ESSAY

KALANTAR

CHANGING TIMES

Rabindranath Tagore

Contents

THE CHANGING TIMES 2
DELIBERATION AND INDISCRETION 13
FOR THE PEOPLE'S GOOD 23
THE ROOT OF THE WAR 35
THE SMALL AND THE GREAT 40
LETTERS FROM A CASEMENT 63
1 63
2 70
3 76
4 82
5 86
THE WORSHIP OF POWER 93
THE CALL OF TRUTH 97
THE PROBLEM 119
HINDU-MUSLIM 142
THE PEASANT'S CAUSE 173
SWAMI SHRADDHANANDA 208

THE CHANGING TIMES

There was a time when our gathering would assemble beneath the village shrine's canopy; light would kindle among the assembly of students, and our discourse remained confined within the bounds of the village itself. Taking pleasure and offense with one another, exchanging tales and gossip, playing at cards and dice, and mingling with some three or four hours of daytime slumber—thus would the day pass by. Beyond this, whatever cultivation of mind occurred now and then took the form of traveling players, devotional song, religious discourse, recitation of the Ramayana, folk ballads, and poets' contests. Their subject matter was drawn eternally from the ancient store of legend. The world in which we dwelt was narrow and utterly familiar. All its facts and currents of feeling had, generation after generation, turned and turned again upon the same unchanging wheel; and by relying upon these, the customs of our daily life had grown dense and settled, and with the brick and stone of these rigid habits, the edifice of our particular household had been completed. Beyond this household, across the horizons of the human universe, the vast unfolding of history proceeded without pause; its whirling nebula had not, from beginning to end, become fixed forever within ancient custom and scriptural precept; within it, one portion collided and clashed with another, giving birth to ever-new problems, and the very shape of history was ceaselessly transformed through the contraction and expansion of mutual boundaries—of this we remained unaware.

The first hostile blow from outside came from the Muslim. But that Muslim too was of the ancient East, he too was not modern. He too was bound within his own past centuries. By strength of arm he had built kingdoms, but there was no diversity of creation in his spirit. For this reason, when he established his permanent dwelling within our horizon, conflict arose between him and us—but that conflict was external, one eternal custom against another eternal custom, one fixed doctrine against

another fixed doctrine. Muslim influence entered our system of governance, but its working did not become fully dominant within the spirit—of this we see proof in

literature. In the polite society of that age, Persian was current everywhere, yet the nature of Bengali poetry bears no mark of this Persian learning—only in Bharatchandra's Vidyasundar, in its polished language and unfaltering meter, does that urbanity appear which carries, through Persian-trained wit, a hint of sophisticated, worldly playfulness. The Bengali literature of that time was chiefly divided into two branches: one the Mangal-Kavyas, the other the Vaishnava devotional lyrics. In the Mangal-Kavyas there are occasional accounts of Muslim rule, but in their essential substance and mental disposition I find no trace whatsoever of Muslim literary influence; and in Vaishnava lyric poetry there is no question of it at all. Yet Persian words had accumulated abundantly in the Bengali tongue; besides, in the cities and the capital at least, Persian courtly manners had considerable currency. In that age, two eternally walled civilizations stood side by side in India, each turned away from the other. It is not that there was no interaction between them at all, but it was slight. The thrust of physical power struck the country very hard indeed, but it did not stir the mind toward any new realm of thought, any new creative endeavor. There is another matter besides. The Muslim, coming from outside, settled permanently in Hindustan, but he did not extend our vision outward. They came into the house and occupied it, and shut the door toward the outside. Now and then that door was battered and broken, but nothing occurred by which our acquaintance with the outer world might have been enlarged. For this reason our chief gathering-place remained the village shrine's canopy.

After this came the Englishman—not merely as a human presence, but as the emblem of the mind of new Europe. A human being occupies space; a mind occupies minds. Today we see the Muslim as a number—recently he has created, in our national affairs, the problem of addition and subtraction. That is, this number has begun to be reckoned not by its inherent worth but merely as a fraction. This people exists within the country, yet as a factor in national unity their absence would be less grievous than their presence; thus India's population statistics, by their very magnitude, have become the most sorrowful of all things.

The Englishman's arrival is a strange episode in India's history. As a human being he remained even more distant from us than the Muslim—but as the embodiment of the European mind, the Englishman has come to us so broadly and so deeply that no other foreign race has ever been able to come in such a manner. The generative force of the European spirit struck our stagnant mind as rain strikes the earth from the distant sky; it enters the inert depths of the soil and awakens the effort of life, and that effort begins to sprout and bloom in manifold forms. That land upon which this effort does not fall at all is desert; and its utter self-sufficiency is the very nature of death. Some critics nowadays, weighing with excessive subtlety how much and from whom we have received from Europe, extend much of it through imagination and some through research, and thus raise their pens against modern writers, taunting them with practiced skill. Once, when the passionate energy of the Renaissance, having surged up from Italy, was reflected in the mind of all Europe, that its influence appeared in various forms in the minds of England's literary creators was nothing to wonder at; had it not been so, that very poverty would have been called barbarism. The influence of a living mind cannot but be received by another living mind—this flow of give-and-take flows eternally wherever mind lives, wherever mind is awake.

Let us see what is the true nature of the light of the present age's mind, which, radiating from the western horizon, illuminates the entire sky of human history. With tremendous force of endeavor, the European mind has spread across the whole earth—nay, across the whole world. Wherever it has extended its foot, that place it has claimed as its own. By what strength? By the integrity of its search for truth. It has not wished to deceive itself through indolence of intellect, the enchantment of imagination, apparent resemblance, or blind adherence to ancient scholarship; the temptation which human instinct naturally believes in order to remain complacent—that too it has ruthlessly suppressed. It has not tested truth by conformity with its own easy wishes. Day after day it has conquered the world of knowledge, because its labor of intellect is pure, free from personal delusion.

Although even today the walls of our calendar-almanac stand raised in suspicion against the open light around us, yet through gaps in that wall the mind of Europe

has entered our courtyard, has brought before us the universal form of knowledge, has revealed to us such an all-pervading curiosity of human intellect as seeks out and wishes to claim, with disinterested eagerness, everything nearest and farthest, smallest and greatest, necessary and unnecessary; it has shown that in the realm of knowledge there is no gap anywhere, that all facts are woven together by an unbreakable thread, and that no particular utterance of the four-faced or thousand-faced deity can claim its own supernatural authority against the smallest witness of the world.

As with the theory of the universe, so too with moral conduct. In the law that came with the new governance there is one proclamation, namely this: that offense does not differ according to the person. Whether a Brahmin kills a Shudra or a Shudra kills a Brahmin, the category of the crime of murder is the same, and its punishment equal—no sage's or seer's ordinance can institute any special creation regarding justice and injustice.

That society's weighing of right and wrong cannot, through the scale-weights of class privilege, create disparity in its eternal ideal—this truth we have not yet been able to accept everywhere, in our inmost hearts; yet it has brought no small revolution into our thought and conduct, of this there is no doubt. That those whom society has counted among the untouchable classes should today no longer be barred from entering temples—this very discussion is proof of it. Although one faction, without relying upon the principle of eternal righteousness, keeps citing scriptural support in its favor, yet the advocacy of that scriptural authority does not gain complete force. The essential truth striking the mind of the country's common people is this: that which is unjust cannot become just through the force of custom, scripture, or personal power—it is not worthy of reverence even with the self-fashioned seal of one bearing the title of Shankaracharya.

Looking at the Bengali literature of the Muslim period, one sees that the belief that the very mark of majesty is the unrestrained license to commit injustice has corrupted the conception of divine character in that age. Just as in those days a

powerful individual would consolidate his rule through oppression, so too we have imagined the majesty of gods and goddesses through the terror of injustice. By that cruel victory or defeat of force was their superiority or inferiority proven. The common man must obey the law of righteousness; the insolent right to transgress that law belongs to the extraordinary. It is necessary to restrain oneself according to the terms of a treaty for the sake of preserving truth and social stability, but the pride of power holds the arrogance to tear it apart like a scrap of paper. Mankind once accepted the insolence of an intolerance-of-restraint, unrighteous audacity as the mark of divinity. The saying current in those days, "Whether ruled by Delhi or ruled by God"—the meaning of this saying is that the divinity of God lies in proof of His unopposed power, not in the ordinance of justice; in that logic, the ruler of Delhi too was entitled to fame equal to God's. Then they called the Brahmin an earthly god, yet in his godhood there was no inescapable responsibility of greatness, only the meaningless claim of unwarranted superiority. That this unwarranted superiority stood above justice and injustice—of this we see proof in the scriptures, in the unbroken license to commit unrighteous conduct toward the Shudra.

There is no doubt that the British Empire is more powerful and extensive than the Mughal Empire, but such a thing could never come from the mouth of even a fool—that Wellington is ruled by God. The reason is that today no one measures, by the ruthless power of aerial bombardment destroying enemy villages, any equivalence with the ideal of divinity. Today, even as we die and die again, we do not think that we can judge English rule by the standard of justice and injustice; that invoking any pretext to ask the powerful to withhold unrestrained power is impudence on the part of the powerless. In truth, having acknowledged the universal ground of the ideal of justice, the immense power of English rule has, in one place, itself stood on equal ground with the powerless.

When we first became acquainted with English literature, we not only drew from it a fresh delight—we saw an eagerness to remove injustice of man toward man; we heard, in political theory, the declaration of man's liberation from chains; we saw, in commerce, the effort against reducing man to mere merchandise. We must admit this sentiment was new to us. Before this we had accepted that, by the

eternal ordinance of birth or by the fruit of deeds accumulated in a former life, persons of particular caste must accept the diminution of their rights, must bear the humiliation of their own dishonor upon their heads—that the stigma of their degradation could be removed only accidentally, by chance, through a change of birth. Even today, among our country's educated class, many count self-effort for the removal of national dishonor as meritorious, yet they tell those degraded by the ordinance of society, invoking the pretext of religion, to remain passive and accept self-abasement; forgetting that the mental disposition to accept fate-ordained decree without protest is, of all things, the strongest force locking fast the chains of national servitude. Contact with Europe has, on one hand, brought before us the universality of the law of cause and effect in the nature of the universe; on the other hand, that pure ideal of justice and injustice which cannot be truncated by any scriptural command, any eternally established custom, any particular rule for a particular class. Today, despite all our weaknesses, whatever effort we make for changing our national political condition stands upon this very principle; and the demands which we would never even have thought to raise before the Mughal emperor, upon these very demands we now raise loud dissent against powerful state rule—by the very force of that principle which found expression in the poet's words: "A man is a man for a' that."

Today my age has passed seventy. In the present age—that is, what must be called the European age—when I first entered it, the time was the mid-nineteenth century. Present-day youths mock this by calling it the Victorian age. That portion of Europe with which we have direct connection, England, was then established at the highest peak of prosperity and political power. No one then even thought that through some crack in eternity, misfortune might enter its granary of plenty. Whatever might have occurred in ancient history, in modern history there was nowhere any apprehension or sign that the fortune of those who held the helm of Western civilization might ever turn backward, that the wind might blow in the opposite direction. In the age of Reformation, in the age of the French Revolution, Europe had fought for freedom of belief, for individual liberty; that day, its faith in that ideal was not shaken. That day, in the United States of America, war had broken out between brothers over the institution of slavery. That age was glorified by the fame achieved through Mazzini and Garibaldi's proclamations; that day,

Gladstone's thunderous voice resounded, condemning the oppression of the Turkish Sultan. We began that day to nurture clearly the expectation of India's independence. Within that expectation, on one hand there was opposition to the Englishman, and on the other, extraordinary trust in English character. From where did we gain that strength by which it seemed possible to think that, merely invoking humanity, we might become partners with the Englishman in the governance of India? From what age had we suddenly arrived at what other age? By what teaching did the worth of man, the dignity of man, suddenly appear so wondrously great? Yet in our own family, neighborhood, local society, the claim of individual freedom or honor for a person, the principle of equal right to just treatment irrespective of class, has still not been able to fully enter our character. Still, in conduct, step by step, despite all protest, the influence of Europe is working little by little in our minds. Exactly the same holds true regarding scientific intelligence. Science has come to our door by the path of the schoolhouse, but within the home, the almanac and scripture still have not entirely relinquished their hold. Yet through the very protest of European learning, respect is gaining ground in our minds.

Thus, considering this, one will see that this age is an age of our deep cooperation with Europe. In truth, wherever there is non-cooperation of our spirit, our learning, with it, there alone is our defeat. This cooperation becomes easy if our reverence is not wounded. I have said before that our new age began with faith in the character of Europe; we saw that Europe, in the field of knowledge, has honored man's delusion-free intellect, and in the field of conduct has acknowledged his just rights. By this, despite all deficiencies, the path to our self-respect has opened. It is in the pride of this self-respect that we today hope for difficult accomplishment regarding our own nation, and dare to judge the powerful adversary, taking the very standard of that powerful adversary's own judgment. It must be said that this cooperation of mind and character did not exist in our former royal court. Then, our fundamental distance from authority was such that we might occasionally receive favor from the powerful by accidental good fortune, but we could not say that it was by its own merit, could not say that man, simply by being man, has claim upon the goodwill of man according to universal justice.

Meanwhile history advanced. In long-dormant Asia appeared the ardor of awakening. Through clash and contact with the very West, Japan, within a very short time, won for itself the right of respect among the community of world nations. That is, Japan proved substantially that it existed truly in the present time, was not merely a shadow of the past. We saw that Eastern nations were setting out toward the new age. For a long time we hoped that we too would find harmony with world history, that our national-political chariot too would move forward, and it seemed too that England itself would give a pull along this path of movement. After looking on for a long time, we finally saw the wheel stuck. Today the chief pride of English rule is in law and order, rule and regulation. In this vast country, the provision for education, the provision for health, is extremely meager; there is nothing at all by which the people of the country might find opportunity to generate wealth through ever-new paths. I cannot even see what possibility exists for this in the near future, because all the country's resources have sunk into the enormous maw of law and order. India has been deprived, by contact with Europe itself, of the very finest gift of the new age. India remains like a blot amid the solar orb of the new age.

Today England, France, Germany are indebted to America. The sum of the debt is very heavy. But even if it were twice as heavy, complete repayment would not have been impossible, if the debtor country had no objection to keeping only law and order intact while being deprived in all other respects. If its food supply remained at half-ration, if its allowance of drinkable water were many times scantier than the whole country's thirst, if even an education system for five or seven percent of the population would suffice, if, though chronic disease has instilled weakness into the very bones of the nation through generations, its system of medical treatment remained nearly inert—still, since such deficiencies are absolutely fatal to maintaining the civilized standard of life's journey, the creditor was heard to say such words as, "We shall not demand repayment." Can India not say, invoking the claim of civilization, that we cannot bear this unbearable debt of your priceless system of governance, whereby the millstone of barbarism presses forever upon the country's breast? The ideal of civilization which Europe has raised in the present age—shall Europe itself confine its claim, by its own hand, only within the western

boundary of the globe? Does not Europe bear the great responsibility of that civilization to all people, at all times?

Gradually it was seen that outside Europe, in the realm of the unrelated, the torch of European civilization was lit not to show light, but to set fire. Thus one day cannonballs and opium bales were showered together upon the vital center of China. In history, up to this day, such utter destruction has never occurred anywhere else—except once, when the European civilized nation, lured by the greed for gold newly discovered in America, completely devastated the wondrous civilization of the "Maya" people, through deceit and force. In the medieval age the barbarian Tartar raised high the pile of human skulls in conquered lands; that anguish was lost not long after. Civilized Europe forced such poison down the throat of a country as great as China that its very marrow was shattered forever. Once, when a group of young Persians stood ready to sacrifice their lives to rescue Persia from the net of long torpor, civilized Europe gripped its throat with both hands in such a manner—that unforgivable, sorrowful affair may be known by reading Shuster's book, The Strangling of Persia, by the then-defeated American treasurer of Persia's revenues. On the other side, everyone knows into what unspeakable horror European rule in the Congo region of Africa was transformed. Even today in the United States of America, the Negro race is branded with social dishonor, and when some such unfortunate person is burned alive, white men and women crowd around to enjoy that bestial spectacle.

