has treated and is treating very shabbily. But I do not consider that even their fate has been as tragic as that of the Muslims of India, not only in their present state, but even from the time the British ousted them from political power. At one stroke their position was then destroyed, for the only position they had in India was that of a dominant colonial minority ruling a large subject population.

To this was added a deeper humiliation. Islam did not permit any Muslim to remain under the rule of unbelievers, and since the beginning of Islam no large group of Muslims had ever passed under non-Muslim rule. This
began with the European expansion from the seventeenth century onwards, and after the British conquest of India, the Muslims who had treated all non-Muslims in the Islamic states as Dhimmis, or tolerated unbelievers, to whom a second-class citizenship was given in lieu of a special tax, found themselves to be very much like Dhimmis themselves. They were only fellow-subjects of a Ferenghee Power with their former subjects, the Hindu kafirs.

In a sense their position was worse than that of the Hindus, because they were suspect in the eye of the new rulers. The British had taken over political power in India from the Muslims, and they assumed rightly that the community would remain disaffected and seditious, cherishing the hope of a revived spell of power. This position was worsened by the Mutiny. Though the rebellion was primarily military and the fighting power of the rebels was furnished mainly by the soldiers of the two high Hindu castes of Brahmin and Kshatriya of the Gangetic plain, belonging to the Bengal Army of the East India Company, the British saw plain Muslim political incitement and ambition, and the two Muslim courts of Delhi and Lucknow by what they had done justified the British suspicion. So, after the suppression of the Sepoy rebellion, the Muslims came under a darker cloud and were themselves corroded and eaten into by their own impotent disaffection.

It was a great Muslim, perhaps the greatest Indian Muslim of modern times, Sir Syed Ahmed Khan of Delhi, who began the rehabilitation of his community. In spite of being a Hindustani Muslim whose ancestors had served the Mogul court, during the Mutiny he had declared himself for the British, as indeed did all the Hindu and other Muslim leaders who were not bigots of the old order. After the end of the rebellion he took up the task of reconciling the Muslims and the British to each other, and the greater task of bringing round his co-religionists to reform themselves and adopt Western education.
His reconciliatory efforts were twofold: on the one hand, he tried to prove that the bulk of the Indian Muslims had remained loyal to the British and therefore it was unfair to hold the whole community responsible for the doings of a part; on the other, he argued with his fellow-Muslims that so long as Islam and Islamic laws were respected by the British India could not be looked upon as a *Dar-al-Harb* or land of strife, in which it was the duty of the followers of Islam to oppose or even fight the unbelievers who were their political masters. But the more constructive efforts of this great man were directed towards giving the Indian Muslims education on Western lines and to liberalize their hidebound beliefs and customs. Already, there was a good deal of leeway to make up, for in respect of education in the modern sense, the Hindus had had a start of nearly fifty years.

Syed Ahmed Khan achieved remarkable success in all his aims, and by the end of the nineteenth century the British and the Indian Muslims seemed to be perfectly ready to bury the hatchet and even to co-operate with each other. This process was helped by the emergence of the Indian nationalist movement which both the British and the Muslims regarded as a Hindu agitation. In the sphere of social, religious, and cultural modernization a number of Muslims appeared who were comparable to the Hindu reformers of the earlier half of the century, and who sought through study and writing to give a new form to the Islamic way of life without sacrificing its basic or essential features.

As the nationalist movement gained momentum the British naturally looked to the Muslims as a counterpoise to the Hindus, and they began to treat the former with a partiality which almost amounted to pampering. The British felt all the more inclined to do so because the Muslims had already unambiguously detached themselves from the nationalist movement conducted by the Indian National Congress. When invited by the Congress leaders to join the organization, the Muslims refused to do so
on the ground that if they did they would be submerged
in the Hindu mass and lose their Islamic personality.
Thus the entire tripartite political relationship in India
of the British, the Hindus, and the Muslims took on a new
appearance. The Muslims were rehabilitated and the
Hindus in their turn came under suspicion. This was a
subject of jokes among us Hindus, and I heard some of
these in my young days. Many of our folk-tales were bas-
ed on the theme of two wives of a king, one of whom
was good and neglected and the other wicked and favour-
ed. Our parents and elders used to call the Muslims the
Favourite Wife.

But that did not mean that there was any genuine im-
provement in the position of the Muslims as a community,
though a larger number of Muslims secured jobs in the
administration and a few basked in the sunshine of Bri-
tish favour as a reward for Muslim ‘loyalty’. From the
very beginning of the nationalist movement the Muslim
leaders felt that a new problem was emerging for them.
The aspiration of the Hindus for political independence
at once brought into their mind the question of their own
position in India if the British left the country and it
came under the rule of a Hindu majority. However dis-
tant and even impossible that might seem to be at the
moment, the Muslim knew that independence for India
was bound to come one day, and in that event their future
had to be safeguarded. It was all very well to make hay
while the sun of British favour shone, but what was to
be done when the inevitable rainy day arrived? All the
strength of their position for the time being was depend-
ent on the presence of the British. That position was
bound to be undermined.

Even so they continued their opposition to the nation-
alist movement, which they looked upon as Hindu, and
when the first open agitation began in 1905, the Muslims
sided with the British in Bengal and elsewhere. But this,
they could consider only as a very short-term and oppor-
tunistic policy, and very soon the need for a new strategy
became obvious to them. They saw clear signs that the British were going to make political concessions to the Hindu nationalists. Therefore, to meet the situation that might arise and develop out of these concessions, the Muslims demanded a number of counterbalancing rights and privileges, and in this they were encouraged by the British authorities in India, including the Viceroy, Lord Minto. To secure their demands the Muslims formed a political organization of their own on the lines of that of the Hindus.

But even this could not be their long-term policy. For the moment the weightage given to them by the British against the Hindus seemed adequate, nevertheless the Muslims had sufficient political realism to perceive that the handicaps for their rivals would disappear with the British when they abandoned India, and the Islamic order in India, if it were to survive, must learn to rely on its own strength. But, given the numerical disproportion between the Hindus and the Muslims in the country, this strength seemed to be wholly insufficient. In this dilemma the Muslims almost unconsciously fell back on the very basic principle of Islam, the brotherhood and solidarity of all the Islamic countries and peoples, and what favoured this trend was the emergence of a new Islamic nationalistic movement, which was, of course, Pan-Islamism.

The first wave of the Pan-Islamic movement reached India in the last quarter of the nineteenth century with the visit of the leader of the Muslim Risorgimento, Syēd Jamal-ad-Din al-Afghani. It roused great enthusiasm among the Indian Muslims. On the other hand, both Sultan Abdul Hamid II of Turkey and Nasir-ad-Din Shah of Persia had their special motives to exploit it. The Pan-Islamic sentiment became stronger and stronger in India from the Muslim fear of being submerged with the Hindus, and under its influence many Indian Muslims, even those of East Bengal who were overwhelmingly converts, hardly regarded India as their country and affected to be colonists from the Islamic Middle East. I still re-
member the answer I got from a Muslim of my own district (Mymensingh) when I asked him what fruit he considered best and liked best. 'Dates of Iraq,' was the prompt reply! Of course, to me, this deliberate insult to the mango seemed both insufferable and ridiculous.

