Thoughts on Indian Discontents

Edwyn Bevan
First published in 1929, this title presents some reflections from one of the leading cultural commenters of his day, Edwyn Bevan, on the notoriously controversial subject of burgeoning Indian Nationalism during the twilight of the British Empire.

Bevan’s analysis of the peculiarities, tensions and divisive issues of the Indian situation as it existed at the end of the 1920s is of particular relevance today, as historians attempt to develop a nuanced and, as far as possible, objective account of the differing mentalities that proved so volatile. The argument proceeds with reference to a range of seemingly disparate topics: the difference between forward- and backward-looking nationalism, the physical well-being of the average Indian, and religious ethos, to name only three. This fascinating reissue will prove valuable to students of Indian and colonial history, British foreign policy and the politics of nationalism.
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Thoughts on Indian Discontents

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PREFACE

At a moment when India is much in the thoughts of men, and books dealing with the great problem, in view of the present crisis, are multiplied, the reflexions contained in this little book may be put forth for what they are worth. They go little into the details of the situation, for which, indeed, I have not sufficient knowledge. But just as sometimes the general lie of a mountain may be better discerned by one who looks at it from a distance than by someone close enough to see the details of rocks and trees, so it is just possible that my view of the Indian problem, although I look at it from a distance, may enable me to see some of its general lines in relation to the moving world of to-day. The little book on Indian Nationalism (Macmillan), which I wrote in 1913, had a kindly reception both from some of the Englishmen who had large experience of Indian administration and from some Indian Nationalists. It made, perhaps, no contribution likely to be permanently remembered, except one phrase—the “steel frame”, quoted from it by Lord Sinha when he made his Presidential speech at the Indian National Congress, and quoted from Lord Sinha by Mr. Lloyd George in a speech from which it has passed into general currency. The phrase is now offensive to Indian Nationalists, although in its original context it was unexceptionable: my point was to insist that a steel frame, even if necessary, could hardly be comfortable, and that you could not be surprised if the wearer wished to get rid of it.
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THOUGHTS ON INDIAN DISCONTENTS

CHAPTER I

INDIAN UNREST, THE NEW PHASE

More than a century ago, as the result of a process which the rulers of England never clearly intended, the people of this Western island became the dominant power in the ancient and far-off and alien world of India. This rule of one people over another seemed to our ancestors to be justified by the great precedents of human history. Conquest of weaker peoples by stronger had always gone on in the world. England was only doing the same sort of thing which Rome had done, and Rome had never felt squeamish about its right to rule. Whatever ugly and evil passages there may be in the story how Rome built her Empire, the building of it certainly did display notable powers and capacities of the human spirit, and even certain kinds of moral virtue, which make the Roman Empire an achievement unquestionably imposing. There have always been people in England who thought of British rule in India in the light of such analogies. We have gained India, so they feel, as a possession by force of arms and political sagacity, and to think of relinquishing our power from any moral or sentimental scruple is a weakness which would make us show as poor creatures beside the Romans—a lamentable failure of nerve. Unfortunately we have a more complicated spiritual con-
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stitution than the men of that old pagan world; even if we are not Christians, there is enough Christianity in our make-up to prevent us being wholeheartedly and happily pagan. Quite early in the history of British rule, the idea of right conferred by conquest was crossed by another idea which had never entered the mind of the Romans—the idea of trusteeship, the idea which regarded the people of India after the analogy of a minor who has to be trained by his guardian for independence. Great Englishmen in India at the beginning of the nineteenth century, like Elphinstone and Munro, looked forward frankly to England resigning the power to Indians some day, when Indians had received the necessary political education. The strange relation between this Western people and India was then a new thing, but as time went on and generations came who found British rule in India a fact in the world into which they were born, it came to seem part of the permanent order of things, and the imagination of a day when England would withdraw was relegated to a future so distant that it ceased to count for present action. Also an effect of the Mutiny was inevitably to make rule by the strong hand seem the essential thing for many days to come. Yet there continued to be from time to time utterances by people in authority which held up the other idea—that of training India for self-government. Only one could hardly say that the Government had committed itself to this policy: the other view—the strong hand and no concessions—had a large amount of support amongst those who served, or had served, in India, and it was still doubtful which way the Government would ultimately incline. A copy of the little book
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on Indian Nationalism, which I wrote in 1913, has been given me with pencilled annotations on the margins written by someone who had held, shortly before that date, one of the highest places amongst the British in India. I had written, "We have had authoritative statements that the ultimate object of the British rulers is to train India for self-government", and the pencilled comment is "Cant: we have sunk tons of money in India, and it would be a bold man who says we would risk its loss."

