

## 2 MODERN RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS IN INDIA

time; and the antecedents of both go back to somewhere about the beginning of the century. The period we have to deal with thus extends from 1800 to 1913.

In 1800 India was in a pitiable plight. Early Hindu governments seldom succeeded in securing settled peace even in the great central region of the country for any extended period of time; but matters became much worse when the flood of Muhammadan invasion came at the end of the twelfth century. When the nineteenth century dawned, India had scarcely known peace for six hundred years. Even under the best of the Mughals there was frequent fighting, and a good deal of injustice; under all other Muslim rulers there was practically constant war and frequent outbreaks of barbarity; while the eighteenth century piled misery on misery. It is heartbreaking to read descriptions of India at that time.

We can now see that British supremacy began to assert itself with the battle of Plassey in 1757; yet the rulers had scarcely a definite policy until the opening of the new century; and, even then, Britain had not by any means awaked to the greatness and the splendour of the task set before her in India. We must never forget that the East India Company went to India exclusively for commerce, and that the British Empire sprang altogether from the necessity, which was only very gradually realized, of providing a settled and just government in order to make commerce possible.

2. In 1800 Hinduism, which was the religion of at least three-fourths of the population of the peninsula, consisted, in the main, of two great groups of sects and a mass of wandering celibate ascetics, who were held to be outside society. The two great groups of sects are the Vishnuite and the Śivaite. The Vishnuite sects were very numerous, both in the North and in the South, and they were perhaps, on the whole, more homogeneous than the worshippers of Śiva. The