But the Pan-Islamic sentiment of the Indian Muslims, which was genuine, could not go with their opportunistic flirtation with the British for immediate advantages, and therefore very soon a conflict between the pragmatic Muslim policies and true Muslim loyalties made its appearance. This conflict remained latent until certain historical events forced a choice in favour of the sentiment.

As it happened, it was Czarist Russia from which came the first warning of the danger implicit in Pan-Islamism for British rule in India, which the local British, and more especially the British authorities, both civil and military, with their hostility to the Hindu nationalism and their interested partiality for the Muslims, were inclined to ignore. At the end of 1910 both Czar Nicholas II and Stolypin spoke to Sir George Buchanan, the British ambassador in St Petersburg, about the danger. But Buchanan with characteristic British empiricism immediately observed to the Czar that it was rather with the Hindus than with the Mahommedans that the British troubles in India had originated. None the less, the British Foreign Office was not wholly indifferent to the possibility of danger, and Sir Arthur Nicolson, then Permanent Under-Secretary of State, informed Sir George Buchanan that Benckendorff, the Russian ambassador in London, had also left a series of questions with him and he had passed them on to the India Office to find out what steps the India Government was taking towards controlling and influencing the instruction which was being given to the Muslims in India in their own schools.

The latent opposition between the true feelings of the Muslims and their opportunistic siding with the British came up to the surface with the Italian attack on Tripoli in 1911. Indian Muslims were shocked and in their anger
they expected the British Government to condemn the naked aggression. The Government of India with its pro-Muslim policy and sentiment at once addressed panic-stricken appeals to London. These seriously annoyed Sir Edward Grey, who said that at a moment when the British Government was making every effort to detach Italy from the Triple Alliance, these importunities of the Government of India were very unwelcome.

The Balkan war made matters worse. As soon as it began Sir George Buchanan wrote from St Petersburg:

The position of His Majesty’s Government will be a very difficult one. Their attitude will be watched with jealous apprehension both by His Mahommedan subjects in India and by the Russian public. The former will expect them to throw the weight of their influence into the scale in favour of their co-religionists in Turkey, while the latter will look to England, as a member of the Triple Entente, to support Russia in advocating the cause of the Balkan Slavs.

In fact, the Turco-Italian war and the Balkan war between them largely alienated the Indian Muslims from the British, and exposed the artificial nature of the Anglo-Muslim liaison in India. Another step in the alienation was taken when Turkey entered the first World War on the side of Germany. Already, in the Balkan war, some prominent Muslims of India had gone to Turkey as medical volunteers. Near my home town in East Bengal a fanatical Muslim priest even fenced in a plot of land and proclaimed it as the territory of the Caliphate, and was, of course, suppressed. During the first World War, however, no Muslim could actively take the side of Turkey, but the whole Muslim community remained pro-Turk and violently anti-British.

This led them to another opportunistic move, an alliance (or misalliance?) with Hindu nationalism and the Indian National Congress. Jinnah, who later became the most fanatical champion of Muslim separatism in India,
brought about a coalition of the Muslim League and Congress at Lucknow at the end of 1916. This combination was finally cemented at the end of the war by the treatment of Turkey by the Allies, by the Treaty of Sèvres, and even more by the strongly pro-Greek policies of Lloyd George. As a result, the Hindu nationalist movement and the Muslim Caliphate movement worked hand-in-hand from 1919 to 1922, with equally unconscious cynicism on both sides, until the victory of Mustafa Kemal Pasha and the rejection of the Caliphate by the Turks themselves ended the movement on behalf of the institution by the Indian Muslims, and put an end to the *raison d'être* of the artificial Hindu-Muslim co-operation. In fact, the treaty of Lausanne can be regarded as a definite landmark in Hindu-Muslim relations, and one of the worst Hindu-Muslim conflicts ever seen—the notorious Kohat riots—took place a few months after its ratification by Great Britain.

Not only was the Caliphate rendered an out-of-date symbol for the Pan-Islamic movement by the victory of Turkey, the whole concept of the solidarity of Islam was undermined by the same historical event. The Turks eschewed both the Pan-Islamic and the Pan-Turanian movements, and took their stand on Turkish nationalism in Anatolia. So far as I remember, Mustafa Kemal even expressed indifference, if not disdain, for any sympathy for his country from the Muslims of India. The other Islamic countries too, including the new Arab States and Iran, began to look upon themselves more as territorial nations than as an articulated group in a non-territorial society bound together by a religion.

This deprived the Indian Muslims of the extra-territorial support on which they had reckoned in order to maintain their position as a community with a separate group personality, and made them revert to their old policy of siding with the British against the Hindu nationalists and demanding special rights and privileges for themselves in the new constitutions. Thus it happened that while in the
Non-co-operation movement of 1920-22 the Muslims were with the Congress and the Hindus, in the next nationalist agitation, the Civil Disobedience movement of 1930-32, they sided with the British and in Bengal even sacked and looted Hindu houses in towns and villages. This earned for them a special weightage in the new Constitution which was created by the Government of India Act of 1935, and for the time being the Muslims secured more political power and influence than their numbers even in the Punjab and Bengal entitled them to. In the political set-up of Bengal more especially, the Hindus were reduced to the position of a permanent statutory minority, which finally helped the ruinous partition of the province in 1947.

But the Indian Muslims could not also forget the precariousness of their position. They knew that the artificial weightage given to them could last only as long as those who had provided it, namely, the British, remained in India. With their going, which the Muslims regarded as inevitable, the guarantees conferred by them were also bound, equally inevitably, to become null and void. Thus the problem of protecting the interests of the Muslim community in the absence of the British arose menacingly. They could no longer think of themselves as a component of the non-territorial Islamic society, and there was no longer any possibility of ensuring their continued existence as Muslims on the strength of extra-Indian support. In simple words, the Muslims of India discovered that by regarding themselves as a non-territorial nation they were now to be without any country for themselves.

It was in tackling this dilemma that the Indian Muslims hit on the idea of a partition of the country in order to give themselves the homeland they lacked by carving out a Muslim state from the historic, undivided India. When it was first put forward the idea was considered not only fantastic but even absurdly ridiculous. I assert this with confidence that not even at the end of 1946 did anybody in India believe in the possibility of a partition of the
country. Yet within six months it was announced as a policy, and accepted as a proposal, and in less than three months from the announcement of the plan the monstrous and unnatural partition of India became a fact. The Hindus and the British alike forewore the principle of unity of India which they had always professed. This was made possible by a combination of three factors—Hindu stupidity in the first instance and Hindu cowardice afterwards, British opportunism, and Muslim fanaticism. The most ironical part of the whole matter was the fact that the most fanatical and determined of the Muslim champions of a *Dar-al-Islam* in India, the man who made a political impossibility a fact, was Jinnah, a man who had no deep faith in Islam as a religion, but treated it as a form of nationalism.

The creation of Pakistan was a windfall for the Muslims of India. But the artificial homeland which the British thought it was their duty to bring into existence for the Muslims before they could leave India, but which really was the product either of British defeatism or opportunism and discreditable on both assumptions, did not turn out to be a Promised Land for the Muslims. Much as I sympathize with this small and brave country, left in the lurch by the Great Powers in the interest of their own *raison d’État*, I would not yet compare Pakistan with that other small country, Israel, equally or even more unfairly treated by the Great Powers. That country and people look towards the future and will always be a living reality: Pakistan can only look towards the past and remain half-dead. Even from the moment it came into existence it became a source of anxiety, dissatisfaction, and disillusionment.