Then, eight years later, during the War, came the epoch-making statement in Parliament which issued in the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms. England committed itself publicly and definitely to the policy which my critic had described as cant. By the Act of December 1919, not only was a declaration made that swaraj was the goal of British rule in India, but the work of transferring power was actually begun by the transference of certain departments of Government to Indian Ministers elected by Indians, and it was provided that every ten years a commission should consider whether the condition of things admitted of further transference. There remained now no difference between the view of the end adopted by the British Government and the view asserted by Indian Nationalists. There remained only disagreement regarding the way to that end. The British Government was resolved to transfer the government to Indians bit by bit, according to its own judgment what, at each date, the situation allowed: the Indian Nationalists wanted more powers transferred to them at once, and the rate of transference to be regulated by themselves, not by the British.
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Of course, many people in England thought this declaration of policy disastrous—people like the critic of my little book. Rome had never done anything like that. At least, if on two occasions Rome proclaimed the “autonomy of the Hellenes”, there was no question of the Hellenes, enclosed as they were by the Roman power, ever asserting a real independence. People of the old Imperial school declared that India had become a lost dominion. And that is probably true. Whether it prove possible in the future for India to remain in any political connexion with the British Commonwealth of Nations or not, a self-governing India could not be a “possession” of Great Britain. If England had determined never to “lose” India, it ought never to have begun any process of transferring power to Indians. It is quite unreasonable to initiate such a process and then start back from its inevitable conclusion. It is arguable from the point of view of pagan imperialism that England was contemptible in surrendering power; it is arguable from another point of view that England was acting in accordance with the higher morality; but what is certain is that you cannot have it both ways. And now that the decision has been taken, England must accept the consequences. Old service men may inveigh against our weak sentimentalism from their club arm-chairs. When the Montagu-Chelmsford Constitution was set up, there were even some Indians who agreed with them. I have a letter written me in 1920 by an Indian friend, whom I had known as a young man of exceptional intelligence. After some years of contact with political life in India, he wrote in criticism of something I had published, in which I had expressed
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the hope of India's making progress to democratic self-government:

I think Montagu and his friends have done a great evil to this country. As between Montagu and his critics (European), I prefer the latter. My own experience supports them. The day of honest government will soon be gone. I have not met one honest Indian politician. . . . I cannot imagine how it will end. I feel more than ever that "the faith in British institutions" is a myth. Britain is represented by the British officer. If he goes, off goes Britain also. This district has had Indian collectors for four years. There is more corruption in it than in any other I have seen. Is it not sad? Everyone I meet has the same opinion. . . . I marvel at your robust faith in democracy. I have lost what little faith I had. Our politicians only want to eliminate the Englishman, not to serve democracy. Most Indians are, by nature, bureaucratic. This becomes clear as soon as a "non-official" gets power. You must know that as yet there is no such person as "Liberal" or "Conservative" in India. We have only the non-official, who is supposed to be all that. India seems full of madmen. Many of us are too disgusted to act; others are powerless to stop a movement which looks for support to schoolboys, filled with the wind that comes out of our newspaper offices.

But whether England was wise or unwise in determining to make self-government the goal in India, it seems unlikely that it will now reverse its policy and go back to the old form of British rule.