Then came the Great War, which suddenly tore away a curtain from Western history. As if some drunkard's modesty had been abruptly stripped away. Such falsehood, such horrific cruelty, dense and concentrated—perhaps in earlier blind ages it stirred occasionally, momentarily, but never before did it manifest itself in such a terrible, naked form. It used to come like a black dust of shadow, enveloping itself, but this came as if it were a volcanic eruption of fire, dyeing the horizons with the pent-up outburst of a bound sin's unblocked source, scorching the greenery of the far-distant earth. Since then I have seen that Europe has lost faith in its own good sense; today it stands ready to insolently mock the ideal of welfare. Today its shame has broken down; the Europe we knew through contact with an Englishman

had a certain reticence about the vulgar—today it mocks that very reticence. Nowadays I see that the sense of responsibility for civilization goes about proving itself refined. Inhuman cruelty appears openly, chest puffed out. I saw civilized Europe's spoiled child Japan in Korea, saw it in China; when its cruel, power-drunk transgression of rights was condemned, it burst out laughing and produced precedents from Europe's own history. The frenzied barbarism of bloodshed seen in Ireland, we could never have even imagined not long before. After that I saw with my own eyes the horror of Jallianwala Bagh. The very Europe which once called the Turk of that time inhuman—in its own naked courtyard appeared the reckless brutality of Fascism. Once I knew that freedom of self-expression was one of Europe's finest achievements; today I see that in Europe and America the strangling of that freedom grows stronger every day. To respect individual conscience—this we used to hear from the pulpit of Europe in our youth; today, among those who believe Christ's teaching to be true, who consider it unrighteous even to hate an enemy, what happens to them—I give here an excerpt drawn from one example.

The French youth René Reine, who protested the war, writes:—

"So after the war I was sent to Guiana… Condemned to fifteen years penal servitude I have drained to the dregs the cup of bitterness, but the term of penal servitude being completed, there remains always the accessory punishment—banishment for life. One arrives in Guiana sound in health, young, vigorous, one leaves (if one leaves) weakly, old, ill… One arrives in Guiana honest—a few months later one is corrupted… They (the transportees) are an easy prey to all the maladies of this land—fever, dysentery, tuberculosis and most terrible of all leprosy."

Everyone knows how unbearable a hell-dwelling is the exile-provision that Italy has made for political dissent. Among the countries which have kindled the light of European civilization brightest, Germany may take first place. But that today, all the ideals of civilization there are being torn to shreds, that such suddenly, so easily maddened inhumanity has taken possession of the entire country—this too has

proven not impossible. When the post-war barbaric shamelessness of Europe began to be unveiled on all sides with such shamelessness, this thought comes again and again—where now stands man's court of appeal, where man's final petition may reach today? Must faith in humanity be broken—must barbarism forever be checked only by barbarism? But even amid that despair, this thought also comes: that however arrogantly terrible calamity may become, still we may raise our heads and judge it, may proclaim, "You are unworthy of worship," may curse it and say "Ruin upon you"—that even amid all this sorrow, all this fear, such a person is found within two days who would stake his very life to say this—this indeed is above all sorrow, above all fear. Today the tax-collector's oppression may grind one's bones to powder, yet still, unlike before, one cannot fold one's hands and say, "Whether ruled by Delhi or ruled by God"; cannot say that the powerful one bears no fault whatsoever. Rather, with unfettered voice one can say: his responsibility is greater, his crime, judged by his own ideal, is the most condemnable of all. The day when the sorrowful, the dishonored, entirely loses the confidence and the right to raise the cry of justice above the lion's roar of tyranny and to curse the self-forgetful powerful one—that very day I shall understand that this age has become bankrupt down to the last farthing of its finest treasure. After that, let the deluge come.

1340 (Bengali Era)

DELIBERATION AND INDISCRETION

One day the flood-tide of patriotism roared through the land of Bengal; the current of our life-blood suddenly swelled beyond measure and overflowed its banks, as it were. That this force was genuine is proven by this: its restlessness did not merely rock our paper boats, nor did the matter end merely with a storm of applause rising in assembly halls.

That day it seemed as if society itself had been shaken from head to foot. In a single moment the Brahmin boy's restraint against weaving at the loom broke away; well-born youths took up bundles of cloth and came out into the streets to sell them; even the arrangement for Hindus and Muslims to sit and eat together was on the verge of happening.

Reasoning it out, none of this happened because anyone sought guidance—no one made rounds among the professors' quarters seeking counsel. When life awakens, without taking anyone's advice it sets out on its own; then it does not sit down gravely to anoint with vermilion and sandal-paste all the obstacles along its path of movement, drawing them close to its lap, nor does it feel any inclination to weave a fine fabric of precise theory or polished poetry around them. As soon as it starts moving, it understands of itself which obstacles will not permit its passage; then whatever touches its body, it begins to push aside with its whole being. When those ancient stones, under the thrust of that pushing, begin to roll away, one understands that life has indeed awakened; this is no illusion, no dream.

That flood's force has subsided now. The restless urge to move that had come upon society has passed, and now the day has come again to bind the fence of custom with cords of restraint.

Now again the chorus of praise for society has begun. In the world, it is said, only in India's soil and air exists this peculiar magic, that custom of itself takes precedence over principle, that practice requires no deliberation of judgment

whatsoever. We have nothing to construct—only to obey, and we sit congratulating ourselves on saying so.

The person who is engaged in the enthusiasm of work has no need for the enthusiasm of eulogy. Proof of this we see even in ourselves—we too went to the western shores of the ocean and told the people there to their faces: "You are dying! Having called the soul a mere thing, you have completely stopped its breath by piling matter upon it—you are worshippers of the gross." Hearing such harsh words, they did not, however, adopt a combative stance. Rather, like good-natured people, they accepted it; they said to themselves, "Perhaps so. We are young in years, we understand work—these people are extremely ancient, so surely they understand better than we do these philosophical matters about taking rest from labor." Saying this, they gave us a gratuity and sent us away pleased, and thereafter, rolling up their sleeves, they went on working exactly as before.

Because, however much we condemn them and show them fear, they continue on their way; that they are full of vitality is proven by their very selves. There is no insult beyond that of the dead—this saying does not apply to them. They know that there is an insult even beyond death—that of dying while alive. In their life's journey there is no end to crisis, and the knots of problems are many, but above all, what gives them confidence is their vitality. For this reason they can bear condemnation without difficulty, and they play for a moment with the matter of despair, deriving from it a slight additional stimulus for the force of their life.

We too could bear condemnation as easily, if we walked in the path of work with full vigor. Because then we would understand of ourselves that the current of life carries away all disgrace in its flow. When the stagnant pond remains motionless, that indeed is condemnable, but though one may blame the Ganges' current in flood-time as muddy, those who bathe in it are not hindered by that charge.

For this reason, it is precisely he who does nothing who needs praise day and night. He who has no achievement, whose hands hold no task, needs the flatterer most of all, for otherwise how would he bear the burden of his own inertia? He ought to be advised: this hereditary immobility of yours is nothing to be proud of; somehow, apply yourself to some work. But in this case the counselor's task is not without risk; the master's retinue will immediately raise an outcry. Thus, if one hopes for a reward, one must say: "My lord, the pile of cotton wool you have propped beneath your ancient cushion is unmatched in the world; therefore, if you wish to preserve your lineage's honor, do not stir."

In proportion as work has come to a standstill in our society, in that same proportion the pomp of praise has increased. Wherever one turns, one sees only obstruction at every step. In such a case, one must either say: break the cage, for it has rendered our God-given wings numb; or one must say: the iron bars of the cage are holier than the God-given wing, for the wing today rises and tomorrow falls, but the iron bars remain fixed forever. The Creator's creation, the wing, is new, while the smith's creation, the cage, is ancient—therefore, whatever flapping of wings is possible within the confines of that cage, that alone is ordinance, that alone is duty, and beyond it lies the infinite prohibition filling the sky. If one must remain confined within the cage, then singing hymns to the cage will surely keep the mind at peace.

Our societal blacksmith has, from childhood, so fashioned this particular bar that, repeating endlessly its refrain, we have forgotten all other songs, for doing otherwise brings endless peril. Here, on every side, this same blacksmith has triumphed, and the one most wronged by this has been the Creator Himself, who gave us the power of action, who honored us with intelligence by calling us human.

Those who say, "Let whatever exists everywhere remain as it is"—all of them command our reverence, because whether their years be few or many, they are all, every one, ancient. We do not deny their necessity in worldly affairs. There is no society on earth where they have not planted their staff and taken their seat. But

in that society which survives by the Creator's grace, their staff is not accepted as the final authority.

One day a puppy was observed: seeing an insect crawling upon the ground, its curiosity was greatly aroused. It began following the insect, sniffing at it. Whenever the little creature would twitch and stir, the puppy would start back, startled.

It was seen that within it existed both prohibition and impulse. The natural instinct of life is this: that it examines everything. Taking the path of ever-new experience, it wishes to extend its own domain. Life is adventurous—even after striking against calamity, it does not wish to be wholly deterred from its path of triumphant progress. But within it there also exists an elder; as soon as it glimpses the terrible visage of an obstacle, it says, "What is the use!" From ancient ages, generation upon generation, whatever news of fear the assaults of danger have preserved—binding it in the form of a manuscript, an old man keeps watch over it. Youthful vitality and elderly fear—both work within every living being. Fear says, "Wait, wait"; vitality says, "Let us see, then."

Therefore, who are we to object to this elderly caution? We do not object. Let him remain seated cross-legged upon his cushion; we are not so ill-mannered as to tell him to rise and move from there. But when a conspiracy arises to make him sole monarch in the domain of life itself, then comes the day to raise the banner of rebellion and go forth. We are ready to give due regard to both misgiving and confidence alike.

Both, indeed, share in the sovereignty of life, but we cannot accept that their shares are equal. The share of confidence must be the greater, otherwise the current flows so sluggishly that moss gathers and chokes the water. That the count of births should exceed the count of deaths is the mark of welfare.

The earth is twelve parts water, four parts land. Without such division, disaster would ensue. For it is water that generates motion upon the earth, that extends life abroad. It is water that gives mobility to food, that gives suck to trees and plants, beasts and birds. It is water that rises from the sea into the sky, descends from sky to earth, washes away impurity, renews the old and moistens the parched into freshness. At the root of that stream of life which has flowed in ever-new currents across the surface of the earth lies this very current of water. How terrible is the sole dominion of land—one need only look toward the desert wastes of Central Asia to understand. Beneath its immobility, how many great cities have been swallowed and lost. That ancient road along which commerce and thought once flowed from India to China and Japan—this cruel desert erased the very traces of that path; burying beneath sand the vibrant history of so many ages, it has reduced it to a mere skeleton. There the naked demon of destruction sits alone, motionless, gazing skyward with upraised eyes;

Uma is not there. So the gods have been chanting a warning—how shall the son be born? By what means shall new life come into flower?

If one does not keep one's eyes forcibly shut, then looking even at our own society, this very same visage is what one will see. Here the immobility of land has become terrible—this is indeed a barren white desert. Here, when once the sap of life flowed, history became living and mobile, not merely spreading from one province to another—like a mighty river it flowed from land to land. That current of exchange of life, that current of exchange of thought with the world, and its vast royal highway, when and in what age did they become buried under sand? Here and there, digging into the earth, one finds the skeletons of pack-animals; at the mouth of the archaeologist's excavation pit, a broken fragment or two of merchandise turns up. In the depths of caves and caverns, some fragments of the artistic current of that age lie caught and trapped, but today they are still, their flow arrested. Everything seems like a dream. What connection have we with these? The current of all creation is stopped. What exists, exists; what was, is only ever sinking away.

All around is so silent, so motionless, that one is deluded into thinking this is the eternal. Never is it so—this indeed is the new. This desert is not eternal; long before this, the ever-new play of life proceeded here—in that play, how much science, philosophy, art, literature, kingdoms and empires, how many revolutions of religion and society surged forth. Without doing anything else, if one merely opens and reads the Mahabharata once, one will see that society was no ready-made, factory-molded, craftsman-stamped product of some codified compendium—it bore every mark of the Creator's own original creation, because it possessed life. It is not flawless, not seamless; it is living, it is powerful, it is curious, it is adventurous.

Those "mummies" lying beneath Egypt's massive tombs, mocking life with their death-grinning teeth immortalized—should these be called eternal? However ancient the dates inscribed upon their coffin-sides, the true eternal life is that of the "fellahin" peasant who today tills the silt-laid fields along Egypt's Nile. For death is but the younger brother of life; life comes first, death after. Whatever is in motion has connection with the eternal motion of the universe; whatever has come to a standstill has severed its connection with eternal life. Today the life-force of diminished India has become entirely cold and still, without daring, without any impulse toward creation—and this is precisely why it has lost all connection with the eternal life of the Mahabharata. The age which contemplated philosophy, the age which created art, the age which extended empire—with that age's connection this present state has become severed. Yet we calculate dates and say that in the world nothing is as eternal as we are—but a date is merely a matter of arithmetic, it is not a matter of life's reckoning. If that were the criterion, then even ash could count its atoms and claim to be the most ancient of all things—older than fire itself.

All the great civilizations of the earth are creations of daring. The daring of power, the daring of intellect, the daring of aspiration. Because power refused to accept any obstacle anywhere, man crossed seas and mountains and went forward; intellect, surpassing the apparently obvious, shattering the web of blind superstition, roams gloriously from the great to the greater, from the subtle to the subtler, from the far to the farther, from the near to the nearer. Disease, poverty, want, contempt—none of these has man's aspiration considered insurmountable

and given up the helm; it goes on making trial after trial. Those who lack that daring still today, in the depths of Central African forests, sit crouched generation after generation within a hedge of thorns of self-imagined terror, paralyzed with fear.

Within this daring lies a powerful indiscretion. Today, those who fly through the sky and fall shattered from the heavens to their deaths—within them, that same reckless indiscretion is at work. In just this same way, those who once, striving to cross the ocean, drowned by the thousands in the waters—that very indiscretion had driven them onward. It is by the excitement of that same unruly indiscretion that even today men, evading the guard of the frost-demon, rush off to the North Pole or the South Pole merely to conquer new territory. In just this way, those who are utterly bereft of fortune are the very ones who have snatched Fortune away from her inaccessible inner chamber and brought her forth.

This band of the daring, even within their own society, do not remain still, resigned as fortune's outcasts. That whatever exists is the final word—this thought their minds refuse in any way to accept. Constantly reprimanded by the wise, this unquiet band, breaking down decaying fences and clearing away old barriers, causes disturbance beyond reckoning. Because the restlessness of life is naturally strong within them, because their courage knows no bounds, in that vast momentum they go about butting against every boundary. This is their nature. It is precisely thus that it comes to be discovered that where boundaries seemed visible, in truth there was no boundary at all. These people suffer, and cause suffering, and stir men into restlessness—and it is they who die when death comes. But it is they, too, who forge the path for survival.

Does our country lack this fortune-forsaken breed? Certainly it does not. For they indeed are life's natural creation; it is by its own necessity that life gives birth to them. But whatever power on earth wishes to make man entirely its subject fears the play of life above all else—for this very reason our society tries so hard, from childhood, through various forms of discipline, to render these life-abundant, unruly boys so subdued

that seeing their meekness would gladden one's eyes. Forbidden, forbidden, forbidden; whether lying down or sitting up, they must obey nothing but prohibition endlessly. To forbid something for which there is no reason, no logic, is their constant habit; obedience becomes such an extraordinarily deep-rooted practice with them that where there is no one left to obey, they simply cannot move at all. Such stupefied, spirit-broken persons are easy to make bow down at the mere signal of one's frown. Our society has opened up, with the very people of society, a grand puppet-theatre of exactly this kind. How wondrously it has bound them, head to foot, wire by wire—what astonishing skill! One must indeed applaud this. Where else in the world has such complete defeat been dealt to the Creator, has any living being been turned into such a mechanical puppet?

Yet, after all, those in whom there is abundance of life cannot have their vigor entirely destroyed, however much they are pressed and crushed from every side. For this reason, finding no other outlet, that same vigor and enterprise they apply with tremendous force toward forging the fetters of society itself. If their nature had not been distorted, those who would have been first to rush along the path of progress are the very ones who now labor most enthusiastically to raise walls across that same path. They were born precisely to do work, but since the field of work is closed, they gird their loins and rise up to engage in the very work of stopping work.

These are like Karna, son of Kunti. Among the Pandava faction, Karna's rightful place existed, but there, by ill chance, having received no recognition, the destruction of the Pandavas became his life's mission. Those of whom we speak are naturally inclined toward movement, but having been born in this country, they have utterly forgotten that fact—and so, of that same faction to which they truly belong, if they could only engage in ceaseless combat with them, these people would want nothing more.