The immediate tragedy was that about one-third of the Muslims, equal to about half the population of the whole of Pakistan, had to be abandoned to the Hindus. These millions were an awful *korbani*, sacrifice, to Allah Akbar: the Lord checked the hand of Abraham, but not of Jinnah. On the Hindu side as well as the Muslim, the partition
created an illogical and yet inescapable situation—each party gave up its legal right to protect co-religionists, but could not relinquish the moral burden of doing so. This left to both the countries the legacy of an absurd and futile irredentism.

Then there was the problem of survival for an unorganized country in the face of the implacable hostility of India. This was indeed a grave economic and administrative problem, and even a greater one in the military sphere. India held the pistol at the head of Pakistan, until, in 1954, the American alliance delivered the country from that nightmare. Though it is very difficult to have reliable information on such matters, I think I am right in saying that at least twice, if not three times, between 1947 and 1954, India intended to invade Pakistan and was deterred only by American and British remonstrances.

What came next was isolation from all possible helpers. The first plank of Indian foreign policy in the years immediately following independence was to isolate Pakistan from her natural friends, the Muslim countries of the Middle East, and also from Great Britain which in the light of the antecedents could be expected to side with the Muslim country. In both the aims India achieved remarkable success. The Arab countries, inspired more by nationalistic and anti-European sentiment than by Islam, thought that powerful India was more worth cultivating than poor and weak Pakistan. Great Britain’s conduct was worse. After inciting Muslim separatism in every way for more than half a century and making a substantial contribution to the impossible situation which led to the partition of India, the British statesmen thought that their duty to Pakistan was fulfilled with its creation and some moral support for its survival, and they were not prepared to give anything more substantial. After the abandonment of the empire in India there was no further reason to support the Muslims against the Hindus; on the contrary, much was to be gained by appeasing the new
Hindu state, which was likely to be a desirable associate in the so-called Commonwealth. Therefore, as regards Pakistan, the British attitude, though considered too partial by the Hindus, amounted only to an inane correctitude, which, given the ratio of strength between the two countries, amounted in fact to a letting down of the smaller, poorer, and weaker state. This attitude on the part of the British Government virtually drove the government of Pakistan into the arms of the United States, and the alliance formed against the will of a majority of the people of that country, is now regarded by its government as only a necessary evil, and nothing better.

I felt the injustice to Pakistan so strongly that I thought it my duty to take the side of that country in two articles published in 1954, one in the influential Indian newspaper The Statesman, and the other in The Times of London. In the first I scouted the idea that American aid to Pakistan was a military danger to India. Among other things, I said that the decisive argument against assuming the possibility of an attack on India with the arms supplied by the United States was that such a result would defeat the very purpose for which American aid was being given. The United States in its own interest, or, to be quite frank, in the pursuit of its policy of containing the Soviet Union, was trying to create military strength in an area in which it did not exist. That very strength and the stability created by it was likely to be destroyed, and the power frittered away if Pakistan was to attack India. In the article in The Times, on the other hand, I attributed the anger of India at the alliance between the United States and Pakistan to the check given by it to India’s policy of keeping the latter country weak and isolated. An American journalist saw the article in London on the day he was flying to India and showed it to Mr Nehru as soon as he arrived. The result was described to me in vivid American diction, and I would only disclose that the man got what he deserved for his indiscretion.
But though the American alliance has saved Pakistan from constant bullying by India, it has not brought a more unclouded satisfaction than the bare assurance of survival. The United States, pursuing a policy of naked *raison d'état* wants as many as possible of the new states in Asia to be on its side, but the same *raison d'état* demands that the advantages should be all on the side of the United States, and that the whole series of alliances would be what the British in the early days of their rule in India called the System of Subsidiary Alliances. Therefore Pakistan could hardly hope for positive support for her claims against India, and if any hope of this kind was entertained at all it was bound to lead to disappointment, because it was as much, if not more, to the interest of the United States to gain the goodwill and friendship of India. As between the two countries, if India could at all be hooked, the United States would naturally attach greater importance to her. Perhaps it would attach even greater importance to an unhooked India, for since the war it has been seen to be the uniform policy of the State Department to ride rough-shod over the interests and sentiments of those allies who have been firmly secured and cannot break away, in order to buy up actual or potentially unfriendly nations at the cost of old friends. When even Great Britain and France were and are being subjected to this treatment, Pakistan could not hope for a less one-sided treatment. So, it can be said that the association with the United States has put an end to the international isolation of the Islamic state only in a negative sense. It can be added that if India were to align herself with the United States in any circumstances, the stocks of Pakistan were likely to fall lower.*

But bleak as all this is for Pakistan, what is even more sad for Pakistan than being only a pawn on the American side of the international chessboard is the isolation in

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*This was written in September, 1962. The pursuit of American *raison d'état* was demonstrated quite clearly in the course of the Indo-Chinese border-conflict.*
time—in the stream of history. Pakistan, unfortunately, is not a flowing river and cannot be one: it has to be only a lagoon by the very circumstances of its creation and by the strongest sentiment which is keeping it going, namely, the loyalty to Islam in a world in which Muslims no longer regard their old faith as the basis of their social and political life. This loyalty pins down the country to a past-regarding outlook.

Yet Pakistan cannot give up Islam, or even relegate it to a secondary position. It has nothing else to stand on. Being poor in natural resources, it cannot even cover up a retrogressive historical evolution by maintaining the pretence or illusion of industrialization, as India is doing. Without its adherence to a lost cause the country itself will be lost, for there is nothing in it besides Islam which can resist the gravitation of the great mass of India and re-absorption in that country.

I hope this exposition of the emergence of Pakistan and its relations with India will not be thought irrelevant in this essay. In point of fact, the position of the Muslims of India vis-à-vis the Hindus is not a bilateral one, but trilateral, and the presence of Pakistan is an essential factor in it. A satellite to the Hindu order as the Muslim community of India is, even as such it is held in its humdrum orbit only by the triangular equilibrium created by the gravitation of the two planets. If somehow this equilibrium is disturbed it is impossible to tell what might or might not happen.

Now I can pass on to describe the status of the Muslims in India. The Hindu attitude towards the Muslims of India has been throughout rather paradoxical, like that of the British to their subjects. It is a mixture of indifference tinged with contempt and an absurd fear. The fear was very much marked in the years immediately following independence. In 1954 a high-ranking officer gave me a lurid assessment of the intentions of the Indian Muslims, which was only an echo of the popular belief that if Pakistan made war on India the Indian Muslims
would rise in a body and massacre the Hindus who were ten times their number. I was startled to hear this drivel coming from an officer and asked him if he really believed in such a possibility. He replied that he did, and when I still persisted in my scepticism he forgot his manners and observed, ‘You are pitiabley ignorant.’ I could not forget mine and retort, ‘If I had been the Minister of Defence in India, I would at once had sacked an officer who could be so “jittery”.

This fear has not wholly disappeared even now, but it is much less pronounced. After the two recent anti-Muslim riots in Madhya Pradesh (Central Provinces) and Uttar Pradesh (United Provinces), in which large numbers of Muslims were killed in retaliation for offences which could not be laid at the door of the Muslim community as a whole, the Hindu mind has naturally been reassured, for it got a demonstration of the case with which the Muslims could be slaughtered. [In 1964 there was another demonstration.]