A disagreement, as has just been said, remains between the British and the Indian Nationalists regarding the way to self-government. But it might have been thought that the situation would be greatly eased when the British formally adopted the Nationalist view of the goal, that their declaration would inaugurate a period in which such
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controversy between the Government and the Nationalists as still went on would lose much of the old bitterness and vehemence, and a large measure of co-operation towards the common goal become possible. If anyone had such expectations, the event has been strangely different. Nationalist agitation against British rule in the old days, when the British held all the power fast in their own hands, was feeble compared with the virulent hostility which has marked Nationalist opposition ever since the British have begun transferring power to Indians. Various explanations of this may be given. The old service men probably say that it is just what they predicted: “the Oriental respects only strength”, and any concessions he interprets as a sign of weakness, so that it is quite natural if agitation waxes bolder and more uncompromising as the Government yields to Nationalist demands. Or the result may be regarded as due to a series of unfortunate accidents which threw things out of track at the beginning of the new period: first unrest in the Punjab, combined with the threat of an Afghan invasion, which led to the Amritsar affair, then the breaking up of the Ottoman Empire, which troubled the Indian Mohammedans and led to the unhappily conceived Khilafat agitation. No doubt, like other movements of thought and feeling in great masses of men, the present temper in India is due to a conjunction of many causes at this particular moment of history. The general unrest in men’s minds all over the world, which followed the War, counts for a good deal. But what specially has to be noted is that amongst the changes taking place in the world has been the national self-assertion of Turks, Chinese, Persians, against outside
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control; a little while ago it also seemed as if Afghanistan were about to be transformed into a strong modern State. That a new thrill should have gone through the Indians as they looked at these things was inevitable. And the Russian Revolution adds another disturbing stimulus—not so much what Bolshevik emissaries can do in India by actual stealthy propaganda, but the wider effect produced by the spectacle of a great despotism, apparently of immense strength and range of power, annihilated in a moment and the seizure of power by people who only a little while before had been hunted agitators. When the existing order of things which environs us seems stable and unvarying, that acts upon our minds by suggestion and causes us to acquiesce in the world as we find it; but when great changes take place before our eyes, wild hopes suddenly seem not beyond the possibility of realization; for us, too, the hard shapes of the actual melt and the future becomes an exciting speculation: an inner vibration makes intolerable the humdrum of every day.

Whatever the causes may be of the present mood of Indians, it seems to be generally agreed by people acquainted with the situation that we must expect in the near future a hostile movement greater in range and intensity than any since the Mutiny. It is, of course, true that the Government has a position of much greater power than it had seventy years ago. This is due to a process which has been going on all over the globe—the process of scientific invention. An effect of that process has been to make it possible for smaller groups, if organized and equipped, to dominate ever greater masses of men and wider areas. In ancient times the forces of a
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Government might easily find themselves opposed to insurgent forces on an equal, or even an inferior, footing. Each side fought with similar arms, and insurgents had opportunity to organize their attack before the Government was aware. Already in the nineteenth century the development of fire-arms, railways, and telegraphy were giving an advantage to Governments as against irregular forces. In countries like Turkey and Persia, the Central Government during the nineteenth century was getting the outlying provinces under its control to a much greater extent than had been possible in days when Turkey and Persia had been strong and illustrious amongst the States of the world. The power of the Central Government in these countries over the provinces was increasing at the very time when the power of the State, as against other States, was sinking. But in quite recent times there has been new and wonderful advance in scientific contrivance—wireless telegraphy, petrol locomotion, air navigation, machine-guns, tanks—and to a greater extent than ever before in the history of mankind a relatively small number of men can dominate immensely superior numbers and vast territories. We see the result to-day in countries where the dictatorship of a man or a group has been set up against the will of the people as a whole, or of large sections of the people. In Italy, it is probable that the Fascist dictatorship is not liked by a considerable portion of the Italian nation; in Russia, the peasantry, who constitute by far the most numerous part of the population, for the most part hate Bolshevism. But no opposition either in Italy or in Russia has a chance. The Central Government would be aware of it, thanks to present means
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of communication, long before it came to a head, and crush it. Under present conditions, when any group in a country has once got firm hold of the central machinery and can depend on its forces, army and police, it can securely defy almost any amount of popular discontent. The tumult of the street, which for ancient government was always a thing to be feared—

lest crowds on fire

"To arms, to arms", the loiterers call,
And thrones be tumbled in the mire;¹

this can be very quickly disposed of by aircraft and machine-guns. The only thing which can overthrow such a dominant group to-day—apart from foreign attack—is a dissension in its armed forces which divides them into two practically equivalent antagonistic bodies. For if it is only a case of the mutiny of a regiment or two, or of a minority of the police, it will, of course, be easily suppressed by the bulk of the forces which remain faithful. Where the armed forces, as in Italy or Russia, are of the same race as the rest of the people, there is always some risk of popular discontent infecting them, and if that happens the danger may become serious for the dominant group. But even when the armed forces are drawn from the people, a dominant group may give them special privileges and create an esprit de corps amongst them, which keeps them steadily on its side, immune from infection.