This class of people is seen much nowadays. They strike their chests and declaim, "Who wants to live without freedom!"; lamenting, they say, our masters have forbidden us, and therefore we cannot show manly valor. Yet, blindfolding society's own eyes, binding it with cords fine and coarse in a thousand knots, yoking it to the vast oil-mill of prohibition, turning it forever in the same circular path—of this, they themselves are the greatest masters. They say, this mill is eternal, its sacred, smooth oil calms all inflamed passion completely. With tremendous energy they are laboring precisely to extinguish the vitality of the country; when nowhere in society is any sign of urgency to be seen, they themselves become terribly agitated.

But they shall not succeed. That very restlessness which has made them so restless against restlessness has itself entered the very pulse of the nation—of this, they themselves are proof. Rising in the morning, if some, annoyed at light entering their room, wish with a great clatter of noise to shut all the doors and windows of the room, then certainly many more will awaken who will be eager to open the door. That in the day of awakening both factions awaken—this is the most hopeful sign of all for us.

Those who kept the country cool and still have held sole dominion for a long time. The monuments of their solitary reign are visible on every side; approaching this subject for discussion carries the risk of provoking anger. But they can no longer keep the country's new youth exiled forever. Let them remain seated in the shrine's canopy, and let everyone else come out onto the roads and paths. Let the triumph of youth be there. Beneath its feet, let the jungle die away, let the tangled undergrowth be cleared, let thorns

be trampled underfoot, let the path be laid open, and by the arrogant momentum of its indiscretion let the impossible be accomplished.

Within the method of movement, the momentum of indiscretion too is necessary; the restraint of deliberation too is essential. But one cannot stop the momentum

of indiscretion while also denying the right to deliberate—one cannot tell man, "You shall not employ power, nor shall you employ intellect; you shall only turn the mill-wheel." Such an arrangement can never continue forever. Where movement to and fro is stopped, grass grows on that path, and among the grass, flowers of many colors also bloom. That grass, those flowers, are beautiful—no one will deny this—but the beauty of the road lies neither in the grass nor in the flowers; it lies in its unobstructed, uninterrupted expanse; it is charming not in the humming of bees but in the tireless footfall of travelers.

1321 (Bengali Era)

FOR THE PEOPLE'S GOOD

That there exists in our country a substance called "the common people"—this we have been guessing for some time now, and the sudden thought has come upon us that something ought to be done for these common people. As the thought, so the accomplishment. For this reason, thought arises for the sake of thought alone.

We cannot benefit another merely by resolving to do so. One must possess the right to confer benefit. The greater can very easily do harm to the lesser, but to confer benefit upon the lesser, one must not merely be great—one must become small, must become equal to the small one. Man will never accept any genuine benefit as charity, nor even as a loan, but only as his due, as something owed to him.

But when we become intoxicated with zeal for the people's welfare, in many cases the very root of that intoxication is a certain arrogance of self-regard. That we are, in every respect, greater than the common people—this very notion we relish in royal fashion through the arrangement for doing them good. In such cases we do them harm as well, and ourselves no good either.

There exists only one God-given right to confer benefit, and that is love. In the giving of love there is no dishonor, but in the giving of well-wishing charity, man is dishonored. The means of humbling man before all others is to do him good while withholding love from him.

It is often said that man is naturally ungrateful—that he strives to avoid the one to whom he is indebted. "The path the great have trodden, that path one should follow"—this teaching, in practice, almost no one obeys. The very path along which one's benefactor travels, that path man abandons entirely.

The reason for this is not that man's mind is inherently perverse. The reason is this: one must pay interest to the creditor, and that interest exceeds the principal. The interest that the benefactor collects is a man's self-respect—and along with taking that, he also demands gratitude, which makes him worse than a moneylender.

For this reason, one must not forget that in doing good to the people there lies peril for the people. If, keeping oneself separate from the people, one goes about doing them good, then that intrusion, unless the people refuse to tolerate it, will not result in their benefit.

Not long ago we received an education in this matter. For whatever reason, on the day when we suddenly felt an intense attachment toward homespun salt, we began, in unnaturally loud voices, calling the Muslims of our country kinsmen, calling them brothers.

When, in response to that call of affection, they did not respond in choked, tearful voices, we felt great anger toward them. We thought this was simply their perversity. We never once considered that there was urgency in our call, but not truth. There exists a certain ordinary sociability between man and man, by whose pull we invite people into our homes with natural affection, sit and eat with them—and if there be some difference between us, we do not let it be seen too sharply—that ordinary, common sociability, in whose realm we cannot recognize someone as brother, as our own, if, when caught in a difficulty, we perform the theatrical gesture of embracing him to our breast as brother with appropriate caution in the political field, that can never succeed.

Between one man and another, one community and another, there is indeed difference, but the very task of common sociability is this—not to bring that difference sharply into direct view. There is a difference between rich and poor, but if, when the poor man comes to his house, the rich man makes that very difference excessively prominent instead of covering it over, then, come what may, for the

rich man to fling himself weeping upon the poor man's breast when caught in difficulty is neither honest nor becoming.

We have exposed the difference between Hindu and Muslim so crudely, so shamelessly, in our society that, some time ago, during the days of the Swadeshi movement, a Hindu Swadeshi propagandist felt not the slightest hesitation in asking his

Muslim colleague to step down from the veranda so that he might drink a glass of water. In matters of work, through the medium of competition, man pushes man aside, even insults him—that causes no particular harm. During wrestling, when wrestlers' bodies touch each other's feet, no one keeps a tally of it, but if in social life someone's foot touches another's again and again in the course of conversation, that becomes quite intolerable. In schools and offices, in the press of competition, we have pushed the Muslim forcefully aside; that is not entirely pleasant, I admit; yet the pushing and shoving there may touch the body, but it does not touch the heart. But society's dishonor does not touch the body—it touches the heart. Because the very purpose of society is this: to spread a becoming veil of harmony over mutual differences.

The matter of Bengal's partition did not touch our food and clothing—it struck at our heart. As far as that heart was undivided, its pain remained unbroken. That the Muslims of Bengal did not join us in this grief—the reason is that we never allowed our hearts to become one with theirs.

There is a saying in Sanskrit: when the house is already on fire, it is futile to begin digging a well. On the day of Bengal's partition, when we suddenly needed to draw the Muslim into our faction, we did not even attempt that well-digging—we thought that merely by striking a pitcher upon the ground, water would rise of itself. When water did not rise, only dust flew up, our astonishment knew no bounds. Even to this day we have forgotten about that well-digging. Again and

again we shall have to strike the pitcher upon the ground, and along with it, that very pitcher shall strike upon our own forehead.

Regarding the common people, our respectable community stands in exactly the same position. To dishonor them in every way has been our habit from time immemorial. If

we look toward our own hearts, we must admit that we know India only as the India of the gentlefolk. That the number of Muslims among the lower classes in Bengal has increased—the sole reason for this is that Hindu respectable society has not drawn these classes to its heart as its own.

Our very mental disposition underwent no change at all, yet we have begun straining ourselves to discuss the welfare of this class. Thus the time has come to remember this: that arranging a great pageant of welfare-work for those whom we keep at a distance and dishonor, while increasing that very measure of dishonor, serves no purpose at all.

The day we set out bearing the banner of national welfare, the portion of "nation" in it was almost nothing—the arrogance of benefaction was the greater part. That day we began national welfare in imitation of Europe, not from the innermost urgency of the heart. Even today, the eagerness we have developed for the people's welfare contains much imitation within it. Recently in Europe, the common people have appeared in the political arena there in the role of chief protagonist. As spectators we stand so far removed that we notice only how much their hands and feet move, but do not hear, to the same degree, what their message actually says. This is precisely why, in the act of imitation, that very physical gesture becomes our sole resource.

But it is essential to know what is actually happening there.

In Europe, those who were once counted as the privileged class were that region's warrior-caste. Then there was no end to cutting and slashing, to warfare. Then Europe's chief external enemy was the Muslim; and internally, small kingdoms, falling upon one another's bodies, did nothing but butt heads endlessly.

At that time it was the warrior-caste there who were the country's protectors. Then their predominance was natural. Then whatever relation the common people had with them was not artificial. They were the protectors and the rulers. The common people naturally accepted them as their superiors.

After this, gradually the condition changed. Now in Europe, the position of the king is being seized by parliamentary governance; now statecraft has become primary over warfare. War preparations have increased rather than diminished compared to before, but now war-science outweighs the warrior; now science has been enthroned in the seat of valor. Consequently, in Europe, though the descendants of the old warrior lineages, and those bearing knightly titles, still even now take pride in their aristocratic lineage, yet their natural connection with the common people has been severed. Thus, though their dominance in the conduct of state affairs has diminished, they no longer have the strength to revive it.

The stream of power has now abandoned the warrior-caste and flows to the shore of the merchant-caste. They have come to sit upon the shoulders of the common people. Taking hold of humanity, they are fashioning it into the engine of their commerce. Man's hunger-fire itself generates the steam of their machines.

The relationship that existed between the warrior-hero of former times and the common people was a human relationship. However much suffering, hardship, and tyranny there might have been, still there was a path for the exchange of hearts between them. Now, the relationship of the common people with the merchant-financiers has become

mechanical. The enormous grindstone called the industrial system is grinding away everything else belonging to man, striving to leave only the residue of wage-labor.

The very nature of wealth is inequality. Knowledge, virtue, artistic beauty—shared among five people, these only increase, never diminish. But wealth as a thing, unless extracted from the hands of the five and protected from the hands of the five, cannot survive. For this reason, the pursuit of wealth, by its very own necessity, creates poverty.

Thus, when society encounters difference owing to inequality of wealth, the wealthy class has no wish to eliminate that difference altogether; yet when that difference becomes dangerous, they wish somehow to hold the danger in check and restrain it.

Thus, in that country, the more the laboring class groans and rises up, the more it is sung lullabies instead of being given bread for its hunger; efforts are made to distract them somehow with this trifle or that. Someone says, improve their lodging a bit; someone says, make arrangements so that after eating two spoonfuls of soup they can go to work; someone visits their homes and asks after their well-being with sweet words; in winter, someone sends them their own surplus warm clothing.

In this way, caught within the vast net of wealth, the common people writhe in agony. Had the pressure of wealth not fallen upon them with such force, they would not have bound themselves together in solidarity—and no one would have taken any notice of who they were, whether they existed at all. Now, in that country, the common people are no longer merely items on a census report; they are a power. They no longer beg—they demand. For this

reason, the country's people can no longer forget their voice; it has made everyone deeply anxious.

We read all about the discussions constantly proceeding in the Western countries on this subject, in their newspapers and journals. This suddenly makes our righteous sense start with a jolt now and then. It says: then surely we too ought to be having exactly this kind of discussion.

We forget that in that country, discussion is not merely discussion for the intoxication of discussion—it is a matter of life's very necessity. Behind this discussion lie various negotiations, various searches for means. Because there, power struggles against power—those who wish to indulge the incapable, granting them entertainment and leisure, this is not their kind of luxurious pastime.

In our country, the common people still do not know themselves as "the people," and therefore they cannot announce themselves either. We shall come to know them by reading English books, and we shall come to know them out of charity—that kind of knowing gives them no strength, brings them no result. Their own want and their own suffering remain, to themselves, isolated and individual. If they could know that their solitary sorrow is part of a vast, general sorrow, then their sorrow would stand as a single problem for the whole of society. Then society, not out of pity, but out of its own necessity, would apply itself to the resolution of that problem. Thinking for another only becomes genuine when the other makes us think. If one goes to think out of mere charity, one's mind wanders at every turn, and the thought bends back mostly toward oneself.

The same holds true regarding literature. If, puffed up with pride in our own elevated status, we think that we shall create "people's literature" for those common folk, then such an import would make even the broken winnowing-fan, discarded in the country, become priceless by comparison. This is not within our power. Just as we cannot eat on another man's behalf, so too we cannot live on

another man's behalf. Literature is the natural expression of life—it is not, after all, an expression of mere necessity. From time immemorial, people's literature has been created by the people themselves. It has not been sitting, mouth agape, waiting for kindly gentlemen to look down from the upper floors of our college buildings and dispense their charity. Like all literature, this people's literature too shares the same fate—that is, within it exist good, bad, and middling qualities of every kind. What in it is good is excellently good—no assembly of connoisseurs anywhere in the world need feel the slightest shame over it. Therefore, out of mere pity, no holder of a degree from our college is fit to become the guardian of people's literature. Even the Creator Himself cannot create the universe by mere charity—He has composed whatever exists here by the sheer force of disinterested joy. Wherever purpose enters and sits as guardian, there creation dies in the making. And wherever charity comes and takes the highest seat of all, from that very place, welfare takes its leave.

Our respectable society lives in comfort because our common people have not understood themselves. This is precisely why the landlord beats them, the moneylender seizes them, the master abuses them, the police fleece them, the guru-preceptor strokes their heads, the pettifogging lawyer cuts their pockets, and they can only file complaints against that fate whose name cannot be served with a summons. At most, we tell the landlord, invoking the pretext of duty, do your work well; we tell the moneylender, reduce your interest; we tell the police, do not do injustice—for how long, in how many ways, shall we go on checking things thus, so utterly feebly? We may bring water in a sieve and tell the water-carrier, "Cover the hole as best you can with your hand"—that will not do; that may work for one moment at some particular time, but it is no arrangement for all time. In society, the force of duty carries more weight than the force of pity.

Therefore, what is needed first of all is that people should be able to see a connection among themselves. That is, there must exist a road among them. If it cannot be a royal highway, then at least let it be a village lane.

Reading and writing is that road. If I say knowledge-education, the argument will arise that our farmers and peasants, by the grace of traveling players and religious storytellers, stand foremost among all countries in knowledge-education. If I say higher education, there will arise a great burst of laughter in respectable society—that too I could bear, if there were any immediate usefulness to this proposal.

I am, however, saying the very least of all—merely to learn to write and to read. That is no great gain in itself; it is merely a road—and even that, a village dirt-road. For the present, this much is sufficient, because without this very road, man remains bound within his own corner of himself. Then one may recite to him, through the medium of traveling players and religious discourse, Sankhya philosophy, Vedanta, the Puranas, and history all together; drums of devotional song may resound in his courtyard as well—but there is no way for him to clearly understand this fact: that he is not alone, that his connection is not merely a spiritual connection, but a vast worldly connection.

Only when the relational pathway between the far and the near, the absent and the present, becomes unobstructedly extended throughout the whole country, will the country's capacity for perception finally become vast. Man is as great as the range of his mind's traffic. To give man power, man must be extended.

Therefore I say this: what a man will learn and how much he will learn, after being taught to read and write, is a matter for later—but that he will himself hear the words of others, and let others hear his own words, that in this way he will find the vast humanity within himself, and himself within vast humanity, that his sphere of consciousness will thus become extended on every side—this is the fundamental point.

That the common people of Europe have gained the power to unite as one today is not because they have all become supremely learned scholars. Perhaps our patriotic countrymen can prove that what is called higher learning is understood

better by our country's common people than by theirs—but there is no doubt whatsoever that the common people of Europe, by learning to read and write, have found a way to reach one another; a great obstacle to the movement of heart to heart has been removed. This is absolutely true: that in Europe, though popular education is presently shallow, if it had not spread widely, then today one would not see there that entity called "the common people" awakening in the pride of its own strength and claiming its due. Had that not happened, the poor man would find himself gratified by receiving the rich man's charity now and then, the servant would remain lying with his head at his master's feet, and the laborer, eating merely the scraps thrown off from the merchant's profit, would fill but one corner of his hunger-stricken belly.

The well-wishers of the people will say: we are indeed engaged in exactly that work—have we not opened night schools? But no one can ever achieve prosperity through charity. That we, the respectable folk, receive the education we do—we take pride in the fact that we have the right to it; that is not something given to us, not charity done to us, but rather, to be deprived of it would be an injustice done to us. For this reason, if any deficiency occurs in our system of education,

we become agitated. We raise our heads and demand education. That demand is not, precisely speaking, by force of arm—it is by force of righteousness. But the common people too have that same claim by right; as long as their education is not arranged for, injustice against them keeps accumulating, and we each partake of the fruit of that injustice—until we admit this, opening one or two night schools out of pity will accomplish nothing whatsoever. What is needed, before all else, is to recognize the common people definitively as "people."