Today the general Hindu attitude to the Muslims of India is not actively hostile, though there is an emotional bias against them. There is not much occasion for this to come to the surface, however, and the Hindus feel generous enough to allow the Muslims to carry on their ordinary avocations and live peacefully. But there is virtually no social intercourse between the members of the two communities, no more than there existed in British days. Quite possibly, there is much less, except in the highest political and administrative circles, in which the Muslims are hardly Muslims. The Muslims in India in relation to the Hindus are for all practical purposes what some sociologists dealing with the Hindu social system have called an ‘external caste’.

The Muslims themselves know it only too well. There is today a certain demure reserve in their behaviour which is in complete contrast with their former obstreperousness, and which could have created an impression of hypocrisy if it had not been so transparently sincere and even
tinged with melancholy. It clearly shows that they know their place in an India ruled by the Hindus. I would add that they are on the whole showing a great dignity and have no whining underdog air. Being fully aware that they are now the subjects of their former subjects, they do not like to make their lot harder to endure by squealing about it.

But it is slightly different with their leaders. It is not always possible for them to maintain the same quiet reticence. Speaking for their community they do sometimes assert that it is not on a footing of equality with the Hindus. However, they couple this mild protest with a loud protestation of their loyalty to India and their pride in Indian citizenship. They claim a better deal for the country's Muslims as unexceptionable and even fervent Indians. Naturally, in the dispute between India and Pakistan they have to take a rather too emphatic Indian line, which is the only facet of their social and political behaviour which seems to be self-consciously prudential. Still, even that deserves forgiveness.

If I were a Muslim I should certainly not have cared to live in India, just as, being a Hindu, I feel I should never have been at home in Pakistan, though I was born and brought up in what is now eastern Pakistan. There is something unnatural in the continued presence of the Muslims in India and of the Hindus in Pakistan, as if both went against a natural cultural ecology. Whether a person is Hindu or Muslim makes a substantial difference in both the countries, though the unnaturalness is less explicit in India than it is in Pakistan.

Here I have to answer an obvious objection, which anyone at all familiar with the conditions in present-day India is bound to raise. If the Muslims of India are in eclipse in the manner I describe, how does it happen, it will be asked, that some of them occupy very high office in the Government of India and hold so many senior posts in the civil service? Fortunately, this objection is not as lethal to my argument as it might at first seem, and I can
answer it. I have, however, to distinguish between the political and the administrative position of the Muslims, and shall deal with the political position first.

It is the legacy of the Hindu-Muslim political collaboration in the period between 1917 and 1922. When the artificial alliance between the Hindus and the Muslims came to its natural end through the victory of Turkish nationalism and the abolition of the Caliphate, some prominent Muslims whose hatred of the British was not weaker than their dislike for the Hindus, did not break with the Indian National Congress and go over to the separate Muslim political organization. Primarily, they were actuated by the feeling that by joining the Muslim organization they would have to show an opportunistically friendly attitude towards the British and in certain situations even have to co-operate with them. They had been too good Pan-Islamists not to find even insincere siding with the British hateful. But there was also a second reason for their choice. During the period of co-operation they had formed genuinely cordial and intimate personal relations with the leaders of the Congress, especially with those who came from the Islamized Hindu circles of Hindustan, and the friendship weighed with many.

They did not indeed have ulterior motives in remaining with the Hindus and were influenced by sincere convictions. None the less, it did transpire that many of them reaped a good harvest in the worldly way in the era of independence on account of their choice. Some of them were at once given high offices by the Hindus, but not all of them lived to see the epoch in which their political choice could confer worldly position. Nevertheless, they left memories behind them, and they also left a number of their younger associates, who might be called shagirds (disciples) in the Muslim parlance, in the hands of their Hindu friends. It was like a dying father entrusting the safety of a minor son to a loyal friend.

It must be said to the honour of the Hindu leaders that they never abandoned their charges. On the cont-
rary, they put them in offices in which they would never have dreamt of putting a fellow-Hindu with equivalent qualifications, unless subjected to a long course of bullying or toady ing or toadying. Of course, there was a political motive in this generous treatment of the Muslims who were with the Congress. That organization claimed to be above caste and creed, and in proof of this claim the Hindu leaders had to give high posts to Muslims and Christians, and not many Muslims were there to serve a Hindu Government even for the sake of glittering worldly prizes. So those who were ready were made much of, and duly rewarded.

One more explanation has to be added. The present political position of the Muslims is due also to the personality of Mr. Nehru. He is, by social and cultural affiliations, more a Muslim than a Hindu, so far as he is anything Indian at all. His family belonged to the circle of Islamized Hindus, and in the United Provinces those Hindus who had sophistication usually moved among the Muslims of the province, because they were more cultured, whereas the Hindu was somewhat of a boor. Besides, Nehru has no understanding of Hinduism and not even any liking for it. He is usually repelled by anything pronouncedly Hindu. This purely personal fact has certainly contributed to the position of the Muslims in India.

A different reason, on the other hand, stands behind the presence of Muslims in the civil service and administration. One of the things which have earned praise for us from the British and American patrons of India is the fact that when the nationalist leaders took over the government of the country they did not dismiss the Indian officials who had served the British loyally till the end, and had even persecuted and imprisoned nationalists. I have heard it said that by not treating these men in the manner of the French and Russian revolutionaries, the Indian leaders showed extraordinary wisdom. Whether this view of the attitude is right or wrong, there is no doubt that no member of the old official order was punished for
having sided with the British, and some of them were even given higher positions in the new administration. Among these were some Muslims. Most Muslims in the administration, of course, went over to Pakistan, but some chose to remain in India, and were for that reason even more favoured than the old Hindu officials. Moreover, in the higher ranks of the civil service, the Muslims did not differ essentially from their Hindu colleagues. They were all Anglicized men with no strong association or loyalty which could tie them to any of the two traditional orders. Irrespective of their religious and social antecedents, these men formed one class, and in dealing with them one hardly had any feeling that they were either Hindus or Muslims. So the Muslims in the civil service did not get any differential treatment.

Thus the present position of the Muslims in the ministries and the civil service is due to a historical situation bequeathed by the British and unlikely to be continued or repeated. That is already more than plain, because it can be easily discovered that no new Muslim candidates are appearing for such posts, and none is in a probationary period. What has happened has happened, and it will soon be a thing of the past. In regard to the future it needs no very great prophetic insight to say that the Muslims, both out of their own choice and owing to the Hindu dislike of them, would not rise to high positions. In fact, most of them would prefer to lead a private life, instead of serving a Hindu regime in which they cannot feel at home and with which they are not in sympathy.

But I must also say that if the Muslims of India are now without prospects as a community and if they are in a sad position they must also bear their share of the responsibility and not make the Hindus alone culpable. Our mistakes and follies come home to roost, and that is as true of national as it is of personal life. The mistakes that the Muslims committed during the decades of the nationalist agitation are now recoiling on them. When they were basking in the sun of British favour, they did
not remember that one day that might cancel their right to Hindu favour.

I should like to elaborate this point. As soon as the nationalist movement got into its stride, the Muslim leaders began to play a curiously equivocal game, seemingly realistic and effective, but so only on a short-term assessment of their interests. The Indian Muslims hated the British with a hatred which was even more vitriolic than that of the Hindus, because it was they who had been deprived of an empire by the new conquerors. Yet, when they found themselves wooed by the same conquerors as a counterpoise to the Hindu nationalists, they could not resist the inveiglement and struck the bargain, a very Faustian one.