When we look at what has happened in the last few years in Italy, Russia, Spain, Poland, Turkey, we may

¹ Horace, Odes, i, 35 (Conington’s translation).
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well wonder what the end of the process will be. If the progress of scientific contrivance, so far as it has gone, to-day enables small groups of men to dominate large countries, without the possibility of opposition, the progress of scientific contrivance, in the next hundred years, might quite well make it possible for a relatively small group of men to dominate the whole globe. International finance is already a power overriding national boundaries. A hundred years hence, a group belonging to no particular nation might rule the rest of mankind autocratically by means of a vast police system; for, of course, there would, in such a state of the world, be no national armies any more. War, at any rate, would have ceased, and it may be that mankind would not have paid too high a price for that, even in losing political liberty. But it would be rather an ironical conclusion to the present controversies between Englishmen and Indians if a hundred years hence they were both alike subject to some group whose leading members were Germans, Americans, or Japanese.

No doubt it is true that individuals can get into their hands some scientific means of destruction, for instance, bombs. But it hardly needs saying that the destruction wrought by a bomb can no more weaken a Government than a pea-shooter can bring down an elephant. A bomb may kill an individual official, but his place is immediately taken by another. It is likely to inflict hideous suffering on a number of perfectly innocent people; but without weakening the Government, it provokes reprisals which actually throw back the cause it was supposed to further. This is so generally recognized to-day
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that no one can entertain the idea of throwing a bomb, unless he is an immature youth with crazy ideas of the world, or a man of really criminal tendencies attracted to a deed of violence, quite apart from any end that it may serve.

But if any Englishman, looking at the situation from the standpoint of national egoism only, regards the possibility of Indian hostility with equanimity because of the great strength of the Government’s position, his vision is short. The Government certainly has the power to put down any force which the Indians could get together, but it could do so only by using drastic methods of repression, and very many people in England have now come to have sensibilities which would cause them acute mental distress if the Government of India became involved in a series of repressive measures, especially if any shooting on a large scale took place. Here again the old Diehards may say that we have become contemptibly soft and sentimental. Certainly in former days men in a position of power rarely felt such squeamishness. I am not sure whether there is any parallel in the past to Asoka’s pangs of contrition for the blood he had shed in conquest. To-day, other peoples have less of such feelings than we have. The Fascists could never have established their power in Italy if they had not done a good deal of killing and exercised ruthless repression. The Bolsheviks in Russia, when they destroyed their bourgeoisie and upper class, inflicted death and torture wholesale on thousands without, apparently, a qualm. Perhaps if we had their mental constitution and applied their methods to India, no more would be heard of Indian unrest after quite a
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short time. But the fact remains that the English to-day have not the mental constitution of the Bolsheviks, and to be responsible for bloodshed makes very many of us unhappy. "If there is trouble in India," a British officer said grimly to a friend of mine, "the first thing to do would be to cut all the cables to England." I am afraid to break communications would not be so easy in these days. But it is unquestionable that under certain conditions of popular excitement, when appeals to reason have ceased to have any effect, the Government can only maintain itself by striking hard, just as we are told that, in certain cases of hysteria, argument is of no avail, and nothing can restore self-control but a sound slap. Conjunctures really do sometimes occur when there are no alternatives before a Government but either to abdicate its functions and give up a country to anarchy or kill a number of people. This applies just as much to native Governments as to foreign Governments. In 1920, when Germany was in that state of paroxysm which not unnaturally followed the terrible experiences of the War and its conclusion, it is generally believed that the Social-Democrat Government saved the situation by shooting a good many people in the Ruhr. The German Communists denounced the action of the Government forces as an atrocity in terms just as strong as those used by Indians of the action of General Dyer: in any case it was a killing of Germans by a German Government. In India, before the days of British rule, the Mogul emperor drove his elephant upon an unruly crowd to stamp numbers to death. If in the future India has swaraj, an Indian Nationalist, should he hold a command in the police or the army, may quite
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conceivably find himself faced with the choice either to fire upon a rebellious crowd and afterwards be pointed at as a brutal butcher, or not to fire and afterwards be pointed at as the man who, had he only showed nerve at the critical moment, might have crushed revolt in its beginnings and saved his country from extensive misery and bloodshed. I thank God that I am never likely to be in such a predicament. The possibility of such conjunctures occurring is inherent in government as such. The only difference in the case of a foreign Government is that the resentment caused by such action of the Government forces amongst those opposed to it has an additional sting from the thought that people of the country have been killed by foreigners. For the people actually killed or wounded I do not suppose that it makes much difference whether those who shoot are foreigners or fellow-countrymen, but it makes a deal of difference for the people all over the country who hear of the incident. That is just one of the things which make the position of foreign rulers an invidious one. There are actions which a foreign Government cannot do without provoking profound resentment in the country as a whole; and yet they may be actions which any Government, under certain conditions, is obliged to perform.