But the problem is this: recognition granted out of pity does not hold. The day they gain power and compel recognition, that very day the problem will be resolved. The reason they lack that power is that they are cut off by ignorance. If the machinery of state does not open for them the road of the mind, the road of connection, then the kindly person's opening of a night school will be like trying to check a fire by

shedding tears. Because this learning to read and write will truly become of use only when it becomes universal throughout the country. A golden ring may fit even on the little finger, but a cloth of that same small size becomes too small even for a joke—only if it can cover the body does it serve any purpose. A trifling ability to read and write, confined to a mere handful of people, does not become a precious thing, but spread throughout the general population, it can preserve the country's honor.

I have said before that only when there is negotiation of power with power does it become a matter of genuine transaction. In this genuine transaction lies the welfare of both parties. Just as laborers in Europe have grown strong, so too have the merchants there fallen into the necessity of accountability. Only through this does the relationship between the two sides become genuine—that is, whichever arrangement can

endure permanently, that alone will remain standing, and that alone will be beneficial to both sides. Man has kept all social power arrayed against woman for the sake of keeping her chaste—thus woman has no accountability before man; this has made man, in relation to woman, into an utter coward. In this, man's loss is far greater than woman's. Because there is nothing more degrading than dealing with the weak. Precisely where our society has rendered the common people powerless, there it robs itself of its own power. Seizing another's weapon renders one's own weapon reckless and unrestrained—herein lies the fall of man.

The common people of our country today depend upon the mercy of the landlord, the moneylender, the government official, the automobile-driver—the mercy of the entire respectable class—and by this, they have brought the respectable class low. We can beat a servant with impunity, harass a tenant with impunity, cheat a poor illiterate with impunity;—to treat the lowly justly, to behave courteously toward the honorless, depends entirely upon our own will, not upon the strength of the other party. It is precisely to save ourselves from this constant peril that we have need to make the lower classes strong. To give them that strength, we must

place in their hands some means by which they may gradually unite with one another—and that means alone is to teach them all, every one, to read and write.

1321 (Bengali Era)

THE ROOT OF THE WAR

In the Sabuj Patra of Agrahayan, the editor has made a few remarks concerning the present war, which are seasoned observations—hence containing both bite and flavor. There is no need to say much more beyond this—it is with that very confidence that I sit down to write.

The editor has explained well that this present war is a war of soldier against merchant, of Kshatriya against Vaishya. In the world there has always existed a natural contempt of the weapon-bearer toward the merit-earner—the Vaishya's dominance cannot be tolerated by the Kshatriya. Thus Germany, in the pride of its warrior-spirit, has begun this war with a certain contempt.

Among the four castes existing in Europe, the Brahmin has, setting aside his sacrifices and rituals, nearly withdrawn and receded. The community of Christendom, which once, in the childhood of present-day Europe, sat upon a high throne, rod in hand, playing the schoolmaster's role—today it sits near the doorway of its now grown-up pupil. Out of respect for old times, a certain allowance is still allotted to it, but it no longer has that high throne, nor that birch-rod. Now it must proceed by pleasing this pupil's disposition. Thus, in war and conflict, in dealings with other peoples, whatever injustice Europe has committed, Christendom has not objected—rather, by inserting a religious gloss here and there, it has made such conduct seem worthy and acceptable.

On the other side, the Kshatriya's sword has nearly melted away entirely and been transformed into the ploughshare's blade. Thus the warrior class sits idle, uselessly twirling its moustache in vain pride. They merely stand guard at the merchant's warehouse door. It is the Vaishya alone who has risen highest of all.

Now that very Kshatriya says to the Vaishya, "Today the battle is between you and me." In the Dvapara age, our elder brother Balarama did not join the battle of Kurukshetra. In the Kali age, the moment his hand touched the brimming wine-cup,

he roared and rushed forth. The chief commander of this present Kurukshetra war is not Krishna, but Balarama. He has no taste for bloodshed—gulping down the silver-foamed intoxicant of merchandise, his drunkenness had been steadily mounting all this while; this sudden abrupt outburst may somewhat diminish that intoxication, but there is fear that in due course it will gather again with doubled force.

After this, another battle remains ahead—that of Vaishya against Shudra, of financier against laborer—preparations for which have been proceeding for some time now. Once that is settled, the present cycle of Manu will end, and a new epoch will dawn.

The war of merchant against soldier has begun, but where lies the root of this war—that is the question worth asking. Looking at the history of former times, one sees that those engaged in commerce sometimes gained the patronage of state power, sometimes received favor, sometimes endured tyranny and dishonor—but they never had to descend into the arena of battle. In those days, wealth and honor were independent of each other; consequently, no one held the merchant in respect—rather, they held him in contempt.

Because worth is not measured by possession of things, but by the worth of the man himself. Thus, in the age when Kshatriyas were lords of the people and Vaishyas were lords of wealth, there was no quarrel between them.

Then the quarrel was between Brahmin and Kshatriya. Because then the Brahmin was not confined merely to sacrifice and ritual, study and teaching—he had extended his dominion over mankind. Thus between the Kshatriya-lord and the Brahmin-lord there was constant jostling;—Vasishtha and Vishvamitra found it difficult to coexist in peace. In Europe too, between king and pope there was no end to the tug-of-war.

Commerce is a matter of transaction; in it, both buyer and seller have mutual interest in keeping each other satisfied. Dominion is precisely the opposite of this; in it, the interest belongs only to one side. In it, one side sits burdened and heavy while the other side bears that burden.

Dominion is a burden—an obstacle within the domain of man's natural free movement. For this reason, dominion is the root of nearly all great wars. If one cannot cast off the burden entirely, at least one must be able to shift it, or else one cannot survive. The palanquin-bearer therefore keeps changing shoulders again and again. Human society, too, must keep changing shoulders again and again under this burden of dominion—because the burden itself wishes to press it from outside. Because a burden wishes to remain motionless, the life-force of humanity keeps it in motion. This is precisely why Lakshmi, goddess of fortune, is fickle. If Lakshmi were unmoving, mankind could not survive.

Formerly, man's ambition for dominion remained confined to the Brahmin-Kshatriya alone—for this reason, all the warfare of scripture and of sword in that age centered upon them. The merchants wandered about the marketplaces, fields, pastures, and riverbanks, never touching the edge of that warfare.

Recently, in the world, the age of Vaishya-dominion has dawned. Commerce is no longer mere commerce—one day it contracted a Gandharva marriage with empire.

At one time, mere goods were the property of the Vaishya; now man himself has become his property. Regarding this matter, let us understand the difference between the former age and the present age. In that former era, wherever there was sovereignty, there too was the king—income and expenditure were both located in the same place.

But now, like the flow of commerce, the flow of sovereignty proceeds with day-and-night import and export. Through this, an entirely new phenomenon has arisen in the world's history—that one country's sovereignty extends over another country, with the two countries lying on opposite shores of the ocean.

Never before in the world has there been such vast, extensive dominion.

Europe's field for that dominion is Asia and Africa.

Now Germany has fallen into difficulty. Its awakening was delayed. It arrived, panting, at the very tail-end of the feast. Its hunger is ample, and it can smell the fish too, but nothing remains except the bones. Now its body trembles with rage. It says: if no plate has been laid aside for me, I shall not wait for an invitation. I shall seize by force of arm whatever plate I find, from whomever holds it.

There was once a time when, in the matter of seizing and grabbing, there was no need at all to invoke the pretext of righteousness. Now that need has arisen. Germany's philosophical propagandists say: those who are weak need the pretext of righteousness; those who are strong have no need of righteousness—their own bodily strength suffices.

Today hungry Germany's creed is this: that there exist two castes of mankind—master and slave. The master shall take everything for himself; the slave shall supply everything for the master—whoever has strength shall drive the chariot, whoever lacks strength shall pave the road.

When this doctrine was propagated outside Europe, Europe could not understand its bitterness.

Today it strikes upon Europe's own body. But the doctrine which German philosophy propagates today, and the doctrine which, like wine, has today made Germany drunk with unjust war—the origin of that doctrine lies not in the brain of German philosophy, but within the history of present-day European civilization itself.

1321 (Bengali Era)

THE SMALL AND THE GREAT

At a time when the people of the land were as parched and anxious as the thirsty chātaka bird; at a time when the observers of the political weather announced that the mighty monsoon-wind of Home Rule had crossed the Arabian Sea and that torrential rain was about to fall—at that very moment, in the Bihar region, a storm of Hindu violence against Muslims broke out in torrents.

In other countries too we hear now and again of fierce conflicts born of communal jealousy and hatred. In our country the conflict that arises is over religion, though we never tire of boasting that in matters of religion there is nowhere in the world a tolerance to equal the Hindu's. The conflict that breaks out today in the north-western regions of the Western world is over material interest. There, the mine-workers, the dock and railway labourers, now and then raise a tumult; laws must be made because of it, troops must be summoned, laws must be suspended, and bloodshed occurs. In such disputes there are always two sides: one party creates the disturbance, the other devises means to quell it. No mocking third party comes forward from outside to jeer at them. But in our sorrowful bridal chamber it is not merely the philosophy of bride and groom that is at issue—there is present a third figure, a spiteful sister-in-law, ready with her mocking laughter and her whispered slanders.

There was a time in England when, even as her machinery of state was hardening into its mature form, conflict raged between Protestants and Roman Catholics. It is not that the two communities always dealt justly with one another in that quarrel; indeed, for a long time the Catholics were deprived of many rights and had cause to lament. Even today the burden of maintaining a particular established Church

falls upon the whole population of England—an injustice toward the other communities of that country. Why have these outward and inward causes of unrest and inequality now become quiescent in England? Because there the people of the

whole country have together obtained a government of their own. Had this burden of governance rested wholly upon a foreign power, then wherever the fit was imperfect, constant friction would have hardened into permanent estrangement. There was a day when the conflict between Scotland and England under British politics was no less bitter—for between the two peoples there were genuine differences of language, sentiment, custom, and historical memory. But through struggle the strife has gradually dissolved. The chief reason this quarrel has been resolved is that both the English and the Scots came to possess a single system of governance that belonged equally to both, in which, in prosperity and adversity alike, the strength of both worked as one. The result has been that today, though differences remain between the Scottish Church and the English Church, though disunity persists between Roman Catholic and Protestant, yet through the union of strength within the machinery of the state, in the pursuit of common welfare, a meeting has occurred between them. Had a third power stood wholly apart above their heads, driving them according to its own will, could any kind of accord ever have been reached between them? Why, even to this day, has no proper accommodation been reached with Ireland? Because for a very long time there was no equality of political right between Ireland and England.

This much must be admitted: in our country there exists, over the matter of religion, a hard antagonism between Hindu and Muslim. Wherever there is deviation from what one holds to be true, there lies offence; and wherever there is offence, there too lies punishment. If religion is not a thing of the inner spirit but makes scriptural doctrine and outward observance its chief concern, then that religion, however great, becomes nothing but a cause of disquiet. How many times has the history of Europe been reddened with blood over the external enforcement of this "dogma," this scriptural doctrine! If non-violence be called religion, I may in practice find it difficult to accept as workable in the field of action, but in the realm of pure ideals I can acknowledge it and gradually work toward it. But if, through the discipline of a particular scriptural doctrine, one insists that religion consists merely in refraining from a specific act of animal slaughter, and then tries to force adherents of other faiths to accept this too, then the conflict between man and man can never be resolved. To slaughter animals oneself in the name of one's own religion, and yet to prepare for the slaughter of men the moment animals are

slaughtered in the name of another's religion—this can be called nothing but tyranny. Our hope is that our religion shall not forever remain dominated by mere observance. There is yet another hope: that one day, if a single political ideal of serving the country's welfare, shared by Hindu and Muslim alike, becomes a living reality within our body politic, then through that inward union all outward differences will be rendered trivial.

Some days ago I had an English companion on the train. He spoke of the disturbances in the Bihar region—apparently, in some place in Shahabad, an English officer had mockingly said to a zamindar there, "You people cannot even control your own ryots. And yet you want Home Rule!" I did not hear what reply the zamindar made. Probably he bowed low and said, "No, sir, we do not want Home Rule; we are unworthy wretches. For now, you please control my ryots." The poor man knew that Home Rule was then a dreamland beyond the seas, while the Captain stood directly before him, and the riot had already climbed upon his shoulders.

I said, "This Hindu-Muslim rioting did not occur, after all, under Home Rule. The unarmed zamindar, accused of incapacity, had perhaps once looked in silence toward the General Sahib's troops, wondering what recourse there was for one man's hand to right the wrong committed by another's. Such a division of labour we have never heard of anywhere. Even in Bengal, precisely at the time of Swadeshi agitation, not merely in a mofussil town like Jamalpur but right in Calcutta's Bara Bazar, the persecution of Hindus by Muslims was extremely severe—that surely is a blot upon governance, not merely upon the governed. If such incidents were to occur regularly in the Nizam's Hyderabad, or in Jaipur, Baroda, or Mysore, then we should have to think hard about finding an answer for the General Sahib."

Our very complaint is this: the responsibility of authority does not rest in our hands; the master has taken upon himself the burden of protecting us from without. Because of this, we are becoming ever more helpless and impoverished within; and so, though from fear we do not answer back when the masters treat us with

contempt, the language we use in our hearts is not a wholesome one. Had authority truly rested with us, then to maintain it and make it fruitful, both Hindu and Muslim would have had equal stake, and all would have had to bear, with the utmost care, the burden of curbing all disorder. In this way, not merely today but for all time, India's political foundation would have grown firm upon its own base. But suppose it should happen that one day, at a turning-point in India's history, when the moment comes for the English to depart, they leave upon the ruins of their good governance a people numbering many hundreds of millions—unaccustomed to self-reliance, incapable of self-protection, unskilled in working for their own welfare, their faith in their own strength utterly destroyed—leave them, moreover, in a field where their neighbours stand awake with new endeavour, empowered beyond measure by new education—then whom shall we blame for this endless, eternally sorrow-stricken misfortune of ours? And if it can even be imagined that, in the midst of the ever-changing history of mankind, the history of the British Empire in India alone shall remain fixed and hold sovereign sway over the infinite future, then is this indeed the writing upon our brow—that the inhabitants of India shall remain forever scattered and divided, that there shall be no bond of common welfare-work between them; that, as always, their hopes shall be petty, their strength fettered, their field narrow, their future enclosed within a stone wall built by another's will?

Thus far, under English rule, we have gained a single governance but not a single responsibility. Hence our unity is external. In this unity we do not truly merge; we lie arranged side by side, and the moment a jolt comes from without or within, friction and collision follow. This unity is inert and inactive; it is not the living, active unity of men working together. It is the unity of sleeping men lying upon one patch of earth, not the unity of waking men walking one path together. In this there is nothing for us to take pride in; consequently it is not something to rejoice over; in it we can only offer praise, we can only bow down—we cannot rise to a higher state.

There was a day when the society that existed in our country kept alive the ideal of our responsibility toward the common people. The field of that responsibility was

narrow—then we knew our birth-village alone as our motherland. Be that as it may, within that small compass, the wealthy man's duty lay in his wealth, the wise man's duty lay in his knowledge. Whoever had whatever power, upon him lay the claim of all around. This manifold expansion of a life lived with purpose—in this alone lies man's true joy and true pride.

That responsibility of ours has drifted away from society and out into the world beyond. Now the Government alone judges us, protects us, keeps watch over us, arranges for our medical treatment, metes out punishment, confers honour, decides in the courts which case is Hindu and which is not, makes arrangements for the liquor-shops, and provides the District Magistrate the opportunity, along with his friends, to hunt down the tiger that has been carrying off the villagers. Consequently, our society no longer bears the burden that has been placed upon it in the same measure. The Brahmin still collects his fees but gives no instruction; the landlord still gathers his rent but owes his tenants nothing in return; the respectable classes still receive honour from the common people but give the common people no shelter. Ceremonial expenditure has only increased, never diminished, and yet that vast expenditure is not meant to sustain and nourish the social order but merely to preserve custom and display pomp. By this, both the rich and the poor of the country feel oppressed. Alongside this there remain all the old forms of persecution—factionalism, the pushing about of caste, the buying and selling of scriptural rulings, and so on. The cow whose feed I am obliged to supply has practically stopped giving milk, yet the thrust of her crooked horn has not diminished in the least.

