

12. THE IDEAL.

The Nationalists for the first time attempted to place an ideal before the country. The Liberal creed was slow and halting; and their very cautiousness and prudence prevented them from framing an ideal for themselves or for the people. They chose to march from one change to another; they wanted the correction of this wrong or another; they wanted a little better government, a little more Liberal administration, a little more scope for Indian talent, a little more encouragement to Indian industries, a little more representation of Indians in the Councils of Government. They were at one with the Government as regards fundamentals: but they differed as regards details here and details there, and they differed as regards the pace of the movement. The officials formed the Conservative party as it were; and the Moderates formed the Liberal and more progressive party. But at bottom both agreed that the march of Indian mind is bound to be slow; and any hasty changes for which the Indian mind was not really prepared were bound to be mischievous.

The advent of the impatient political idealist changed all this. The Liberals were hurried on from the ideal of enlightened and humane and just administration, to the ideal of a more representative form of government, to a qualified form of responsible government of the colonial type. They had to meet the popular wishes: and they found it impossible after 1905 to postpone a clear and bold formulation of their ideal.

The new party deserves the credit of demanding a clear-cut enunciation of the goal towards which the Congress was moving. What then should be the goal? Here a practical politician like Tilak would accept a colonial form of self-government: but the Bengal Extremists

wanted to have complete independence as their goal. Having already defined very fully their attitude to the British Government they were bound consistently to demand separation from the Empire. Their quarrel was with the Government not because it was despotic, but because it was foreign. Hence they wanted a completely national government—'Swaraj'.

The word 'Swaraj' is indeed a new word in the literature of modern Indian politics. Dadabhai Naoroji in 1916 was bold enough to use it in his Congress Presidential speech; but he would not press the use of the word to its full logical connotation. The Extremist did not want to mince matters. Tilak said that he wanted Indians to rule India just as Englishmen rule England or Frenchmen France. B. C. Pal, however, boldly took up the question of the exact nature of Swaraj. Self-Government under British paramountcy did not appeal to him as an intelligible conception. How would the British assert their paramountcy? How and where would you draw the line between Indian sovereignty and British paramountcy? It is said that foreign policy at least legitimately belongs to the sphere of imperial authority: but if you allow the foreign affairs to be controlled by the British, you will have to allow the army to be controlled and regulated by the British. This implies further that the British should continue to control the purse of the nation. Where then will the right of self-taxation and self-administration go? Paramountcy is either formal and nominal, or real. If it is merely formal, where is the point in continuing it? If it is real, how can it be reconciled with any measure of genuine self-government? The line between internal affairs and external affairs is an arbitrary one and completely breaks down in practice. It is absurd for our politicians to imagine that England will willingly shoulder the burden and sacrifice of Indian defence while allowing India an unfettered right to exercise her will in all internal matters.

The analogy which the Moderates are fond of employing between India and other colonies is not a satisfactory one. The ties in the case of Australia and Canada are the ties of blood. India's case is different. England is white; while we are black and brown. Bryce said, "The colour-sense of the Anglo-Saxon is one of his strongest senses. The Asiatics may overcome their sense of colour, but the European cannot; and least of all can it be expected of the Anglo-Saxon European." The colonies receive with open arms the surplus population of England as immigrants but the English people consider India to be climatically unfit for this purpose. There is a common bond between the English people at home and the English people abroad; they can always maintain a common front against the coloured peoples and if necessary against other European powers. An independent India would not also allow free immigration from England because she would not receive the same accession of national life and strength from it as the Australians or Canadians do.

The ideal of self-government under British paramountcy is, therefore, an impossible ideal. The Swaraj that India really needs means complete self-government. The nation alone should have the supreme control over its political affairs, home affairs, foreign affairs, civil affairs, and military affairs. It means the unrestricted right and power for self-taxation, self-legislation, self-administration. This ideal is the same as that which even sober Gokhale did not object to when he said at Allahabad that he would not put any limits to the aspirations of his countrymen and desired that his people should attain the highest that is in them in their intellectual, in their industrial, in their moral, in their spiritual life.