For the moment even we Hindus thought that they had been shrewd and stolen a march on us. They knew that their own battle was also being fought by the Hindus, and that in the event of a British withdrawal from India their share of the spoils was assured. In the meanwhile, it was not only not necessary to make sacrifices for the Muslim cause as against the British, but even profitable to make the best of both worlds. This game, played with unscrupulous boldness, succeeded for the time being and yielded all the immediate results expected from it. The creation of an independent state for the Muslims of India, or at all events for a majority of them, was the greatest achievement of the double-faced policy.

That has also been seen to be the only achievement. A colossal Machiavellian game of politics of the order attempted by the Muslims could not be played without grave moral and political risks, and the risks have now overtaken the Muslims completely both in India and in Pakistan. On the rank and file of the Muslims of India the opportunistic liaison with the British had a disastrous effect. So far as the British were concerned, it left one section unweaned from the barren and rancorous hatred, and made another pine for the ruling nation’s favours. The British were, of course, ready to show or even shower
their favours so long as it served their interest to do so, but the Muslims forgot that the part of cat’s-paw cannot be played, even if it is played with cynical opportunism, without being made, at one time or other, to pay the price.

In respect of the Hindus, on the other hand, the Muslims, being sure of British support, began to show an arrogance and an enmity which were never justified by any regard for Muslim interests, and which earned them the undying hatred of the Hindus. It added a new edge to the old Hindu hatred of the Muslims. It can be said that in the epoch of the nationalist agitation the Muslims were not only provocative, but also openly aggressive. During the Civil Disobedience movement of 1930-32 the Muslims of East Bengal, to give only a few instances, looted Hindu shops in Chittagong, attacked Hindu houses in the city of Dacca, and plundered and burnt Hindu homes over a belt of some twenty miles in length and about ten in width in my own district of Mymensingh.

All this created a chronic and endemic violence which lasted till the partition of India. In Dacca, while the Muslims knifed Hindus whenever they found them helpless, the Hindu boys, even schoolboys of fifteen, suddenly went out of their houses and came back after a little while to enjoy their dinner with the recollection of a Muslim murdered in stealth. All of them behaved as if they were werewolves.

I shall relate an incident which I have on good authority. In Dacca, on the Wari side, the railway line runs through a residential area. One day, on it, a young and very handsome Muslim boy was found to be lying, obviously murdered by a Hindu. An elderly Hindu widow, who lived in a nearby house and whose son had been murdered by the Muslims, saw the body, walked up to the railway line with a chopper, and hacked away the head of the boy to keep it as a trophy. Could head-hunters or scalp-hunters do better?

This violence went on with rising tempo to its crescendo in 1946 and 1947, and led to the colossal massacre of
1946 in Calcutta, which frightened the Bengali Hindus into believing that partition was the only means of release from the Muslim nightmare. The resignation to partition was both foolish and cowardly, but at the moment it seemed to be the height of wisdom.

The Muslims are now expiating for their short-sighted arrogance, which makes me observe that whatever clever people might say in defence of unscrupulousness in politics, and about its success, there is some power in the universe which sees to it that such cynicism does not pay, and that nothing but what is inherently right ever succeeds. Define it as you like, as theodicy or the justice of history, it is there, irrespective of any name. We see the operation of that power in the sad fate of the Muslims of India, both in the Hindu and in the Muslim state. What gave them victory in 1947 was not the opportunistic policy of their leaders, but their fanatical devotion to a cause which was a lost one in history. So, there is no escape for them today from that lost cause, and still less from the intolerable burden of fighting to the last for a lost cause.

Chapter 13

THE HALF-CASTE MINORITIES:
GENETIC AND CULTURAL

It is with the utmost reluctance that I write this chapter. The communities with which I am going to deal in it are the underdogs of Indian society, and no one would willingly give an impression of being harsh to them, far less do anything that would look like hitting a man who is down. As it is, they have enough to bear.

But I cannot leave them out, nor can I write about them with whole-hearted sympathy. It might be said that about
the Hindus too I have not written with unreserved sympathy. True, but I have criticized them as a Hindu myself, as a lone critic of the rest of the three hundred million, and the risks are all mine. In the case of those whom I am describing as half-castes, my criticism can seem to be prompted by the confidence given by the presence of the same millions behind me. It is not my habit to bark with a master at my back.

But I am compelled to write about them because they are all communities in being in India, and because they are also elements in the country’s population which are still reactive in the ethnic and social evolution, and have not become merely sedimentary. Their influence is out of proportion to their relatively small numbers on account of some special circumstances. Besides, they illustrate the great difference that can be seen in regard to ethnic results between the Aryan and Muslim conquests on the one hand, and the European on the other. Both the former conquests deposited massive human elements, large in numbers, solid in culture, and assertive in their ways, but the European conquest created nothing which stands comparison with the previous deposits. This curious ineffectiveness of the European expansion in the ethnic sphere calls for an explanation, all the more because in those of culture and economic life the Western impact has certainly made a difference, and will make more. Yet on the ethnic evolution the same impact has been negligible: of minor significance for the Hindus and Muslims, and unfortunate for the new communities themselves. Moreover, they, or at least some of them, are a bad influence on the Hindus, both culturally and morally. Furthermore, their unfortunate plight illustrates an aspect of the winding up of European imperialism which those who are bragging about the end as an achievement are most anxious to conceal: that the products of the imperialism are being abandoned by those who produced them. Therefore what I am going to write will annoy the contemporary British anti-imperialists.

c. a.—11
On the other hand, my sympathy for these communities is inhibited by the poverty of life they exhibit. It is this, and not their insignificance in numbers, which prevents my writing about them with full sympathy. In this they present a striking contrast to the Parsi community, which is also small but has nevertheless maintained a high quality of life as resident aliens. But there is something unnaturally shoddy and unhealthy about the half-caste communities, and no novelist even would like to deal with them unless he had a penchant for the decadent and the abnormal.

But perhaps I should first enumerate the communities which I am labelling as half-caste. As the chapter heading indicates, I have divided the ethnic elements created by the European expansion in India into two broad classes—the genetic half-castes and the cultural. The first group includes the communities in which there is an actual intermixture of European and pre-existing blood, mostly Hindu. The second is comprised of the converts to Christianity, in which the intermixture is not present.

This at first sight would seem to be a wholly arbitrary classification, for no one can be called a half-caste who does not have two racial or genetic strains in his heredity. But that precisely is not my definition of a half-caste in India. According to me, a half-caste in India, as perhaps everywhere else, is a psychological and cultural type, and not merely a zoological hybrid, though the genetic admixture has certainly played a part in predetermining and preconditioning his mental and cultural characteristics. Furthermore, the half-castes of India (and, I would repeat, of other countries also) are not the possessors of a composite culture, unless culture is defined in the very wide anthropological sense. They are not natural and healthy hybrids, racially or culturally, but, be they genetic hybrids or converts, are people who have given up their old culture without being able to adopt a new culture except in a weak and debased form. To put it even more plainly, the half-castes of India are, either
through birth or conversion, only a depressed offshoot of the conquering European nations, and they remained protégés of the European nations so long as their rule lasted. In an India politically dominated by the Hindus, it is this social and cultural status which is making the position of the communities I am speaking about very anomalous, and even dubious.