Whether the system that once existed within society, now removed and set outside it, has become a better system is not the question here. If man were merely a collection of stone fragments, then the sole important consideration would be how to arrange him, chained into order, and set him to work. But man is man. He must live, he must grow, he must move forward. Hence this much must be conceded: that the dead weight of joylessness which now presses upon the bosom of the country, by suppressing the efforts of the people of the country on behalf of the country, is not merely cruel—it is, from the standpoint of statecraft, blameworthy.

The right we have been demanding is not a right to arrogance or to domination; we do not wish to shoulder a stick and, holding back every hungry soul, keep the whole world's affairs milked for ourselves alone; we harbour no perverse ambition to shame the devil by claiming the greatest strength, the greatest enterprise, and the greatest zeal in the matter of slaughtering men in war; we shall not brand our own foreheads with the mark of humiliation which mighty the West inflicts upon us on the pretext of our being meek Hindus; nor shall we grieve to lie, till the very end, upon the bed of arrows which our modern rulers have shot at us on the pretext that we are "spiritual"—we ask only for the natural right to serve our own country, to take up the responsibility for it. Having fallen away from this right, the sorrow of hopeless inactivity has become unbearable within us. It is for this very reason that of late we see a fierce eagerness among our young men for service to the people. Man does not live under the shelter of a secure and stagnant peace, for the innermost impulse of man is the impulse to grow and move forward. To accept suffering by dedicating oneself to a noble goal—that is the very motion of this growth. In the history of every great nation, the irresistible passion of this motion has, through the intervening course of failure and success, roared forth, foaming, breaking through obstacles, stealing past them, and falling like a cascade. It is impossible to expect that this grand spectacle of history should be kept hidden even from us, crippled as we politically are. Hence, when young men whose nature holds this natural excitement of vitality, despite drawing inspiration from the teachings of the great and the lessons of history, remain forcibly inert—that this is, to them, harsher than death itself—one can understand by reading the heart-rending final letter of Sachindra Das, written before his suicide. But the innate goodwill of an entire nation cannot merely be released, moment by moment, on the pretext of flood or famine. It is only within the daily labour that spans the whole country that the manifold powers of man find manifold fulfilment. Otherwise, most of that power remains dammed up and grows distorted in the heat of inward despair. From this distortion arise the country's various secret disturbances. Hence it is seen that the authorities are gravely suspicious of the country's moral sense and goodwill. The man who is selfish and treacherous, the man who is indifferent and inert—his course of life is, under the present covert system, the safest of all, and the fewest obstacles lie in the path of his advancement and reward. The accountability demanded of selfless benevolence has become a terrifying thing. For it is hard to answer, before the suspicious, this question: "What need have you of

such lofty endeavour? When you can pass your days in comfort, eating well, marrying well, moving about the offices and the courts on a fat or a modest salary—why then do you go, having eaten at home, to drive away the buffaloes of the forest?" In truth, the authorities know that this light and that smoke arise from one and the same cause. That cause is the effort of the country's goodwill to break free from the stupor of inactivity. Logic says, "Where there is smoke there is fire on the mountain." The spy's logic says, "Where there is smoke, there is an enemy on the mountain." But say what one will, do what one will, when that dreadful secret tunnel has been dug beneath the soil, where there is no light, no sound, no trial, no lawful means of release—can this truly be called the right path? By burying, without discrimination, the anguished striving of the country in one common grave, can its restless spirit ever be pacified? To silence the writhing of hunger from without with a dab of ointment, and thereby grant chronic famine the dignity of respectability—this cannot be called true statesmanship, nor, for that matter, wise policy.

At the time of these secret disturbances, news arrived from across the ocean that a draft of self-government was being prepared to be granted to us. I thought to myself: surely the authorities have understood that unrest cannot be dispelled by the terror of repression alone—that generosity too is needed. My country is my country, not merely because I happened to be born here, but because the whole country has a claim upon my labour in the making of this land's history—and if this profound sense of grandeur can be felt with enthusiasm by the people of the country, only then will the history of British rule in this land be crowned with glory. In the course of time, even should that history come to an outward end, its majesty will remain inwardly memorable. Besides, the opposition even of the most utterly powerless is like the smallest leak in a boat. In calm weather one may bail continuously and still row the leaky boat, but in a storm, when every hand is fully occupied at the oars and the helm, it is then that the tiniest cracks below cause the gravest trouble. To strike at them in anger with the policeman's baton of Regulation or Non-Regulation only widens the gap further. By spending a little at the right time to seal the cracks, one saves an extraordinary expense in the long run. I do not believe that England's wise statesmen fail to understand this. It is precisely because they understood it that the matter of Home Rule was raised at all.

But passion is blind; it magnifies the present moment and disregards what has not yet come to pass. It scorns the appeal to justice as weakness and sentimental fancy. Swollen with the joy of an undreamed-of prospect, India had reckoned this passion of the English as a trifling thing. Those English who are in this country as government officials or as men of commerce live in the closest proximity to India. In this near view, it is their own power, their own accumulation of wealth, that looms largest, while the three hundred million people of India, with all their joys and sorrows, appear to them as indistinct, unreal, and dim as shadows. By the weight of this nearness, by the measure of this present moment, India's claim seems trivial in their eyes. Hence, whatever influence of a granted boon might give India a measure of self-strength will reach us weakened, mutilated, and bloodless, or else it will die midway of an untimely death and strew the desert path of India's destiny with the skeletons of failed good intentions.

Those who wield the power to obstruct this are intoxicated with the wine of unbroken dominance; behind the hard, layered armour of national pride, their minds are cut off from contact with the people of India. To them, India is an enormously vast government or mercantile office. Meanwhile, that Englishman of England who is the arbiter of our destiny shares kinship of blood with these men, his hand rests upon theirs, his ear is close to their mouths, they have a seat in his council-chamber, their movements pass through the machinery behind the scenes of his political theatre. Flowing ceaselessly out of India, these men have mingled into every layer of English society at home; they have shaped the mentality of the Englishman there. They swear by their own grey hairs, they invoke their experience, and, declaring "It is we who have raised the pinnacle of the Indian Empire to its immeasurable height," they demand boundless deference. Behind this sky-piercing wall of arrogance, where indeed are our language, our hopes, our very existence? Whom shall we look to, who has the extraordinary power of vision to rise above this wall, to leap over the barrier of the office, and see the three hundred million people of India as human beings?

That distant Englishman who, being amid the atmosphere of Europe, has cut through the illusion of narrow self-interest and can look upon India with a generous eye—these near ones inform him that to see through the dust-thick air of the lower sky is to see reality, while to see from the clear sky above is to be estranged from practical fact. They regard the distant Englishman's intervention in the governance of India as an insolent presumption. The people of India must bear this fact in mind: that it is not, in truth, that great and noble nation called English which is actually governing India; rather, we are subjects of a bureaucratic class which, through the long-continued acid of reform in the India Office, has, from raw youth, grown wizened into artificial men on our behalf. A man who is not a man with his whole heart and mind and soul is no man at all; a man who is a man only to the measure of some special purpose is precisely an artificial man. We may call the photographer's camera an artificial eye. This camera sees very sharply, but it does not see completely; it does not see the moving, it does not see what cannot be seen. For this reason it may be said that the camera sees while being blind. Because behind the living eye stands the whole of man, its vision, however imperfect for some partial purpose, is more complete for the complete field of human dealings between man and man. We are grateful to Providence that He did not give us cameras instead of eyes. But alas, in the governance of India, what has He given us instead! The great Englishman is a man sixteen annas whole; our fortune is that he remains across the sea, while, the moment he crosses over to this side, he trims away, in the scissors of expediency, twelve annas of himself and emerges reduced to this tiny remainder. And that trifling remainder contains not a shred of the surplus—that is to say, whatever in man is savour, fragrance, and grace, whatever is his tenderness and pliancy, whatever, by the natural law of life, grows of itself and causes others to grow—has all of it, then, simply been discarded? This petty, clipped, truncated Englishman can in no way understand why, even having obtained so costly and flawless a camera, we should still thirst so deeply, inwardly, for the gaze of a living eye. He does not understand the reason: that at the time of the mechanical trimming, their very faculty of imagination has been snipped away along with the rest. In England's official orphanages, the inmates' minds yearn to flee and their hearts cry out restlessly. For that workhouse is neither wholly a home nor wholly the outside world. It gives neither kinship nor freedom. It gives shelter only, calculated to the last farthing. Shelter is an extremely necessary thing, but because man is man, he wants a home—that is, if he cannot obtain, along with

necessity, a great abundance of the unnecessary, he cannot live. Otherwise he feels humiliated, and even at the cost of forsaking comfort and convenience, he tries to escape. The stern superintendent of the orphanage is enraged and astonished at this ingratitude, and seeks only to suppress the grievance through the force of his anger. For this superintendent is not a whole man, his vision is not whole; this small-minded man imagines that an unfortunate person can, for the mere peace of shelter, forever keep his soul—restless with the boundless yearning for freedom—bound in the merchant's house like a chained beast.

The great Englishman does not touch India directly—he has placed the little Englishman between. For this reason the great Englishman exists for us in the pages of English literature and history, while India exists for the great Englishman in the ledgers of the office and the fair-copy accounts of profit and loss. That is to say, to him India is an aggregate of heaped-up statistics. In that statistical record one may find how much was imported, how much exported; how much earned, how much spent; how many were born, how many died; how many police for the preservation of order, how many prisons to mete out punishment; how many miles of railway line, how many storeys the college building rises. But creation, surely, is not merely a sky-spanning table of figures. A sum far greater than that column of figures never reaches, through any department of the India Office, any single human life.

However great the resistance to believing this, still the people of our country must know for certain that a truly great nation, called the English, does indeed exist somewhere upon the globe. When the strong commit injustice against the weak, it is their own weakness that stands revealed thereby—our glory lies in remaining free from that same baseness. It may be said, upon oath, that this great Englishman is, in every respect, humane. It is equally certain that whatever quality has made every great nation of the world great, the English too are great by that same quality; however greatly we may rage, it cannot be said that they have risen merely by standing on the tip of a sword, or by climbing upon a sack of money. That no nation ever gained glory in history merely by its capacity to hoard wealth or wage war is beyond doubt. That some nation should have become great without being great in humanity is a proposition that may be dismissed at the very outset for want of any

evidence. Reverence for justice, truth, and freedom is the inward ideal of this English nation. That ideal has found expression, in manifold forms and through manifold endeavour, in their literature and their history, and even in today's great war, that ideal, despite many a subterfuge and counter-argument, is lending them strength.

This great Englishman does not stand still—he moves ever forward. Through the course of history, his life has undergone change and expansion. He moves not with his state and commerce alone, but in a full flood carrying his art, literature, philosophy, science, religion, and society along with him. He is a creator by nature; in the vast sacrifice of European civilisation he is a chief officiant. The noble lesson of the present war is stirring his heart at every moment. In the generous light of death's renunciation, he has found opportunity to read the history of mankind anew. He has seen what inevitable calamity attends the making absolute of national self-regard in defiance of insulted humanity. Today, whether he realises it or not, he is understanding, hour by hour, that the deity of one's own nation is the deity of all nations, and that to bring human sacrifice to that god's worship is to provoke him, one day, to take on his terrible form of destruction. Even if he does not understand this today, he will surely understand one day that wherever the fabric grows thin, there lies the storm's centre—for the surrounding heavy wind rushes to seize that very gap. In just the same way, wherever in the world a country is weak, there lies the cause of conflict among the strong; there lies the field of greed; there man does not stand forth in his own noble form; there man carelessly grows slack and abandons his own humanity, day after day. There the devil takes his seat and mocks God as weak. The great Englishman will surely come to understand this: that one cannot build a house upon sand, that the strength of one can never rest securely upon the powerlessness of another.

But the little Englishman does not move forward. The country which he has fixed and bound remains, century after century, bound to him in turn. On one side of his life is the office, on the other, amusement. On the side that is office, he touches the many millions of India with the very tip of the sceptre of the state or the merchant's yardstick; and the side that is amusement remains, like the far side of

the moon, utterly invisible year after year. Yet, reckoning only by the passage of time, these men claim experience. At the very beginning of British rule in India these men were engaged in the work of creation, but for a long age since then, they have chiefly been guarding and enjoying an already-established empire and an already-established commerce. By endlessly turning the mill of routine, they have acquired the settled character of men of worldly business, and mistake that hardened callousness for strength. They imagine that their office runs in good order, and that this is the greatest event in the world. But they scorn the notion that, outside the office window, upon the dust of the road, the Lord of the Universe drives even the humblest wretch's chariot with His own hand as charioteer. Having dealt perpetually with the incapable, they have taken this to be immutable truth—that as they are today's masters, so are they the arbiters of the future. Not content merely to say "we have come here," they insolently declare, "we shall remain here."

Therefore, O unfortunate soul, deluded by mirage, do not rush toward the western shore, shouting with excessive clamour, carrying in your heart only this hope that a shipload of boons is coming from the great Englishman. Remember also this fear: that at the bottom of the Indian Ocean, layer upon layer, the little Englishman's "mines" lie planted. It is not impossible that the broken timber of your ship's fortune should serve, in the end, for the funeral rites of self-government. Thereafter, if we can fill our bellies with brine and yet crawl ashore, we should count ourselves fortunate.

I observe that our people, reckoning the great Englishman's generosity as the ultimate treasure, have begun to answer the little Englishman back to his face in blunt language. They fail to reckon at all how much power the little Englishman wields. They forget that the modest stipend of the intervening priest can outweigh the blessing promised by the god above. How great is this middleman's power, and what manner of temperament he possesses—have we not seen it again and again? The power of the little Englishman is something we witnessed not only under Lord Ripon, and to some extent under Lord Hardinge, but it was seen too, on another day, in the times of Lord Canning and Lord Bentinck.

Therefore I say again and again to the people of my country: "By what strength do you presume to defy? The strength of arms? You have none. The strength of voice? Whatever pride you may hold in that, it too is not truly yours. The strength of numbers? That too I do not see. If you possess the strength of righteousness, then place your entire trust in that alone. No one can deprive you of the noble right to suffer willingly. The glory of dedicating oneself for the sake of truth, for the sake of justice, for the sake of the good of the people, awaits you at the far end of an arduous road. If a boon is to be won, it shall be won from the Inner Witness Himself."

Have you not seen that, upon hearing that the highest department of the Government of India has a hand in the plan for granting self-government, the English newspapers of this country burst into scornful laughter, asking: "Have the nerves of the India-Secretaries given way? What calamity has occurred, that from the Thunderbolt Department a sudden shower of rain is being arranged?" And yet, when even the tender children of our schools are seized and sent off in droves to that lightless, lawless netherworld, these very men declare: "The disturbance is so grave that the law of the British Empire had to yield, and the lawlessness of the lawless jungle had to be imported." That is to say, the alarm that is true when it comes to striking is not true when it comes to applying balm. For striking costs nothing, whereas applying balm costs something. But even so I say—the bill for striking may in the end grow far larger than the bill for the balm. You have firmly resolved that the history of India, which belongs to the people of India, is not flowing forward; that, like a whirlpool, it is spinning round and round some violent centre, sinking ever toward the bottom. At such a time, coming out of your office one day, you suddenly discover that the current has overflowed the line of your chart and advanced some distance further. Then, roaring with rage, you say: bind it with stones, provoke it, encircle it with an embankment. The current then, finding no outlet, begins to seep from above downward—and in trying to check that stealthy seepage, the whole country's embankment cracks and splits apart.

Let me speak of a dispute that arose between myself and this little Englishman. Some time ago I wrote a short letter protesting the arbitrary imprisonment,

without trial, of hundreds of people. For this, some India-based English newspaper called me a liar and an extremist. These men are the unlicensed secretaries of Indian governance; therefore it is unnecessary for them to know the truth about us, and so I shall forgive them. Even among the people of our own country—those who say that in my poetry there is no meaning and in my prose no substance—even those few among them who have chanced to read my writings must at least concede this much: that from the days of Swadeshi agitation down to this very day, I have written against the path of extremism. I have always maintained that whatever gain is won through wrongdoing never, in the final reckoning, repays its cost; the debt of injustice becomes, in the end, terribly heavy. Be that as it may—whether native or foreign, in whatever age—I shall fear no insult offered in my own name. What I mean to say is this: by extremism we mean that path which is neither decent, nor lawful, nor open—that is, to abandon the hope of reaching one's goal by the straight path and to walk instead by crooked and devious ways: this alone deserves the name "extremism." That this path is utterly reprehensible I have said forcefully to my own people, and it is for that very reason that I claim the right to say, with equal force, that "extremism" is a fault in the policy of the Government as well. The road of law is called a straight road; sometimes, admittedly, one must take a roundabout way through it to reach one's destination—but that does not mean that trampling straight across the breast of Belgium to shorten one's path is an "extremism" that becomes anyone.