Whether it is sentimentalism or not for Englishmen to feel distress at the thought of the British Government in India suppressing revolt by killing or imprisoning a large number of people may be a matter of controversy: sentiment of some kind is implied in all moral valuation, and the feeling which makes people hate the idea of death and pain being inflicted upon a multitude of their fellow-men
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by those for whose action they are themselves in part responsible cannot be described as an unworthy feeling simply because it is a sentiment. We should have to condemn all kindliness or chivalry or patriotism as sentimentalism at that rate. But it is clear, beyond all controversy, that sentimentalism, in the sense of something reprehensible, does exist where sentiment has got into the wrong place, where, for instance, it is allowed to obscure or distort our view of facts. Those Englishmen are guilty of such sentimentalism who wish the British Government to go on in India and refuse to contemplate the repressive measures without which, in certain contingencies, government could not go on. I do not think we could call pacific anarchists of the Tolstoyan type sentimentalists in the same sense; for Tolstoyans do face the fact that a readiness to take measures of this kind is essentially involved in government, and for that reason they want to get rid of all government. Tolstoy would not even, on his principles, have approved of self-government for India. If, indeed, one asks such pacifists how, without any government at all, men of violent will are to be prevented from preying upon the weak and gentle, I have never heard of any satisfactory answer given from that quarter.

Englishmen who do both realize that such repressive measures would certainly be necessitated by any widespread movement against the Government in India, and at the same time hate the thought of them, cannot, therefore, be consoled, in looking at the present drift of things, by the consideration that, if it comes to the point, the Government is strong enough to put down any resistance.
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They would do anything they could to prevent things coming to that point. Any Indians who have a sense of realities must look forward to such a conjuncture with even greater apprehension. There would be not only the suffering inflicted upon a great number of individuals among their fellow-countrymen, but the incalculable damage done to the whole of India. An unsuccessful attempt to paralyse or defeat the existing Government would leave all nationalism in India terribly weakened and throw back the advance of the country for a long time to come. Unfortunately, it by no means follows, when two bodies of men are moving to a collision, that because the more clear-sighted on each side see that the collision would be a catastrophe for both, which reasonableness could easily avoid, the catastrophe will therefore be avoided. Such movements of men in the mass are not directed by logic. There is a psychology of crowds, which shows the mass heaving by the force of impulses, only dimly conscious of their ends, acting under the suggestion of certain ideas or phrases, each individual dominated absolutely by the volume of feeling which runs through the whole. Those who are called leaders are largely themselves hypnotized by the ideas in the air. For them, too, it is impossible to make a sane calculation of the elements in the situation and see things and men, on their own side and on the other, as they really are. Or if they have a truer vision, they may not have the moral courage to set themselves in singular opposition to popular currents running strong.

For an Englishman to give advice to Indians in the present phase of things would not only be useless, it
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would actually be a new provocation. For one of the principal constituents in the mass of feeling which now impels most of educated India is the desire to act for themselves, without external direction. The thing which especially exasperates them in the English is the assumption of superiority. In the jargon now fashionable this is described as an "inferiority complex". But to give advice seems necessarily to imply some belief in the giver of his superior wisdom. From an Englishman Indians to-day would receive advice less than from anybody. Possibly they would resent it less from Lord Irwin than from any other Englishman because his official position might furnish some excuse. But it is questionable whether under the conditions of the moment they would listen to advice from anyone, even, as a prominent Indian recently expressed it to me in conversation, "from the angel Gabriel".