Nevertheless, it would not be advisable to disregard the genetic factor, for as between the different half-caste communities, it has determined the degree of 'half-casteness', if I might coin the derivative. For instance, Indian Christians do not exhibit the same degree of half-casteness as do the Eurasians. Again, the Indian Christians who belonged to the higher Hindu castes before their conversion show even fewer of these attributes, compared with the converts from the depressed or untouchable Hindu castes. There is a whole gamut of tones in the half-caste scale. Furthermore, the position of those who are half-caste both genetically and culturally is infinitely more difficult than that of those who are so only culturally. The first of these have almost completely burnt their boats, and are now looking for fords or swimming desperately to get back to the Hindu bank, while the others, even if they did not keep the boat-bridge standing, at least kept the boats.

I can now proceed to list the communities which I call half-caste, and I shall begin with those among whom there is undoubted admixture of European blood. The first injection of modern European blood began in India with the Portuguese conquest, mostly on the western coast of India, but partly also in Bengal. In Bengal, however, the half-castes of Portuguese origin did not remain distinct from the half-castes of British descent. They became one with the lower stratum of the Eurasian or Anglo-Indian society, a dark element distinguished from the dark Eurasians of British descent only by their Portuguese names. But in Goa and Mangalore people with Portuguese names
have remained generally speaking separate from the Eurasians.

I should explain here that the terms 'Indian' and 'Anglo-Indian' were introduced as official nomenclature for the natives of India and the Eurasians respectively by Lord Hardinge towards the close of his term of office as Viceroy. Before that the Hindus, and the Muslims as well, were called 'natives' by the British, and the mixed Indo-English breed 'Eurasians'. Both these terms had acquired pejorative associations and were felt as insulting by the communities concerned. So the new names were introduced. I have, however, reverted to the word 'Eurasian', because it avoids confusion with the older usage of the word 'Anglo-Indian', which meant an Englishman who was residing in India or had done so, and also because 'Eurasian' is a more accurate descriptive label.

Now, there is no doubt about the mixed type which is Indo-British. But the genetic element in the Indo-Portuguese breed is difficult to assess. It is always a question how much European blood exists among the people of Goa and the Indian Christians of Mangalore, who bear Portuguese names. The name itself gives no clue, for it might have been taken by mere adoption as a client. It would seem, however, that intermixture of blood is virtually negligible among the Christians of the Mangalore region, whereas in Goa it certainly exists, though it is uncertain to what extent. But, irrespective of any actual intermixture of blood, the whole mental cast and cultural complexion of the Christians of Goa are those of a Mestizo population. In their social habits and institutions and way of living, the Goanese Christians became basically distinct from the Hindus, and it was not a question of the Christian religion alone. Therefore I am including the Christians of Goa among the genetic half-castes, keeping in mind the possibility that many of them might not have any Portuguese blood at all.

The products of the intermingling of British and Hindu or Muslim blood are the Eurasians properly so-called.
They are found all over India, but are mainly concentrated in the three big cities of Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras, with secondary concentrations in important railway centres and some of the hill-stations. By the criterion of colour the Eurasians or half-castes of British descent range from the pure European blond to dark brown, but the community as a whole is fair. The dark Eurasians are not looked upon as equals by the fair ones, and as a rule the fair marry among the fair, and the dark among the dark. Whenever an over-ambitious dark Eurasian marries a fair girl of the community, there is trouble, and there is unhappiness. Thus, within the Eurasian community, there is a contrasted selective breeding which is making the fair side fairer, and the dark side darker. The difference in complexion is a source of internal stress in the community.

Coming now to the cultural half-castes, that is to say, to the converts into Christianity and their descendants, they are far more heterogeneous than the Eurasians. The community of Indian Christians is divided up into sub-communities, between which there is neither intermarriage, nor even social intercourse. These sub-groups owe their existence to the differences among the churches and denominations which have converted them, and also to the previous status of the converted families in Hindu society.

Since I am concerned in this chapter only with those Indian Christians who can be described as half-caste according to my definition, I am not including in my account the oldest Christian community in India. It is formed of the Syriac Christians of Kerala or the former Princely State of Travancore. They came over from Syria when the Arabs conquered their country, and since their arrival in India they have been living here as colonists.

Thus the first group of Indians converted to Christianity that I have to mention here are the Roman Catholic Christians who live at and around Mangalore, all of whom
have Portuguese names. They are, of course, a product of the Portuguese conquest of Western India, and as such they should go with the Christians of Goa. In fact, these two groups of Roman Catholics have the same history and are very close to each other in every way. Nevertheless, the Mangalore Christians do not look upon themselves as being the same kind of Christians as those from Goa. They even dislike the Goanese. A D’Souza, Mascarenhas, Pinto, or Lobo from Mangalore will not willingly marry among the De Souzas, Mascarenhases, Pintos, and Lobos from Goa. On the other hand, they do not like to be confused with the other Christians of India. They look upon themselves as a Catholic aristocracy even among other Catholics, not to speak of the other denominations. When one day talking to a lady from Mangalore, I described her as an Indian Christian, she indignantly protested: ‘I am not an Indian Christian, I am a Catholic. Indian Christians are low-caste converts to Protestantism.’

All the Christian groups of India retain the mark of the caste system. This is exhibited as strongly by the Christians whom the lady looked upon as mere ‘Indian Christians’, as by her fellow-Catholics. They continue their caste status and pride of caste even in the generations born to Christianity and not merely converted to the new religion. For instance, a Bengali Christian who bears such surnames as Banerji, Chatterji, Mukherji, Bose, or Dutt will be very wary about a Bengali Christian who is a Biswas. Now, the son of an eminent Bengali Christian of Calcutta wanted to marry a girl with one of the lowly surnames—which are those of the low or depressed castes from which the converts came—and the father at first strongly objected, and his sister told us: ‘After all, we are Brahmin.’

Let me begin with the Eurasians. In assessing their position, and indeed of both the groups of genetic half-castes, one must keep in mind not only the immediate background of British rule, but also the ancient Hindu
background. The Aryan Hindus had a horror of miscegenation, especially that kind of miscegenation in which a woman of the superior and dominant race married a native. They treated the offspring of such intermarriages with such contempt that even the products of these were left with a permanent sense of inferiority. It was as if an indelible bar sinister was not only painted on their escutcheon but branded on their forehead. Of course, this was natural in a community of Whites who were colonists among a dark and uncivilized native population.

The ancient Hindus showed another characteristic prejudice. They had even greater suspicion of the half-caste who pretended to be Arya and tried to behave like one. In the Mahabharata Yudisthira asks Bhishma, ‘Grandfather! How can we recognize a half-caste who is born of the seed of a man of inferior caste in the womb of a woman of superior caste, but who looks or dresses like an Arya?’ Bhishma replies, ‘The baseness of a man born of miscegenation is easily detected from his un-Aryan conduct; indiscriminate habits, cruelty, non-observance of rituals proclaim the low origin of these men; . . . they can never hide their baseness; just as tigers and other animals cannot give up their nature, these men too cannot . . . mere knowledge of the sacred books cannot remove the baseness of a base man.’ So it goes on.