What in English is called a "short cut" was current in the history of primitive times. By the method "Bring him, cut off his head and bring it here," one was spared the tedium of untying the knot—the knot was severed at a single stroke. Europe's pride is that she has discovered that though a knot may be cut by this easy method, the goods themselves suffer far graver loss thereby. Civilisation carries a certain obligation—in every crisis that obligation must be preserved. There is inevitably a harshness in the very act of punishing; only by filtering punishment through the process of justice, cleansed of personal anger, hatred, and partiality, can a civilised society then accept it. Without this, the distinction between the club of the strong-arm man and the scales of the magistrate becomes wholly effaced.

I confess that the task has grown difficult. We are ashamed on behalf of the band of boys and young men in Bengal who have adopted this path to overcome the obstacles standing in the way of true union between the country and love of country. We are the more ashamed because we ourselves have taught, borrowing the lesson from the West, that there is no wrong in separating the ethics of duty toward one's country from the ethics of religion. The West regards the covert and open falsehood of politique and the covert and open banditry of politique as one regards an alloy mixed with gold—believing that without that trace of alloy, gold cannot be made hard enough. We too have learned to say that it is folly, weakness, mere sentimentalism, to set man's ultimate good above the interest of the nation and go on nagging about religion in the midst of political affairs—that one must strengthen civilisation with barbarity and strengthen righteousness with unrighteousness. In this fashion, we have not merely embraced unrighteousness—we have, at the very place where our teachers display atrocity, bowed our heads before that very atrocity. We no longer have, standing upon the strength of our own conviction, upon the strength of our religion, even above our own teachers, the vigour and genius to declare this truth—

Adharmeṇaidhate tāvat tato bhadrāṇi paśyati,
Tataḥ sapatnān jayati samūlas tu vinaśyati.

That is: through unrighteousness a man may for a while flourish, from unrighteousness he may see his own good fortune, through unrighteousness he may even conquer his enemies—but in the end he perishes, root and all. That our very moral sense should have suffered so great a defeat before our own teachers—this, above all things, is our deepest shame. We had cherished a great hope that when the light of patriotism was kindled in our country, whatever in our nature was noblest would shine forth in radiant expression; that whatever crimes had accumulated in us across the ages would flee, abandoning their own dark corner; that, rending the stony crust of unbearable despair, the inexhaustible fountain of hope would gush forth and rise; that, disregarding even the most insurmountable helplessness, an unassailable patience would, step by step, construct its own royal road; that, through the joyous power of pure, unfeigned love, the whole country

would rise together, heads uplifted, and cast off the burden by which cruel custom has for so long kept man degraded and humiliated in this land. But what has become of our fortune? The light of patriotism has been kindled—but what sight is this that appears in that very light: this theft, this dacoity, this secret murder? When the deity has been revealed, is His worship to be offered with the tribute of sin? The very destitution, the very inertia, by which for so long we thought political begging the sole means of gaining wealth, merely drafting petitions to the royal court and idling our hands—has that same destitution, that same inertia, that same lack of self-belief, in this new springtime of love of country, not besmirched the whole land by taking political banditry as the one overnight path to riches? The path of the thief and the path of the hero shall never meet at any crossroads. We are mistaken in thinking that European civilisation has achieved a union of these two paths; but let it be remembered that at the court of Providence the verdict on the path is not yet given; and though the whole world, in matters of external gain, may accept that worldly gain is the ultimate gain, let India refuse to accept it. I pray to Providence for this one boon: thereafter, if we win political liberation, so much the better; but if we do not, let us not obstruct the path to a liberation far greater than that by polluting it with the refuse of a defiled political method.

But one thing must not be forgotten: in the light of patriotism, we saw in Bengal not only thieves and dacoits, but heroes too. Never before have I seen the divine power of noble self-sacrifice shine forth so brilliantly among our young men as I have seen now. Casting away petty worldly calculation, they have made ready, with fierce dedication, to give their whole lives to the service of the country. At the far end of this path lies not only the absence of any hope of government employment or royal honour—the path is thorny even with opposition from wise guardians at home. I have been overjoyed to see, quite suddenly, that in Bengal there is no want of young travellers for this difficult, wealthless, honourless road. When the call came from above, our young men did not delay in answering; in droves they stand ready to cut their way, carrying nothing but their own moral conviction, toward the lofty summit of noble sacrifice. These young men have not sought to smooth their path by scattering petitions before the Congress; nor have they nursed the vain hope that the little Englishman will rightly understand their noble resolve, or raise a hand in blessing. In other more fortunate lands, where manifold paths of service

to the people and to the country lie open in every direction, where good intention and the field for good intention are perfectly matched—there, such firm-resolved, self-sacrificing young men, however lacking in worldly prudence, however carried away by imagination, are the greatest treasure the country possesses. Reading the last letter of the self-slain Sachindra, one understands that had this boy been born in the country of the very Englishman who condemned him, he could have lived in glory and died in even greater glory. Any king, or any king's official, of ancient or of modern times, may govern and crush such vitally alive boys and render the country senseless from one end to the other. This is the easy way, but it is not the noble way, and we have heard that it is not truly English either. To hand over, without discrimination, to the merciless suspicion of the police, all the boys and young men of the country whose innocence and nobility are beyond question, or who, in a passing distortion of noble enthusiasm, have lost their way for a moment, who, climbing too high, have fallen, and who, had they been given a chance, might one day have returned from that path and made their lives fruitful—to rely on mere suspicion and cripple such boys for life is the most merciless waste that human life can suffer. To hand over indiscriminately all the boys and young men of the country into the hands of the police's secret agents—what manner of statecraft is this? This is to clothe sin and baseness in the badge of royal authority. It is as though one were to loose a herd of buffaloes at midnight into a field of tender crops. The one whose field it is beats his forehead and wails in anguish, while the one whose buffaloes they are puffs out his chest and says—well done, not a single weed remains.

There is another calamity: once the police have sunk even the smallest tooth into a sapling, that sapling never flowers, never bears fruit again, in all its life. There is poison in their saliva. I know personally of one boy—as intelligent, as learned, as upright in character as any—who, though he emerged wounded from the hands of the police, is today, still young, spending his life insane in the Berhampore lunatic asylum. I can say with certainty that he had not the slightest cause to alarm the British Raj, and yet from him our country might have hoped for a great deal. As for the beating by the police, that goes without saying—their very touch is deadly. Some time ago, when the boys of Santiniketan went to sit for their examinations at the Birbhum district school, the police did nothing more than merely note down

their names. Nothing more was needed; their very breath is enough to start the withering of a tender young life. Their register is a secret register, their gait is a secret gait. As no one eats fruit that a snake has tasted, so today no one will employ, for any purpose whatsoever, a man once touched by the police. Indeed, that father in Bengal seeking a match for his daughter, who would not turn away even an ugly, ill-natured, poverty-stricken, aged, sickly bridegroom, fears even to send a matchmaker to such a man's door. If he tries to open a shop, his shop will not run; if he begs, one may pity him, but to give him alms is to court danger. If he is engaged in any charitable work for the country, that work will be ruined.

The officers upon whom this department of terror is laid are, after all, men of flesh and blood; they are not great sages free of anger and hatred. Just as in moments of anger or panic we too readily mistake a shadow for solid substance, so do they. When suspecting everyone becomes their trade, then distrusting everyone naturally becomes their nature. It is entirely natural for them to seize upon the merest hint of danger and treat it as decisive, in order to secure safety absolutely—for their responsibility above is slight, the people around them are cowed into silence, and behind them the Englishman of England is, if not encouraging, at least indifferent. Where natural sympathy is absent but wrath is present, and power too remains unchecked, if in such a field the machinery of action turns secretive and the machinery of justice turns hostile, does even our little Englishman truly believe that justice is thereby being preserved? I swear he does not believe it—but his belief is that the work is being accomplished. For I have observed that Germany too, by force of this same belief, has made light work of disregarding international law and the ethics of mercy in her rules for winning the war. The reason is that, unfortunately, in Germany today the influence of little Germany has grown greater than that of great Germany—the Germany that is merely a machine for working and an implement for warring. Again I say: though one may accomplish affairs of state by saying "bring his head here," the politics thereby degraded is politics for all time. It is for this politics that the English have fought in their own history; it is against the debauchery of this very politics that English youths, roused to noble hatred against Germany, have rushed in their thousands to give their lives on the field of battle.

I have kept it firmly as my aim that the spiritual vision which sees the history of the human race as an undivided whole should not be weakened or sullied for the boys of the Santiniketan ashram. Hence I have not hesitated to claim, for the good work of this ashram, the gift of an Englishman devotee's life as well. I have not wished to fragment ultimate truth by invoking any grand name; and for this, my ethic may be scorned by both the disciples of Nietzsche and Treitschke among the English, and by the weak-kneed disciples of this country, as the ethic of the feeble and the consolation of the dying. Our situation is unnatural; our present field and our future hope are narrow on every side; the zeal for the development of our inward mental powers is faint, and the opportunity for it is obstructed; crushed and stunted beneath the shadow of towering, arrogant privilege and responsibility, whatever fruit we bear is of trifling worth in the marketplace of the world, its price next to nothing—and yet it is declared, both at home and abroad, that this very stuntedness is our eternal nature, and that to keep that shadow forever unbroken is beneficial to wretches like us. The weariness that such a condition brings weighs down, layer upon layer, the hearts of our people from within. It is for this reason that the counsel of spiritual liberation, free of fear and hatred, finds little reverence in this country nowadays. Yet I believe that even fighting against all these obstacles, the purpose of our ashram has not been entirely in vain. For however hard the obstacle, once the truth of the highest good has been set before mankind, one cannot altogether disregard it—even for the most utterly modern boy of our country, it proves difficult to do so. On this matter of our nature, I find my view in agreement even with the Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab. But at times such calamity comes that even to a very good person—like this stubborn boy—the highest truths become an object of contempt. For when passion clashes with passion, passion is aroused, and it becomes hard, in the midst of that frenzy, to acknowledge what is good. We have in our ashram two small boys. Their guardians' circumstances were once fairly comfortable; they have always paid for their stay here. Some time ago, three men of their family were together interned. Now it has become impossible for the two boys to pay for their stay in the ashram, and the burden of their education and board must now fall upon the ashram itself. These two boys bear not only their own shame but know, too, how great is their mother's sorrow. They are not unaware of the anguish of want and joylessness that has filled

their home. Their father has been struck down with malaria; their mother struggles anxiously to have him kept in a healthy place—all these anxieties weigh upon these two children as well. On this matter not a word issues from the boys' lips, nor do we say anything—but when these boys are present, I feel a reluctance to speak of patience, of love, of devotion to eternal duty, of faith in the God of all mankind; at such times, the sneering, twisted faces of those who mock excessive saintliness, just as the Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab does, rise before my mind. In this way, the friction of passion against passion is kindling fire; in this way, in province after province of Bengal, amid sorrow and terror, man is storing up, in the eternal treasury of his heart, the outward pain inflicted upon him. From within the invisible cloud of the ruling power, bombs suddenly fall into the midst of ordinary life, and among those who die from them are many a helpless widow and defenseless child. Shall these not be called non-combatants?

If you ask where the root of this vicious problem lies, one must say: in the absence of self-government. To the English we are, above all, foreigners—we hear that certain learned travellers among them have written that even with China and Japan they feel a far more intimate kinship than with us. And then there is our spirituality, which we are told holds no attraction for them at all—so fundamental a difference between man and man can scarcely exist elsewhere. Further, they do not know our language, they do not keep our company. Where there is so much distance, so little knowledge, wary suspicion is bound to be the only policy. There, those among the people of the country who are selfish and cunning, who know that unsalaried espionage is the way to advancement, infiltrate the crevices of the administration with their poisonous influence, filling it with falsehood, and with something more dreadful than falsehood—half-truth. Those who value self-respect above self-interest, who know the good of the country to be greater than their own advancement, keep themselves as far as possible from this system of governance until the day the police finally seize them. This constant furtive walking on tiptoe and whispering, this day-and-night sidelong glancing, this skulking through the thickets—nothing else, merely this ceaseless commerce with the police—this is the polluted air in which the ruler who dwells finds no natural obstacle standing in the way of his mind's suspicion hardening into merciless action. For to them we are one indivisible mass; we are merely the ruled community. Hence, when in our homes

mothers weep, brothers weep, wives take their own lives, children's education is halted; when the many sorrowful, well-meant endeavours of an unfortunate country are shattered again and again by the crooked gestures of the C.I.D. on every side—then, on the other side, no man's appetite for dinner, no man's midnight sleep, is disturbed in the least, and enthusiasm for a game of bridge remains undiminished. I say this not to lay blame—it is entirely natural. All these men, wholly human where they themselves are concerned, have probably left their hearts behind, outside the dry parchment of the office. Bureaucracy everywhere means those masters who do not deal with the world of men created by God, but who extend their dominion of authority over an artificial world of their own making. In a free country, this bureaucracy is not supreme over all, and so man can grow up through the gaps left in it. In a subject country, this bureaucracy will not leave even the smallest gap anywhere. When we plead for a gap through which to lift our heads to the open sky, their small and great branches, on either side of the ocean, begin to sway with such tremendous violence that we grow flustered and think—never mind the gap, let us only make sure we are not crushed and broken beneath the lash of that bough. Still, let me state the final truth: no nation, however mighty in physical strength, can in the end keep any unnatural thing perfectly straight upon the point of a needle forever. The weight accumulates, the hand grows weary, and the vast gravitational pull of the whole world reduces the incongruity of that unnatural state to dust.

What is naturalness? It is this: whatever the system of governance, and whoever exercises it, that there be a connection between the people of the country and the responsibility of the country's governance—that the people of the country feel an attachment to the machinery of their country's rule. If that governance remains perpetually an external thing, the subjects' indifference toward it will inevitably turn into aversion. And those who then try to suppress that aversion purely from outside only harden that aversion into hatred. In this way the problem only grows more and more tangled.

The English have come to this country as messengers of the truth of the present age. Whatever is the greatest treasure of humanity in any given era is bound to

spread, in various forms and by various means, from land to land. Those who are the bearers of that treasure—if, overcome by greed, they grow miserly, they will needlessly obstruct the purpose of righteousness and create sorrow, but they will not be able to keep suppressed the fire they themselves are carrying. What is to be given, they must give, for in this gift they are but the occasion; this is the gift demanded by the present age. But the unnaturalness lies in this: that even as, on the bright historic side of their nature, they scatter abroad this very truth, on the dark historic side of their nature they smother that same truth in the darkness of repression. Yet they will never, by any means, be able to deny one part of their own nature through another part. If the little Englishman perpetually tries to dam the great Englishman with the barrier of self-interest, he will only go on increasing sorrow and misfortune. A historic game cannot be played by keeping one's cards face-up on the table. The consequence appears suddenly, against all reckoning, and startles everyone. Hence, on the whole, this much may be said: when any unnaturalness is indulged for a long time, and it becomes a fixed conviction in the mind that "whatever rule I have made is the only rule," it is precisely then that history suddenly strikes upon some small stumbling-stone and topples over. For a hundred years man has lived beside man, and yet there is no human bond between them; he is governing him, and yet in no way is he making him kin; the West, tearing down the wall of the ancient earth, has come and settled itself right within his own household, and yet has not abandoned that maxim—"never the twain shall meet." So great a burden of unnaturalness and sorrow can never remain fixed in the world forever. If there is no natural remedy for it, then in the fifth act of some historic tragedy the curtain shall fall upon it. The heart-rending tragedy of our own misfortune in India, too, has had its acts composed, age after age, in just this manner. We too have devised elaborate arrangements to keep men close and yet hold them at a distance; the right which we ourselves accepted as the most precious of all, we have kept others perpetually deprived of; we too, giving it the grand name of "one's own duty" [swadharma], have insulted mankind and afflicted the eternal law of righteousness. Even with the extremely rigid bonds of scriptural ordinance, we have never been able to render this unnaturalness, this impure rebellion against God, conducive to our own history. We thought our strength lay here—but it is here, precisely here, that our weakness has lain. It is here that, century after century, at every step, we have gone on merely killing ourselves, and dying of it.