But the ideal of Swaraj is said by the Liberal to be an unattainable ideal. The Extremist however does not desire any more than the Moderate to project a magnificent

ideal just to satisfy his political imagination. No serious politicians would allow free reins to their fancy and indulge in sweet romantic dreams out of all relation to actual reality. The ideal does not mean the unreal, the phantastic, the impossible; it is that which is implied in the real and is based on the actualities of the real.

The common objection that the ideal does not come within the range of practical politics applies equally to the ideal of Swaraj of the Extremists as well as the ideal of colonial self-government of the Moderates. Neither of these ideals enters into the imagination of the English rulers. Morley says: "As long as my imagination reaches, so long the Government of India must continue to be a personal and absolute Government." Such is the verdict of the most distinguished, the most sympathetic, the most broad-minded, the most philosophical, of the practicality of the ideals of both the Extremists and the Moderates.

The English politician knows too well that the moment India gets control even over internal affairs, India will hasten to build heavy tariff walls against the cutlery of Leeds or the textile fabrics of Manchester and Lancashire. The British capitalists will no longer be liable to develop the natural resources of the country in their own interest. What will be the use of India to the British then? The English people will never accept this alteration unless they are driven to it by the pressure of events. The conception of partnership in a common Empire on equal terms may appeal to the Indian imagination at present because it promises him his practical political salvation: but it cannot appeal to the imagination of the English politician because it means for him the end and complete dissolution of the Empire. The ideal, therefore, of a common partnership is intrinsically more unintelligible and practically as attainable or unattainable as the idea of Swaraj

of the Extremists. "Therefore it seems to me," said B. C. Pal, that "this ideal, the practically attainable ideal of self-government within the Empire, when we analyse it with care, when we study it in the light of common human psychology, when we study it in the light of our past experience of racial characteristics of the British people, when we study it in the light of past British history in India and in other parts of the world, we find that it is a far more impracticable thing to attain than even our ideal of Swaraj."

Here then we get for the first time in the history of Indian nationalism, a clear-cut demand for full self-government. The demand for Swaraj was only a comprehensive but summary statement of all the one thousand and one things which India wanted. The nation is no longer a baby; it is becoming conscious of its position; it demands the management of its own affairs. The nation is no longer a Hindu or a Muslim nation; it is a wider entity calling itself Indian nation; and the Swaraj was, therefore, to be Indian Swaraj.

It was too early to give a concrete shape to the exact form of government in which the Swaraj ideal will express itself. The nation was passing through a process of evolution, and hence it is not possible for any one to lay down beforehand the precise form it will take. Circumstances under which the Indian nation will achieve its salvation will determine the form of the first Indian government. It so happened in the history of France. France started with the cries of Liberty and Equality and Fraternity and ended with the Napoleonic despotism.

The ideal that is now in the air is certainly a democratic ideal. The whole case for Swaraj rests on the case for democracy. Swaraj, like democracy, is the government of the Indian people, by the Indian people, for the Indian people.

The democratic ideal is present to the mind of the Congress leaders from the beginning. But it was not pressed to its logical conclusion. The Extremists made it perfectly clear that we want a full-fledged democratic government. The ideal yet only meant to a great extent the freedom of India from alien domination. Even then the enunciation of an ideal is a great thing: and since 1905 no party in India is without a well-defined ideal. The pursuit of a definite objective makes the whole situation at once clear to all parties. It gives a definite direction to all the stirrings and activities of the nation. Political struggle becomes more conscious and more systematic. There are no longer vague, instinctive stirrings and desires, surging in the mind of the nation, no more timid and halting efforts at self-expression; the nation knows what it wants and wants to achieve it.

The clear conception of an ideal enables the politician to place something before the nation's mind, which may touch its imagination and rouse its whole being. The Extremist was able to create a stir in the public mind because he asked the nation, to strive for a political objective which captured its imagination. The Swaraj became a war-cry, a slogan to fight, work, live and die for. The emotional value of a cry like Swaraj is simply incalculable. But its intellectual value, is equally great. It gives the people a standard which they can use in order to form a judgment on the various alternative programmes placed before them. It brings out the real nature of the disease from which the country is suffering and prescribes an appropriate remedy. The ideal of good government is one thing; the ideal of self-government is quite different. The country must make up its mind whether it merely wants better government, or whether it wants its own government, good or bad. The Moderates were striving to realise to a great extent