Englishmen, therefore, who study the Indian situation at the present moment should beware of judging the action of Indians by logic. Action here, as so often, is to be explained, not by logic, but by psychology. It springs not from a cool and objective estimate of the facts of the world, but from impulses whose causes go back to a mass of feelings and thoughts which have been created by different incidents in the past and now work with the imperious force of hypnotic control. Probably if imaginative sympathy in an Englishman were large enough to enable him to enter into the feelings which have successively swayed Indians in recent years, many actions which, looked at from outside, seem wholly irrational would be understood as the inevitable outcome of their psychological
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antecedents. Perhaps we might in some cases speak even of psychological justification. In the case, for instance, of the widespread opposition to the Simon Commission, nothing could be more inept, if judged by logic. It is easy to show that the arguments put forward by Indian Nationalists rest on quite false presuppositions, that if the Simon Commission is an organ of the House of Commons for transmitting to Parliament the views and desires of different elements in India, it will not do its work better by containing in itself an Indian element, any more than an ear-trumpet, which gathers for a deaf man the sounds by which I may convey to him my demands, would do its work better if I put my hand into it. Or, again, that the Indians were fighting about a point which would not help their cause if they won it, because, had their agitation had the maximum conceivable success and the Commission been constituted entirely of Indians, Parliament would have been less likely to agree to Indian demands, if presented to it by such a body, than Parliament would be to agree to Indian demands if presented to it by a body constituted of its own members, and that the agitation was therefore as deplorable strategy in politics as in war the strategy of a general would be who wasted his forces to attack a position which did not command the field of battle. All this is true enough, but the logical absurdity of the agitation does not prove that it was not the natural psychological reaction to faults committed on the British side. If report speaks true, Indian leaders, even those ready to co-operate, had real ground of grievance in not having been taken more into consultation whilst the plan of the Commission was still under consideration; and a
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little more tact and courtesy in personal relations at an earlier stage would have obviated a great deal of the trouble. If this is so, we are not really meeting the case if we simply show that the agitation was logically absurd. We must get deeper down, to its psychological origins, and when we do that we cannot condemn it as wholly gratuitous.

In the same way, in looking at the Indian situation to-day as a whole, we should regard the psychological grounds of action as more important than the reasons put forward in debate. It may be impossible now, when large bodies of men are moving with the impetus of mass-suggestion, for any political sagacity to divert them from disaster. The situation bears a kind of likeness to the situation in the British Labour world before the attempt at a general strike in 1926. The human masses in that world, too, are largely driven by impulses which have psychological, rather than logical, grounds. And before 1926 the idea, widely prevalent, at the back of men’s minds that the adherents of Labour had in a general strike a weapon which they could use any day, and which would infallibly bring the bourgeoisie there and then to its knees, acted as a continual exciting cause and made it almost impossible for those who believed in it to acquiesce in any negotiated arrangement. They were inevitably restless till the weapon had been tried. When it was tried in 1926 it proved to be deceptive. The bourgeoisie could not, indeed, hold out permanently if labour were withdrawn from the essential services of the country; but it was shown that in these days when young men of the British bourgeoisie turn their hands in ordinary times to so many
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kinds of manual work, there were enough young men in an emergency to carry on the essential services for a much longer time than the strikers could maintain themselves. The supposition that a merely passive strike could bring the British bourgeoisie to its knees is now therefore eliminated for everybody as a delusion. That is a good thing, but it is a good thing purchased at excessive cost. No one knows when the country will recover from the economic damage inflicted upon it by the Strike of 1926.

There is a very similar idea widespread in India that a large movement of civil disobedience, without actual, organized war, would compel the Government to capitulate. No doubt the idea here, too, is a delusion; but so long as it rules in the minds of men, the psychological conditions for reasonable agreement are not there. It may be that Indian Nationalists will have to try civil disobedience, just as Labour had to try a general strike in 1926. But the cost of such an experiment for India is likely to be even greater than the cost of 1926 for England—terrible to contemplate. Perhaps if among the Indians themselves a man arose great enough to sway men’s minds, one who saw the facts of the world as they are, a way might be found by which India might win its freedom and the terrible damage of a vain struggle be avoided. But such men come only when God sends them, and the more clear-sighted Indian leaders of to-day, whilst they see the extent of the possible catastrophe, see also the magnitude of the forces now moving men in the mass, and so are tempted to abandon the attempt to save the situation as hopeless and resign themselves to a dull fatalism. The thing which makes the thought of a possible collision and
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struggle so poignant is that there is no reason, in the factors of the problem itself, why it should not be solved peaceably. There seems a way in which the Indians could secure the whole of their desire—unless the thing they desire proves to be something which the nature of things forbids—and in which at the same time the conditions regarded by the English as essential to their withdrawal would be satisfied. If Englishmen once set this way before themselves clearly and showed that they were willing to follow it, there is a faint chance that on the Indian side, too, a change might occur which allowed the voice of reason to be heard. This little book is written only in the hope that it may serve to make a few things clearer.

First, we must ask ourselves what our attitude really is to the Indian demand for independence.