Whatever the present appearance may be, I have nonetheless fixed firmly in my heart this hope, this faith—that the West shall unite with the East. But here too we have our own duty. If we grow small and afraid, the Englishman too will grow small and show us fear. The whole strength of the little Englishman rests upon our own diminished strength. That future age of the world has arrived when the unarmed must stand against arms. On that day, he who can kill will not be the victor; he who can die will alone achieve triumph. On that day, the man who inflicts suffering will be the one truly defeated; the man who suffers will hold the final glory. On that day, in the struggle between muscle and the strength of the soul, man will proclaim that he is no beast, that he has transcended the law of natural selection. The task of proving this greatness lies upon us. If East and West are to be united, it must be upon some great ideal—it must not rest upon mere condescension, nor upon cannon, gun, and battleship. We must make suffering our ally, we must make death our ally—then alone shall the Conqueror of Death be our ally. If we do not gain strength, the union between the powerless and the powerful can never be complete. A bond built on one-sided dominance is no bond at all. We must, by our own strength alone, make peace with the strength of the other. Let that strength be neither a borrowed strength nor a begged strength. Let it be the boundless strength to bear suffering for the sake of truth, for the sake of justice. No power on earth has the capacity to bind, like a sacrificial beast, the strength of sorrow, the strength of renunciation, the strength of righteousness, in chains. That strength, though it seems to lose, wins; though it dies, becomes immortal; and the muscle, going forth to erect its own pillar of victory, suddenly discovers itself struck motionless with paralysis.

1324 [Bengali Era]

LETTERS FROM A CASEMENT

1

On one side stands our universe; on the other, our world of daily labour. All our anxious thought is spent upon this working world; toward the universe we feel no obligation at all. For this reason we must keep the bond of our disinterested kinship with the universe as concealed as possible—for otherwise, should attention slacken toward our worldly portion, our work would suffer. And so, from our office desks, we go on holding the universe at bay month after month, year after year, until at last, even when we have need of it, we can no longer find where it has gone.

Yet the need does arise. For the universe is truth. Even if our dealings have no connection with truth, still another connection exists nonetheless. Though we may absent-mindedly deny that connection, we cannot simply cast it away. At last weariness comes upon our labour, the light of day grows dim, and within the confined compass of worldly life the stuffiness becomes unbearable. Then the mind closes its neat ledger of accounts and cries out: I must have the universe, or I cannot live.

But the locks on all the nearby doors have rusted; the key no longer turns. One must pay the railway fare and travel far to find that sky which is blue, that earth which is green, that flowing water which murmurs, even just above and around the office roof—one must rush off to Etawah or Katwa or some remote little corner of the world to behold them.

Why has all this suddenly risen in my mind? Let me tell you. You all know that in ancient days I was once entirely unemployed—that is, my chief bond was with the universe at large. Then, for some time, I became engaged in settling the arrears of all the undone work of my early years—that is to say, my principal connection became one with the world of affairs. And yet, in the very act of working, I forgot

what a vast severance had occurred between that former day and this present one. This power of forgetting is indeed the mind's special faculty. It does not set foot in two boats at once; while it dwells in one boat, it keeps the other tied fast behind.

Just then my body fell ill. A brief respite was granted from the world of affairs. On the upper floor, at the eastern edge of the room, beside an open window, I sat reclining in a long chair. Before two days had passed, I discovered that I had already come a great distance—so far, indeed, that no railway fare could carry one there.

When I travel to America, to Japan, I fill letters brimming with tales of my journey and send them to you. For that I must pay the dignity due, equal in weight to the cost of the passage. But this journey of mine, without expense, from the shore of work to the shore beyond work—of that too a travelogue may be written; I shall write now and then. The difficulty is that leisure is found here and there amid one's labours, but leisure entire within leisure itself is a rare thing indeed. There is another matter too: this unpaid travelogue of mine ought properly to adopt the light gait befitting something had without cost—but the pen cannot simply will such lightness into being, for by its very nature the pen moves with the stately, elephantine gait.

Having thrust the universe beyond the fence of habitual busyness, I had at last come to believe myself a person of great importance. Once this conviction takes root, one feels oneself utterly indispensable; without oneself, nothing can proceed. This is the greatest of all the vanities that Nature has devised to make men labour without wages. Those who work for money labour only in proportion to that money—a fixed measure; hence they are entitled to holidays. Should they be made to work beyond their appointed leave, they count it a loss. But those who labour for the sake of their own vanity have no holidays left at all; even loss itself they do not reckon as loss.

For so long, believing that "without me nothing can proceed," I laboured in great agitation, not daring even to blink an eye. The doctor said, "Rest here a while, pause a moment." I replied, "If I pause, how shall anything go on?" And then, precisely at such a moment, the wheel broke, and my chariot came to a halt before this very window. Standing here, after so long, I gazed once more toward that vast firmament. There I beheld, in the great chariot-procession of eternal Time, millions upon millions of fiery wheels revolving onward—no dust rising, no sound ascending, not the faintest mark left upon the path. Bound to the wheel of that great chariot, the whole motion of the universe proceeds unceasingly. In a single moment my spell seemed to shatter. It seemed I saw with perfect clarity: even without me, all proceeds. That silent wheel of Time's chariot shows no sign, for anyone's absence, for anyone's slackness, of pausing even for an instant, even a hair's breadth. From the land of "Without-me-nothing-proceeds" I have arrived, with a sudden jolt, at the land of "Without-me-it-proceeds"—merely by coming from that desk to this window-sill.

But I cannot accept this truth so easily. Though the lips may consent, the mind will not agree. If it is equally true whether I remain or whether I depart, then how did my pride ever find room for itself, even for a single moment, anywhere in this universe? On what does its power to endure depend? Throughout the vastness of space and time there is no end of arrangements, yet amid all this abundance no one has been able to dismiss me. The direct proof that I am indispensable is this: that I exist.

The very worth of my existing is precisely this: vanity. As long as I hold this worth within myself, I go on bearing endlessly all the burdens, all the sorrows, of maintaining myself. It is for this reason that the Buddhists have said: only by renouncing this vanity can the very root of clinging-to-existence be struck down—for then the wages of persisting no longer suffice to pay their cost.

Be that as it may, this worth has surely been drawn from some treasury or other. That is to say: I exist because somewhere there is need of my existing; according to

that need, worth has been bestowed upon me. I exist because the whole universe is the retinue of this Will; every atom and particle of the universe partakes of it. In the glory of that supreme Will my vanity too has blossomed forth. In the glory of that Will, this infinitesimal "I" is, in measure and worth, inferior to nothing in the universe.

This Will, mankind has viewed in two ways. Some have called it the caprice of the Mighty One; others have called it the joy of the Blissful One. And those who have called it Maya—that is, the existence of that which does not truly exist—their view I set aside.

Whether my existing is the manifestation of Power, or the manifestation of Love, is a question whose answer determines, for each thinker, the goal of life accordingly. The worth that Power confers upon us wears one face; the worth that Love confers wears a face entirely different. In the realm of Power, the direction of my pride's motion is one way; in the realm of Love, the direction of my pride's motion is precisely the opposite.

Power can be measured; its number, its weight, its velocity—all these fall within the compass of mathematical reckoning. Hence those who know Power alone as the ultimate truth wish to become great in magnitude. The count of money, the count of men, the count of instruments—all these they go on merely multiplying manifold.

It is for this very reason that, in their craving for accomplishment, such men sacrifice another's wealth, another's life, another's rights. The chief element in the worship of Power is sacrifice. In the blood of that sacrifice the earth is set adrift.

The chief characteristic of any theory of matter is the measurability of its outward expression—that is, its finitude. Whatever has ever entered the annals of human

history as civil or criminal litigation has, for the most part, concerned itself with the boundaries of this very finitude. To extend one's own boundary excessively, in terms of magnitude, is inevitably to encroach upon another's boundary in that same dimension. Hence the vanity of Power, being a vanity of expanding magnitude, means that however far one trains the longest telescope while standing on this ground, nowhere across the blood-red sea of battle can one glimpse the shore of peace.

Yet in this material universe, in this field of Power, as we go on adding up the figures of its magnitude, we suddenly find at one point that the total does not simply rush ever onward in a straight line of increase. In the very midst of the theory of continuous increase, we suddenly encounter an obstruction, and discover that the path of Susumna—the central channel—bars the way. We see that there is not merely motion, but also cessation. When Power seeks to transgress this inviolable law of rhythm through blind, unyielding vanity, it is then that self-destruction occurs. This has been seen again and again in human history. It is for this reason that men have said, "Excessive pride ends in disgrace." It is for this reason that mankind still remembers the tidings of the fall of Babylon's arrogant, towering pinnacle.

We see, then, that the theory of Power, whose outward expression lies in magnitude, is not the ultimate truth, nor the supreme truth. In the reconciling of the universe's rhythm, Power itself must be brought to a halt. That very gate of restraint is the gate of true welfare. The worth of this welfare is not a matter of magnitude, nor of multiplicity. He who has known the One within himself feels no shame in a broken begging-bowl; he can fling his royal crown into the dust and set forth upon the road.

Having come from the theory of Power to the theory of Susumna, we can at once understand that for all this time we have been offering rich oblations at the wrong altar. The power that swelled up on the blood of the sacrificial beast was destined only to burst and perish. However much soldiery, however many cannons I station

behind it; however far I extend the compass of my battle-fleet; however vast I make the share of plunder—by the force of arms falsehood can never be made truth. In the end, one must be crushed to death beneath the very weight of that excessive arsenal, ground down under one's own burden.

When Yajnavalkya, having settled and divided all his possessions, established Maitreyi in this kingdom of wealth and took leave of her, it was then that Maitreyi said: "What should I do with that by which I would not become immortal?" Much, much, much—joining much to much, adding number upon number—still one can never thereby arrive at immortality. That which is obtained by endlessly swelling and amplifying sound alone is nothing but roaring noise. But that which is obtained when sound, disciplined by melody and rhythm, achieves restrained completeness—that alone is music. That roar is Power; its measure can be taken. But music is nectar—it can be weighed in no scale whatsoever, held in no hand.

In the realm of this nectar, the current of man's pride runs in the opposite direction—toward self-offering, toward sacrifice. Man, by ceaselessly drawing everything toward himself, attains vastness; but by offering himself unto all, he attains harmony. In this harmony lies peace. Never, by making some external arrangement more extensive, by joining power to power and heaping it into mass, can that peace ever be won—the peace that is established in truth, the peace that is free from greed, the peace that lies in restraint, the peace that lies in forgiveness.

I had raised the question: in which truth does the ultimate worth of my being reside? In the power of the Mighty One, or in the joy of the Blissful One?

If we accept Power alone as that truth, then we must also accept conflict as ultimate and eternal. Many modern writers of Europe have proclaimed this very doctrine with defiant assurance. They say: the ethic of peace, the ethic of love, is but an artificial fortress built by the weak for self-protection—the law of the universe pays no heed to this fortress; in the end, Power alone triumphs. Therefore

the timid crowd of the pious, who condemn as unrighteous whatever this unrighteousness may be, are themselves the ones who lead mankind away from true fulfillment.

Another school does not wholly deny this truth; accepting it all, they say:

Adharmeṇaidhate tāvat tato bhadrāṇi paśyati,
Tataḥ sapatnān jayati samūlas tu vinaśyati.

Even in the pride of prosperity man's mind is scattered outward; and again, in the sorrow and humiliation of poverty, all man's covetous instincts thrust themselves outward. In both these states man feels no shame in seating that very Power above all the gods—that cruel Power in whose right hand is the weapon of injustice, in whose left hand the instrument of deceit. The Realpolitik of Europe, drunk with the arrogance of might, is this very worship of Power. It is for this reason that the diplomacy of that world seeks ever to avoid open declaration; that is, the form which Power there assumes is not wholly naked—yet the nakedness of its lolling, blood-lusting tongue is hidden nowhere. Behold, at the very council-table of the Peace Conference, it flickers and darts.

On the other hand, once in our own country, during a time of political turmoil, a fearful and afflicted populace made their poets sing hymns of praise to Power itself. Kabikankan's Chandi, Annadamangal, the Manasar Bhasan—these are, in truth, hymns to unrighteousness. In that poetry, cruel and deceitful Power triumphs over the unjust,

though the strange fact is this: that this very hymn to defeat has been given the name "hymn of auspiciousness."

Even today we see that this same wind has arisen in our country. Speaking in the name of religion, one faction now declares: fear even of religion is but cowardice; they say, whoever are heroes, for them injustice is no injustice. Thus we find that those who succeed in worldly matters and those who fail in worldly matters, their voices converge at one point—both regard righteousness as an obstacle, an obstacle they wish to overcome by sheer force. But sheer force is not, after all, the greatest force in this world.

In this great time of calamity, I pray that we shall neither fear nor worship the hideousness of Power in any form whatsoever—that we shall disregard it, that we shall hold it in contempt. Let that be our human pride, the pride by which man, standing amid the overwhelming vastness of this gross material world, can lift his head and say: my treasure is not here. He can say: I am not imprisoned by chains, I am not wounded by blows, I do not die in death; he can say: "What should I do with that by which I would not become immortal?" Our forefathers have said: "This is immortal, this is fearless—worship That and attain peace." Let us take their teaching to heart, and attain fulfillment in that peace which lies beyond death and beyond all fear.

2

To plough up someone's courtyard is counted, in our language, the ultimate punishment. For in the courtyard, man has made his own that vast treasure called open space. This openness is not, outwardly, rare—but unless one makes that outer thing an inner possession, one's own, then having it becomes as good as not having it. In the courtyard, man makes emptiness a thing of his own household; there the sunlight becomes his own household light and shows itself; there his own household's child claps hands and calls to the moon in the sky. Hence, if the courtyard too is not left idle but turned into a field of crops, then the world that is man's own household-world has its very dwelling destroyed.

The distinction between the truly rich and the truly poor is this: the rich man cannot keep this open space great. Whatever goods the rich man uses to fill his house command a very high price, but that emptiness through which his courtyard becomes spacious, through which his garden becomes vast—that alone is the most precious of all. The merchant's shop is crammed with goods; there he has no power to keep space open. In his shop the merchant is miserly; there, though he be a millionaire, he is poor. But in the house where that merchant dwells, the rooms are long and wide and high, defying necessity on every side, giving greater honour to emptiness—and as for the garden, there is no question at all. It is here that the merchant is truly rich.

Not only is emptiness of place precious—emptiness of time too is of great worth. The rich man can afford, with his abundant wealth, to purchase this leisure. The chief mark of his opulence is that he can let long stretches of time lie fallow. No one can suddenly plough up his time's courtyard.

There is yet another emptiness, the most precious of all—the emptiness of the mind. Whatever compels the mind to think, from which it can find no release whatsoever—that is called worry. The poor man's worry, the wretched man's worry, clutches the mind entirely, as the roots of the peepal tree clutch a ruined temple. Sorrow closes up the openness of our consciousness. The healthy state of the body is precisely this: the open field of bodily consciousness. But let there be, say, a touch of rheumatic pain at the joint of a toe on the left foot—instantly the openness of bodily consciousness closes up; the whole of consciousness fills with pain. What the mind desires is openness, but in sorrow it cannot find that openness.

Just as one cannot live well without an emptiness of place, so too, without an emptiness of time, an emptiness for thought, the mind cannot think in large terms; truth grows small in its eyes. That diminished truth, like a flickering light, gives license to fear, deceives vision, and keeps the field of human dealings narrow.

Today, being an inhabitant of India, I feel, more than any other, my own greatest misfortune, coming here to this window's edge—that by our fate the window's own gap has been closed up. In this corner and that corner of life, whatever small patches of fallow, of leisure, once remained, have all been overgrown with thorn-bushes.

In ancient India one thing was abundant, which we know to be of very great value: a generous leisure of mind, fit for contemplating and comprehending truth in its full magnitude. India once stood upon the vastest emptiness above pleasure and pain, gain and loss, and there beheld that truth with perfect clarity: "He who has attained one thing does not think there is anything higher to attain."

But in this present age that great leisure for contemplation, once India's own, has been destroyed. Today the Indian has no more leisure left; the very innermost spring of his leisure has withered and died, and pain has overwhelmed the whole of his consciousness.

Thus, today, the moment I come and sit at this casement, I find rising from our courtyard the wailing of the weak; and in that wailing of the weak, all the space from our north to our south, our east to our west, has become utterly filled. Today the weak are weak in a manner so terrible as never before in the history of the world.