Contemporary Hindus have certainly not outgrown this ancient prejudice, and no Hindu can, for he remains basically genetic in all his social outlook: a believer in blood and birth. Moreover, he was not taught to think differently by his British rulers. They displayed, and even paraded, a good deal of the Hindu contempt for the half-castes they themselves had created. They had the same horror of miscegenation. Thus it happened that in Calcutta no woman of pure English birth who had married a Bengali in England and come over to her husband’s country, could ever have any social life among the British of the city. As for a man of Eurasian origin, it was virtually impossible for him to marry among the pure
British. He could not even mix with them in society on an equal footing. The British in India showed yet another similarity with the Hindus in thinking that the Eurasian who knew his place and kept to it was a better man than the Eurasian who wanted to pass off as an Englishman.

Even Kipling could not write about the Eurasians with complete sympathy, though they were the genetic product of British imperialism. Not that he did not see good qualities in them—read his description of the Eurasian boys at St Xavier's school at Lucknow; but he also knew that there was another side to the matter. So, while giving them their due, he also made Kim cut in with a snort when Mahbub Ali spoke of the young sahibs of St Xavier's:

'Not all! Their eyes are blued and their nails are blackened with low-caste blood, many of them. Sons of _mehteranes_—brothers-in-law to the _bhungi_ (sweeper).'

All that the British in India admitted was that, having brought this class into existence in the country, they had a duty to it and were under an obligation to provide suitable livelihood for its members, which was, of course, like the behaviour and conduct of all honourable men towards their natural sons. Although it cannot be said that in this matter the British authorities in India quite took their cue from Louis XIV, Charles II, or even Lord Chesterfield, they did give the Eurasians every help they could in obtaining employment matched to their outlook and aptitudes. The community as a whole did not possess much ambition, nor did it show any high degree of ability or intelligence. Generally speaking, the Eurasians were like feeble replicas of the British lower middle-class white-collar workers. But they had stronger outdoor interests than the Hindus. So they were given employment in the Post and Telegraph Department, in the railways, in the Survey Department, and partly also in the engineering and medical services in the lower grades, besides being appointed to minor administrative posts in the
secretariats. Outside government service they were appointed in mercantile houses and British shops, and their women, when they worked, had almost a monopoly of the posts of stenotypists and saleswomen in the British offices and shops.

This framework of their economic life naturally determined their outlook and also the quality of their personal life. It was very dull, commonplace, and even vulgar. Even when they rose to higher levels mentally, they never achieved distinction, depth, or originality. At best they showed a conventional and well-intentioned goodness.

But the curious thing is that despite this ordinariness their life was not free from its pain. In India even the most unexciting life has its bitterness, and in their way the Eurasians were eaten into by spleen. While British rule lasted they had no means of knowing what the Hindus felt towards them, and they did not suffer from Hindu contempt. But they felt all the insult of the British attitude, and nursed a standing grievance. There hung over their consciousness the shadow of a dispossessed life, cast by the knowledge that all their potentialities were limited by something over which they had no control, namely, their birth. This fostered in all Eurasians a resentment against the British, which often became strong enough to be sullenness, affecting the mood and temper of the whole community.

Yet they could not allow themselves to be driven by this sentiment into anti-British behaviour. They knew equally well that their position in India was dependent on the British. So they developed a psychological dichotomy, in which their resentment against the local British came to be mixed with the impulse, which became a habit, to look up to the British in India as protectors and to remain abjectly dependent on them. To this was added another psychological maladjustment. Towards the people of the country, especially to the Hindus, they behaved with an arrogance which was very stupid. But, of course, it was intelligible: it was derived half from the assurance
of British protection, and half from the consciousness that they were partly of the ruling race, or in any case nearer to the ruling race than to the Hindus. So they also addressed Bengali gentlemen in Calcutta as 'Babu'. The English have now given up this form of address, but the half-castes still call us 'Babu'.

All these strands of feelings and ideas, in their combination of a crushing awareness of inferiority, rancour, and the egregious race pride which they displayed towards the natives of the country made for an unbalanced collective personality. This personality often found expression in behaviour, which was not wholly normal even in British days when the Eurasians had a sense of special protection. Although the community as a whole was most effectually defended by its mediocrity, which engendered sluggishness and prevented clashes, its basic instability also spilled out.

Young Eurasians, both boys and girls, showed a weak and degenerate form of the exuberant animal spirits of the English schoolboy and girl. The lack of balance lasted until the young people were overtaken in due time by the general insipidity of the class. To young Eurasian girls, more especially, the instability gave a deceptive beauty, like that of a rime-covered, but canker-eaten, moss rose. This type of beauty with its appearance of fragility and evanescence attracted some true Europeans with a romantic temper, because what they took it for was European feminine charm polarized by an exotic light, but in a direction which was opposite to that of Creoles. But if any of them was drawn by it into a permanent man-woman relationship, he very soon found reason to regret it. Even before age and married life had congealed the Eurasian wivces into their natural commonplaceness, they showed themselves as women with whom it was impossible to live. They were either lifeless wax dolls without a mind but capable, nevertheless, of looking frighteningly unhappy, or demons driven by a heady, but very volatile, essence of sensuality with no body. Every moment the
unfortunate man would feel like strangling the creature out of exasperation, yet every moment he would also realize the utter impossibility of hurting anything so flimsy, so much like an ethereal embodiment of all that was frail and feather-brained in womankind.

These are the antecedents which have to be kept in mind in trying to assess the life of the Eurasians in present-day India. Unfortunately for them, another and a very painful antecedent has also to be recalled. In the British days it was the women of this class who mostly supplied prostitutes for the White Man in India, and they were concentrated in the big cities. In Calcutta the quarter in which these women lived was known as Kareya. It had rows of *maisons de tolérance*. These bawdy-houses with their bead, lace, or net curtains and glimpses of tawdry bric-à-brac, suggested a sad meretricity such as is conveyed in phrases like *filles de joie et de tristesse*, and the impression was heightened by the sudden appearance at a door, or a window from which a canary cage was hanging, of a young woman with a thin but hectic face and sunken eyes. More unfortunately still, there was a large number of amateur practitioners in the community, how many it was difficult to say, but certainly not too few.

Even down to the twenties of this century the Hindus hardly cultivated Eurasian prostitutes, professional or amateur. These were considered above them, and, besides, the Hindus had not as yet learnt to enjoy Eurasian *putinrie*. There is a style and genius in prostitution as there is in all other human activities. But with the growth of external Westernization among the Hindus, which has been increasing in the last forty years or so, the fashion of going to Eurasian prostitutes has also developed substantially, and it has to be admitted that there is an innate appropriateness in this. A Bengali in trousers was likely to look very incongruous in the arms of a traditional Bengali prostitute, who had the Bengali woman stamped all over herself; moreover, the man was also bound to feel uncomfortable. And to indulge the new
yearning for drinking strong spirits was even more difficult with them, for in the company of a Bengali prostitute, who had no nerves to speak of, it had to be joint drinking and vomiting, and vomiting and drinking, all the time until the power to do either was lost in stupor. Drinking with Eurasian girls, on the other hand, was likely to be more in the cocktail party style.

In addition, there was a whole complex of hard-set predispositions and sensibilities which came into play in making Eurasian prostitutes fashionable among the Hindus. For one thing, the Hindu debauchees, especially the hard-boiled ones, had a feeling that the Hindu prostitutes were not piquant enough. This was quite an old idea, and before it worked in favour of the Eurasian prostitute it had been helping the Muslim. In an old Bengali book the major domo of a rich man says to him, ‘Babu, do not go to a Hindu whore, but only to Mussulman wenches, because you will get more fun out of women who eat garlic and onions than from those who do not.’ Not even the most fanatical Hindu vegetarian thought that this type of food improved prostitutes, whom they wanted to be game.