the ideal of good government; they demanded further representation of Indians and subsequently even a modified form of self-government because they realised more and more that without self-government they cannot have good government. It is true that latterly they became more emphatic about the intrinsic desirability of self-government for its own sake also and not merely with a view to bring about a better form of government. But in their own mind they were really more attached to the ideal of a rational, just, humane, enlightened administration, preferably democratic, than to the ideal of indigenous rule, irrespectively of its nature or functioning. The attitude of the Extremists was entirely different. They raised the fundamental issue whether Indian people are to control their own destinies or whether they will allow or suffer their destinies to be controlled by outsiders.

The attitude of the Extremist is like the attitude of the modern syndicalist. To him the more the Government tyrannises over the people, the better; the humane and just foreign administration is the last thing he would like to have. He wants a radical cure: and he therefore prescribes radical remedies. Palliatives only add to the existing evil, they create a false consciousness of temporary security, they lure the patient into deeper and deeper trouble; and they considerably postpone and sometimes make it difficult, if not impossible, the final cure.

That is exactly how B. C. Pal argues. "Unless you are sure as to what you want, you cannot adopt now the necessary means, the instrument for securing that which you want. You ought to know what your destination is with a view to determining what your work and duty, what your direction must now be. Unless you have always a clear conception of the practical end, you run the risk of being carried away by the passions, the tempt-

ations, the prejudices, the difficulties, the obstacles of the hour from your goal. By seeking to relieve the present distress you may be missing an opportunity of creating those forces in the community by the application of which ultimately you may be able to attain Swaraj or autonomy. He is a quack doctor, who, when the disease is a constitutional one, wastes time by local application. Your malady is not a local malady. It is not the removal of one cess or another cess, it is not the securing of a few appointments here and a few honorary posts there. The evil under which you suffer is fundamental, a radical, and a constitutional evil; and therefore, it is the more necessary for you to keep this constitutional, this fundamental, this radical character of the problem that faces you, so that you may not run off from the right course by passing temptations of the hour, this way or that way. When you ask this isolated individual redress of this individual and isolated grievance, you can increase the hold of the Government upon the mind of the people."

Thus there is a deep difference between the ideal of the Liberals and the ideal of the Extremists, even when these ideals seem to agree. The Swaraj of the Liberal is to be attained by the progressive development of the same principles of administration which work now. It is only a further stage of the same journey. The Indian will and the British will both have to remain in harmony with each other from the beginning to the end. But the Indian will have to count more and more; and the British will have to count less and less; but all this by a process of accommodation, of voluntary agreement of give and take. It was a partnership in the beginning; it is a partnership in the middle; and it will be a partnership in the end. But as the student grows in intelligence and scholarship, there is naturally an intellectual co-operation more and more on terms of equality with the professor, so

the Indian community will develop in intelligence and political aptitude and acquire a greater and greater voice in the councils of the Empire. The whole process is a process of growth without any violent departure. The agreement even deepens the more the Indians develop: because domination gives way to genuine partnership. This seems to be the meaning of the ideal of Swaraj within the Empire.

The Extremist ideal is entirely different. There was no conflict between the ideals of good government and self-government in the minds of the Liberals; and in any case there was more emphasis on 'good' than on 'self'. The two merged in each other; the one was to lead on to the other. The Moderates would never prefer the rule of a native Rajah or Nabob to the present administration. But the Extremist was clear about it; he would prefer any indigenous government to the most enlightened foreign rule. Beneath the identity of words, a very real difference is hidden. For practical purpose the two parties may unite as they did unite in 1916; there may be eventual modifications of the creed in the light of practical experience; but the attitude of the Nationalists who organised a new party in 1905 was entirely different from the attitude of the old Liberals, not only as regards methods but even as regards the ideals.

13. *WHY SWARAJ ?*

The case for Swaraj essentially rests on the nature of the human mind. The desire for freedom is a part of the essential nature of man: it is the desire to express one's self, the desire to live one's own way, the desire to be one-self. In the *Bande Mataram*-an Extremist paper-we have a beautiful presentation of this ideal.

"It is not in human nature to rest eternally contented with a state of sub-ordination or serfdom. God