

## CHAPTER XV

### SEVEN PERILS OF HUMANITY—NUMBER FOUR. THE HINDU PERIL

**B**Y the Hindu peril I mean the peril that confronts the fellow passengers on the good ship *Earth* from the people of that part of Asia lying south and southeast of the Himalaya Mountains. Most of it is British India. Farther India and its neighboring lands belong with them in a broad way. I call them the Hindu peril because the Hindus are the most numerous of them and the vast majority of them live in Hindustan.

These peoples are as numerous—to use an old simile—as the sands of the sea, and they are not good passengers for the good ship *Earth*. Sometime they may become such, but it is to be feared that long before they cease to be a menace to the welfare of all on board the problem of what our attitude shall be

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toward them will become a world nightmare.

Whenever a British writer begins to tell of India he protests that it is not a nation, but a continent. Well, it *is* large, but to American minds not amazingly so. Take a map of the United States, place your finger at Eastport, Maine, and follow the Atlantic Coast to Key West, Florida. Now follow the west coast of Florida to Pensacola, shoot northwest through Minneapolis and St. Paul to Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. Thence through the Canadian wilderness, travel eastward to Newfoundland and down the coast to Eastport again, and you will have made about such a journey as would bound British India.

It contains 1,766,000 square miles, while the United States has more than three millions. But while we have less than a hundred millions of people, British India has 300,000,000, (244,361,056 in 1901).

These 300,000,000 fellow passengers of ours are very poor, and very ignorant and unenlightened. Therefore they multiply rapidly. Wherever there is found on the good ship

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*Earth* a people which has a very high birth-rate, the masses will be found living on a low intellectual plane, on a low plane of prosperity, or both. The Hindus—meaning all the Indian peoples—are as far as the masses are concerned, not only poor beyond the conception of an American, but they are plunged into an intellectual slavery that is appalling. Therefore they multiply very rapidly.

In the absence of the accepted checks on population—war, pestilence and famine—and in the absence of the check which must come in to prevent those by checking multiplication—the extirpation of poverty and the attainment of high intellectual life—the people of India will at the rate with which their population has grown since first it was computed, amount in 1950 to 450,000,000; in A. D. 2000 it will be 675,000,000; in A. D. 2050 it will be 1,012,500,000; and in A. D. 2100 it will be 1,518,750,000.

There is, of course, no room in their present habitat for such swarms. There are many unused natural opportunities in their coun-

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tries. There are coal, iron, water-power and irrigable lands; but even at the present rate of increase all these opportunities will be overtaxed in a hundred years. The Hindus are robbed by taxation, and exploited by landlordism and monopoly, but with a perfect system of distribution of wealth, if such were to be hoped for, multiplying as they are doing, poverty would overtake them through sheer swarming—in the absence of the enlightenment which diminishes progeny.

For their increase does not show their birth-rate. War has been forbidden them by the Roman peace of the British rule. But still their ignorance and squalor, their neglect of sanitation and supineness under disease keeps down the multiplying hordes. And famine descends upon them whenever rain fails to come with the southwest wind which is called a monsoon—the rain-bringer for the Hindus. The government puts aside some millions of rupees every year as a famine-insurance fund to keep the people from starving in years of drought; but this can do no good. More peo-

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ple will live over this famine and therefore there will be more mouths to feed when the next famine comes. The cause of famines in India is not drought, but too many people and bad distribution of wealth. And if the distribution be remedied the people will at once multiply to take up the slack liberated by better institutions. The situation is perfectly hopeless in the absence of enlightenment and the adoption of sane beliefs. For population depends more on beliefs than on food and clothing and shelter.

So, unless the Hindu myriads can in some way lift themselves, or be lifted to a higher and more active intellectual life, there is no hope for them. And we, their fellow passengers on the good ship *Earth*, must not allow ourselves to think that it is a matter of no importance to us that these teeming millions lie there, sodden, servile and squalid.

It is of importance to all of us. It is of importance in a thousand ways. For one thing, plague festers among them all the time and now has found foothold in California and

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threatens the United States. For another, we can not as human beings, be happy with these brethren miserable.

And there are more concrete dangers. When the Mohammedan peril takes form, as it may one day, and Islam marches forth under the green banner of Mahomet, the caliph of all the faithful will find in India his best base of operations. Islam lacks mastery of industrial craft—the making of powder, guns, railways, ships, smelting ores, mining coal, all the facts and processes of science. She will find them in the 62,000,000 Mussulmans now in India. She will find ports and cities and a British-drilled army. Here she may establish her new Cordova. Her first blow will be to close the Suez Canal and seize India.

The unrest of the darker-colored races under the domination of the whites may play into the hands of such an irruption of Mussulman fanaticism into India. Since the Japanese won their victory over Russia, the attitude of the browns and yellows toward us has changed—all observers are agreed as to that. They

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have always hated the white man; but they have feared his seemingly irresistible power, and respected his apparently enormous superiority over them. But now yellow men have shown themselves able to meet one of the five greatest of the white nations on the field of battle, and defeat it. Yellow men have given evidence of being at least the equal of white men in science, organizing ability, financial genius and every other branch of the great game of statecraft. There is stirring among all the Asiatics and Africans a feeling which tends toward the solidarity of all of them against us. Should Islam ever reappear in the Indo-Gangetic Plain with her embattled hosts marching against the white man's armies, there is good reason to believe that under competent leadership she would find countless millions of the brown men leaning to her side, rather than to that of the successors of Clive.

Can India and her related nations ever emancipate themselves from their poverty and benightedness? That question is the one which constitutes the Hindu peril to humanity.

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I do not know. The curse of these three hundred millions is caste. Caste means that the hundreds of different classes hate one another and despise one another. There is no love or sympathy between class and class. How could we make any progress toward better institutions if the preachers loathed and despised the doctors; the doctors the lawyers; the lawyers the merchants; the carpenters the masons, and if to each the ones below were so unclean that they could not eat together, or marry together, or associate in any way on terms of equality? Yet such is the caste system of India. The scavenger's son must be a scavenger and marry a scavenger's daughter. There is no rising in the world, in our sense. It is an awful thing when to one occupation those below are unclean; but when such uncleanness is supposed to inhere in the flesh of every baby born to it the belief is too terrible for utterance.

Caste keeps the people from uniting for better things. It keeps them under the British dominion. It makes them the prey in all ages



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of some conqueror. On a mission in Bombay is a sign which reads, "Caste is our curse, but Christ is our salvation." That caste is their curse is true. And their salvation, if not Christ, must be that democracy for which Jesus stood, and which we nominal Christians have yet to put fully into effect. Until, through democracy, these people gain enlightenment and general prosperity the Hindu peril will always loom over the passengers of this good ship *Earth*.