Secondly, the Hindu women in this profession tended to be homely. They would not go beyond certain limits. If, in addition, any of them came to develop some sort of affection for a regular customer or took what Bengali gay dogs and the more refined police officers of Calcutta euphemistically abbreviated in the Roman alphabet as P.N.—which is quite correctly translated as ‘lover for love’—she showed a dangerous tendency to behave like a wife, and became capable of thinking that the most impassioned declaration of love was to say, ‘Have a handful of rice before you go, for my sake!’ In a certain District town in West Bengal the houses of ill-fame bore signboards: ‘Dinner and bed for gentlemen who have to be in town overnight.’

Thirdly, by going to prostitutes of European descent, the Hindus also got satisfaction in the patriotic and nation-
alistic way. It could be felt as a form of revenge for political subjection if they could pay back the humiliation to the women of the ruling stock. This inclination had also grown in the Muslim period and was easily transferred to the Eurasians who were of the ruling race, at least on the father's side of the family. The Hindus like to satisfy their sensuality and their nationalism at the same time, and some of them even read the 'sexy' novels now coming from the West in paper-backs for the double pleasure of being titillated and coming on fresh proofs of the depravity of the White races. Before considerate European and American novelists began to meet the demand with specially written material, even Anna Karenina was read by some Hindus in this spirit. A very recent practical development along these lines has also to be noted. Most Indians have already acquired an uneasy feeling that the Americans are going to be their future political masters. This is necessarily having its reaction on their sensual appetite. The Hindu sensual avanguardisti have already begun to boast about their delectable experiences with American women, with what truth I am unable to say.

Fourthly, just as there was on the one side a moral satisfaction to be had from going to prostitutes of European stock, there was, on the other, escape from a certain kind of moral qualm. Muslim and European women did not confront the Hindu sensualist with the unpleasant prospect of having a sudden pain shooting through his pleasure by being given glimpses of the degradation and suffering inflicted by Mrs Warren's profession, which the Hindu prostitutes at times could give. I shall tell an anecdote about this.

One evening a friend of mine was going along a street in north Calcutta, notorious as a disreputable quarter. He saw the usual groups of bold and tittering persons at the doors. But at one in a rather quiet stretch, he saw only one very young girl standing timidly. Something in her air made my friend look back after he had gone a
few steps. He saw her lips parting, and as he expected the simpering solicitation, an infinitely more dangerous whisper floated across the still atmosphere: 'Dada Babu,*
give me something. I have not eaten the whole day, and my landlady will not give me food until I have handed her my earnings.' He walked back, put what he had with him in her hand, and walked away again with an exercise of the will. Though there are people who would, even in such a situation, insist on value for money or even a little more, there are also men who can think that one opportunity for sexual satisfaction is well lost for an act of compassion. But it is unreasonable to expect such sacrifices to be made continually or by everybody. So it was wiser in every way to avoid such risks by going to women who could not put lust and compassion at war.

Lastly, the cultivation of Eurasian prostitutes had a snob value, and to be able to command only Hindu women was looked upon as the sign of a third-rate rake’s progress.

All these factors taken together began to turn the attentions of the Hindus to Eurasian girls. Another friend of mine satirized the emerging fashion in alliterative Bengali verse, ‘Kareya bareya bara,’ which meant: ‘Kareyas [that is, the Eurasian prostitutes of the quarter of that name in Calcutta] were very fine.’ But even more than the professional it was the amateur Eurasian girls who exercised the stronger lure on the Hindus.

The new fashion made its appearance in the twenties, and by the thirties was well established. Pioneers in this exploration were some very rich Muslims and Hindus, especially young men of the wealthy Marwari community, the longest range of whose Westernization at that epoch was the Eurasian girl. Regular touts wandered about in Chowringhee and nearby streets, especially at Whiteaways Corner, and offered to take well-dressed and prosperous-looking Hindu youths to ‘Anglo-Indians’ in well-known

* ‘Dada Babu’ literally means ‘Brother and Master’, but its respectfully tender suggestion is impossible to translate.
Eurasian streets. With independence the Hindus have, of course, attained the status of White clients, without superseding them.

It is this Hindu eyeing of the girls of the Eurasian community which constitutes the greatest future danger to it, socially and morally. In India every ruling power has in the past showed its particular taste in women. The Moguls, for instance, preferred Kashmiri beauties, the British Muslim and Aboriginal girls, and the Hindus would rather have women of European descent, after they had outgrown their earlier taste for Muslim mistresses. The more risky part of such attentions to a politically and socially depressed community is that they seem to evoke a readiness to be obliging, and by and by it becomes unable to resist the money and power of the rulers. Its members become all the more responsive because they think that they can thus exert a backstair influence in the interest of their community. The laxness already shown by the community of Eurasians in meeting the sensual demands of the Hindus has risked the position even of its honest women. There is a general tendency among the Hindus who are on the sensual quest to look upon all Eurasian girls, irrespective of their conduct, as fair prey.

As it happens, the very figure of these girls has become a sort of emblem of their destiny. They have a characteristic physical appearance, which is top heavy. While, even when not plump, they have full upper limbs and equally full nether limbs down to the calves, they exhibit a thinness from the calves to the ankle which is wholly unexpected. This part of their shins is extraordinarily slender, and since they heighten the gazelle-like effect by wearing high-heeled shoes they seem to be always on the point of toppling over. To the onlooker they give a curious sensation suggestive of their luscious appeal to the Hindus and precarious foothold in the Hindu order.

In other respects the Eurasians have neither much to fear nor much to expect from the Hindus, who are quite
willing to leave them alone in their own half-caste world. The community is definitely not under suspicion like the Muslims, even though in the past it formed part of the British ruling order and treated Hindus badly. Their former arrogance seems to have been forgotten and forgiven, which, given the cast of the Hindu mind, is to be expected. What a Hindu mostly wants to inflict on an enemy, national or personal, is moral humiliation. Once defeat is accepted on that plane, a Hindu will neither kill, nor persecute, nor even harm the one-time enemy’s interests, and the Eurasians have accepted defeat.

But the main obstacle in the way of a stable and psychologically adjusted relationship between the Hindus and the Eurasians is not the attitude of the new rulers, but of themselves. The British affiliation has not been blotted out of the memory and mind of the Eurasians by the disappearance of British political power. When the British withdrew in 1947 many of the Eurasians felt strongly that they could not break the tie and that, for better for worse, their lot was cast finally with the British, and so they chose to emigrate to Great Britain. I have conflicting reports of their experience there.

In India, on the other hand, there is undoubted maladjustment at all levels and in all circles, and the presence of a strong but suppressed resentment can be felt. Their leaders, like those of the Muslims, feel compelled to say that they are as good Indians as any Hindu could be. But in the public utterances of the same leaders there is an undertone of continual grievance. In political life they are as a rule in the opposition, constituting a feeble element in it, and voicing the small grievances of a small and weak community.

Besides, there is a strange unreality in their claim to be Indian, which is revealed very significantly by their assertion that English is one of the languages of India and the mother tongue of true Indians. That alone is enough to show what their title to be Indian is worth. I am sure that if they wanted to be regarded as Indians in the sense