

Social Reform

Reform is not an excellent thing in itself as many Europeanised intellects imagine; neither is it always safe and good to stand unmoved in the ancient paths as the orthodox obstinately believe. Reform is sometimes the first step to the abyss, but immobility is the most perfect way to stagnate and to putrefy. Neither is moderation always the wisest counsel: the mean is not always golden. It is often an euphemism for purblindness, for a tepid indifference or for a cowardly inefficiency. Men call themselves moderates, conservatives or extremists and manage their conduct and opinions in accordance with a formula. We like to think by systems and parties and forget that truth is the only standard. Systems are merely convenient cases for keeping arranged knowledge, parties a useful machinery for combined action; but we make of them an excuse for avoiding the trouble of thought.

One is astonished at the position of the orthodox. They labour to deify everything that exists. Hindu society has certain arrangements and habits which are merely customary. There is no proof that they existed in ancient times nor any reason why they should last into the future. It has other arrangements and habits for which textual authority can be quoted, but it is oftener the text of the modern Smritikaras than of Parasara and Manu. Our authority for them goes back to the last five hundred years. I do not understand the logic which argues that because a thing has lasted for five hundred years it must be perpetuated through the aeons. Neither antiquity nor modernity can be the test of truth or the test of usefulness. All the Rishis do not belong to the past; the Avatars still come; revelation still continues.

Some claim that we must at any rate adhere to Manu and the Puranas, whether because they are sacred or because they are national. Well, but, if they are sacred, you must keep to the