By the grace of science, brute strength today has grown a foe most difficult to overcome. Today the wrestler struts with lion's roar over water, land, and sky alike. Once the sky itself would not permit man's violence to enter its own bounds; today man's cruelty has claimed dominion even over that void. From the depths of the sea to the outer edge of the atmosphere, everywhere the blood of shattered hearts flows on.

In such a state, when the disparity between the strong and the weak has grown so immensely great, if even now we find that the cowardice of the mighty is not dispelled, then we must think carefully about the cause of that cowardice. It is necessary to consider this: whether the peace that is being attempted in Europe today will hold fast or not can only be judged by examining closely the mentality of these very powers-that-be, these sacrificers of victims.

When the war was raging with full force, when the fear of defeat was no less than the hope of victory, in that state of doubt and anxiety, this side charged the other with "crime"—that is, offence—for breach of the terms of truce, for illegal use of weapons, for aerial bombardment of unarmed enemies. When does man commit "crime"? When he deems some other urge more powerful than the urge of righteousness. Germany deemed the urge of victory in war more immediately pressing than the urge of just conduct. When this side suffered for that reason, they said: this conduct on Germany's part is altogether wrong; even granting it is war, does that mean there is no law, no religion? And yet, when this side, in the conquered territories, felt no compunction in inflicting severe punishment for slight offences, doubtless there was, from the standpoint of immediate necessity, sufficient cause on their part as well. But this side had said: is the mere accomplishment of immediate necessity the ultimate manhood? Does civilisation not bear some responsibility? Those who value the achievement of the task at hand above the preservation of that responsibility—can they truly find a place in civilised society?

To all these arguments there is, from the standpoint of righteousness, absolutely no answer. Hearing them, we had believed that in the fire of this war all the sins of the Kali Yuga would this time be burnt away, that after so long mankind's fortunes would turn—for its mind had turned. Unless the mind turns, mere change of condition or arrangement can never yield any true result.

But we had made a miscalculation then. In our country people view renunciation born in the cremation-ground with suspicion. The reason: when the mind is

weakened by the sudden death of a loved one, its renunciation then is not to be trusted—renunciation of a strong mind alone is true renunciation. Likewise, when the mind is weakened by the uncertainty of war's outcome, the moral pronouncements made in that hour cannot be believed in full measure.

This side has won the war. Now a council sits deliberating on what must be done to lay a firm foundation for peace in the world. Bargaining of words, exchange of proposals, division of territories, proceed apace. From this workshop, I cannot clearly discern what shape, and with what power, the resulting machine will emerge.

One thing, though I understand nothing else, is becoming increasingly clear: even this vast conflagration did not consume the accumulated sins of the Kali Yuga; the mind has not changed. Where does that throne of the Kali Yuga stand today? Upon greed. We wish to seize, we wish to keep, we are unwilling, in any way, at any time, to yield even the least thing anywhere. It is for this very reason that even the mightiest victor feels fear—who knows if, by some mischance, either now or in the far future, even the slightest loss should occur? Where loss can in no wise be endured, there the appeal to law, the appeal to religion, is but falsehood. There it takes not a moment to console oneself that injustice is duty; there the judgment of a wrong is made not by the measure of the wrong, nor by the measure of the law, but by the measure of one's own greed.

In this age of terrible greed, when even the strong begin to fear the strong, then, invoking the higher classes' claim to justice, negotiations proceed; then effort is made that not even the smallest crevice remain anywhere within the law. But when, in that very same period, the strong, driven by that very greed, fears the weak even to the slightest degree, then the frenzy of authority refuses to acknowledge any such appeal; then vast breaches are dug within the very body of the law.

Between the fear of the strong and the fear of the weak there lies a vast difference. The weak fears he will suffer pain; the strong fears he will meet obstruction. Everyone knows that for some time now, in Western countries, a panic has arisen under the name of the "Yellow Peril." The root of this panic is this: that the greed of the mighty suspects that somewhere, someday, that very greed may meet with mighty obstruction. Should there be any possibility of obstruction—should any other nation rise to greatness in every respect, as these mighty ones themselves have done—their rising to such greatness is itself deemed a peril, one which must be prevented by suppressing and diminishing them through others' collective pressure. The entire Western world today conducts its dealings with the rest of the world upon this very principle. A peace kept alive by ceaselessly nursing such fear cannot endure.

The world-renowned French writer Anatole France writes:

That is to say, greed will nowhere accept obstruction. For this reason, whoever lies below, it wishes to keep pressed down there forever, and whatever shows signs of rising to power, it regards as an evil omen.

So long as this greed exists, peace can never come to the world. The Peace Conference has no such power. Machines are producing many things, but we do not trust peace manufactured by machinery. The unrest among wealthy industrialists has greed as its cause; the unrest between one nation and another has greed as its cause; and again, the unrest between king and subject has greed as its cause. So in the end it comes down to this: in greed lies sin, in sin lies death.

In such a state, when the powerful factions, through mutual settlement, desire peace, they build strong embankments on their own shores and cut sluice-gates on

the shores of others, diverting the current of greed away from themselves toward another direction. They wish to divide the earth in such a way among themselves that the portion is soft enough that teeth sink in easily, and if in tearing it the nail suffers a wound, the nail can exact its due revenge. But it can be said with certainty that things cannot go on forever in this fashion; the shares will not remain equal, the hunger of greed will not fill equally everywhere, the crevice of sin will remain in various places; suddenly, one day, there will be total shipwreck.

Providence has made one direction fixed for us: in that direction of strength, our road is entirely closed, right up to the very last gap; even the hope that flies though there be no road has had its wings clipped for us. For us there remains only one great path—the path that leads over sorrow. Let the enemy strike us from without; we shall not give it shelter within. When we, more than those who strike us, can become greater, then our suffering of blows will be blessed. The path to that greatness lies neither in fighting nor in filing petitions.

Atha dhīrā amṛtatvaṁ viditvā
Dhruvam adhruveṣv iha na prārthayante.

3

There exists an arrangement for speaking with others and for writing letters to others, throughout the whole of society. But with oneself? That is confined only to this little casement. Yet within oneself, who converses with whom?

Let me offer an analogy. A portion of earth's water, made subtle, rises as cloud and floats away into the sky. From there, carrying the melody and generous vigor of that pure remoteness, it begins, in stream after stream, to return once more to the water of the earth.

Just like this water, one portion of man's mind soars above the world into the sky; if that sky-wandering mind can, now and again, unite once more with this earth-bound mind, then in that union fulfillment occurs.

But there exist such desert lands where, for almost the entire year, there is no rainfall at all. Whatever rises as vapour ascends above and, having become rain, never again descends upon the earth. The mind below and the mind above never meet again. There, canal-dug water serves for irrigation, but where, there, is the music and conch-blast of the auspicious union of sky and earth? There, the rain-resonant festival of vital sap never came to pass. There a certain dryness of perpetual estrangement remains lodged within the mind.

This concerns drought. Besides this, one hears now and then of various calamities—showers of mud, showers of blood, and the like. When the purity of the sky departs, when the air becomes filled with all the refuse of the earth, then such things occur. Then even the sky's own voice, no longer pure, fails to sanctify the earth. The earth's own sin begins returning to the earth.

Today that very calamity has occurred. In the dust of the earth's sin, even the rain of heaven descends turbid. The long-cherished hope of a pure stream for holy bathing has, this time too, again and again been frustrated. Mire has stuck to the mind, and stains of blood have fallen upon it; how many times must we wipe them away?

From this blood-stained earth there rises today a plea for peace—but the pure silence of the sky above cannot wash away its discordance.

Peace? Who can truly, in earnest, plead for peace? For those prepared for renunciation. But for those existing solely for enjoyment, solely for gain, whose ten

fingers writhe like the ten hoods of a python—they may wish for peace, but by cunning, not by

sacrifice. The peace by which all the world's cream may be safely licked from the bowl to the last drop is not true peace.

Unfortunately, the great vats of this world's cream lie mostly in the charge of the weak. It is for this reason that the willingness to renounce, in which true peace is found, cannot easily arise in the minds of the mighty. Where the guard is strong, there one need not exert much effort in restraining greed—there man remains disciplined and thinks himself a very good fellow indeed. But where the guard is loose, there fear too vanishes, and shame departs as well. There exist such places where, to declare oneself a "good fellow," there is profit to be had; but where one's dealings are with the weak, examples are not lacking of how difficult it is for the powerful party's goodwill to remain entirely disinterested. Let me quote a passage from the celebrated French writer Anatole France. On the subject of Europe's relations with China, he writes:

The devastation, the plunder, and the outrage that occurred in Peking were not, indeed, insignificant in terms of human suffering and humiliation—but everyone knows how infinitesimal, by comparison, the measure of shame felt and shame given over that episode has been, set beside the modern discourse surrounding the European war. From this we see clearly: the rigorous ideal of goodness that upholds man's humanity aloft descends to a lower level in dealings with the weak. Man draws up, unbeknownst to himself, a treaty with himself, saying: this ceaseless struggle within me over the judgment of good and evil can be sufficiently relaxed within such-and-such boundaries. In India too we have done this very thing—the Brahmin so utterly weakened the Shudra that the Brahmin felt, in relation to him, neither shame nor fear. This will be found if our scriptures are examined. The

consequence of this throughout the country has grown so severe that even the capacity to understand it has vanished—so profound is the degradation.

The weak is, to the strong, exactly as dangerous as quicksand is to the elephant. This sand, precisely because it offers no resistance, does not push forward; it only draws downward. The greater the magnitude of Power, the heavier its weight, the more terrible is the downward pull of weakness upon it. The earth that offers no resistance—the harder one strikes it in stamping, the greater the peril to the foot.

Wherever the wind grows light, that very place becomes the storm's center. It is for this reason that the true birthplace of Europe's great storms is Asia and Africa. There, resistance is scant; there, the impulse to uphold the European ideal of justice is feeble. And the astonishing thing is this: that this very ideal of justice, though it be in decline, arrogant man cannot even perceive it. This is precisely the ultimate degree of degradation.

This numbness, this blindness, goes so far that at times its consequences make one laugh even amid deep sorrow. There exists in our country a certain band of young men who have grown drunk on the political liquor swilled from Europe's own taverns; they murder one another. Watching this, I have often thought: our own indigenous sins are surely not lacking, and those who import foreign sins on top of them make our burden of pollution all the more unbearable to carry. At just such a time, the former ruler of our Bengal, apropos of these very political assassinations, declared that Bengal's moral sense regarding murder is utterly distinct from Europe's; he said that the Bengali knows nothing of murder beyond merely dispatching a man from one world to another. And this very judgment comes from those Westerners from whom the Bengali student learned all these vices in the first place! Perhaps, from sheer habit, they do not perceive, as outsiders can, just how cheap they have made human life on the marketplace of politics. Do these very devotees of politics have no particular mentality of their own? Have they too forgotten that it is precisely this mentality of theirs, once instilled, that is now spreading murder throughout the whole world?

Those who say "they are different from us, utterly different from within" defile, at the very root, the relation between "us" and "them." By declaring that the rule applicable to "us" can never apply to "them," they keep their own moral sense at ease; they wish to kill off whatever remnant of shame and unease exists within injustice and cruelty. Ever since the ancients came into contact with the West, such phrases as these have arisen. Toward those against whom injustice is easy by brute force, it becomes possible, by force of mind as well, to commit injustice without any obstruction whatsoever; hence these people wish to keep that road, too, entirely clear.

I have said before that in our dealings with the weak, our faculty of judgment is corrupted—we judge ourselves by one standard, others by another. When our own students cause disturbance, we call it, with affection, youthful restlessness proper to that age; but when the students of others occasionally grow unruly, we call it, glaring with anger, mischief. The slightest sign of hatred toward another race provokes terrible rage when we see it on the part of the weak; but on our own part, though it be sevenfold greater, we find so many plausible reasons that we feel actual affection for it. Once again I turn to Anatole France—his mind clear, his imagination luminous, catching in an instant, with his playful vision, whatever is incongruous; the burden of ruling over another's land never once fell upon him. He speaks of the Chinese thus:

Thus I say: the greatest danger of the strong lies in the company of the weak. The weak so steals away the strong man's moral sense that the strong cannot even see it, cannot even understand it. Today this very danger is growing greater in the world than any other, for suddenly there has come an excessive increase in brute strength. Ruling over the weak is growing steadily more and more unrestrained. This rule has become so tightly bound with scientific method that whoever, poor

soul, falls into its net has no hope of finding, at any time, anywhere, even the slightest gap through which to escape. Yet even so,

the appetite is nowhere satisfied, for greed, being cowardly, will not let even the mightiest of the mighty rest secure. So the mighty sits pondering how to twist the screw of governance so tight that men shall not dare even to lodge complaint, shall fear even to bear witness, shall be deemed guilty for crying out even in the privacy of their own homes. But those who take upon themselves the burden of enforcing this rule, made so excessively easy, must pay its price by breaking into the very treasury of their own humanity. This treasury being broken day after day, its consequences will appear, day after day, in various forms, in their own households. Even now they are appearing—but no one is reckoning up the account.

So much, then, for what concerns the powerful side. It causes us great shame to dwell overmuch on such matters, for outwardly this bears the appearance of a moral lesson, but its inner countenance is nothing but the transformed shape of a cry of pain suffered under the lash. Fear on the one hand, weeping on the other—this is the greatest shame of all for the weak. We have no strength to fight the strong, but fight with ourselves we must. Whatever else we do, we shall not be afraid, and if speech itself be silenced, we shall not raise from shore to shore across the sea a wail out of tune.

When the fire of sorrow burns, let us burn only in its heat, and put its light to no use whatsoever—that would be the greatest of all losses. Let the darkness of delusion be dispelled by that very light; look closely, just once, and see. Ask your own mind, just once: is that hideous, powerful man really as great as he appears? From without he can wreak destruction, but has he the power to add even the slightest treasure to the inner life of man? He can make treaties, but can he grant peace? He can overwhelm, but can he bestow strength? Nearly two thousand years ago, a humble band of fishermen's obscure

Guru was pierced through with the same rod of punishment as a common thief, by a ruler of the mighty Roman Empire. That day, no dish was lacking from that ruler's feast, and he went comfortably to sleep in his own royal palace. That day, seen from outside, who appeared great? And today? That day, in that place of cremation, there was pain and death and fear, and in the royal palace, enjoyment and pomp. And today? Before whom shall we bow our heads? "To whom shall we offer worship with oblation?"

4

The subject of Bengal's mangal-kavyas is precisely this: one deity being driven from the throne, and another deity's ascendancy in its place. It is easy to suppose that if there is any competition between the two deities, it must be over some difference in the excellence of their moral teachings—that if the new deity could grant man's moral sense more satisfaction than the old, then there would be sufficient reason to accept the new one.

But here we find precisely the opposite. Once there was a male deity who caused no particular trouble. Then, quite abruptly, a goddess arrived and forcibly demanded: I too must be worshipped. That is to say: the place over which I have no claim, I shall seize by force regardless. What is your deed of title? Brute strength. By what means will you seize it? By any means whatsoever, whichever they may be. Thereafter, whatever means were devised—human moral sense does not call them righteous means. But in the outcome, it was precisely these very means that triumphed. Deceit, injustice, and cruelty not merely seized the temple, but had the very poets summoned to ring the temple bells and wave the ceremonial fans, singing hymns of victory to their own cause. The abashed poets, by way of excuse, scratched their heads and said: what can we do—we have received a command in a dream. This dream had, on that day, taken possession of our whole country.

The history of that day is not entirely clear. But whatever faint shadow of history we can glimpse runs something like this: when Bengali literature, from within its

inarticulate primordial ocean, first raised its head like a coral island coming into view, Buddhism, having grown decrepit, was shattering, splintering into fragments, transforming into various distortions. Just as, in a dream, one thing becomes another, so too in this way the Buddha had stood transformed into Shiva. Shiva the renouncer, Shiva the mendicant, Shiva opposed to the Vedas, Shiva the deity of all common folk. The tale of this Shiva's opposition to the orthodox Vedic tradition is proclaimed at the very outset of Kabikankan's Chandi and the Annadamangal. Shiva too, we see, favours liberation through extinction, just as the Buddha did—dissolution itself is his joy.

But this deity of peace, this deity of renunciation, could not endure. In Europe too the modern worshippers of Power are declaring: a deity like Jesus, so poor, so meek, a deity of such utterly pale blood, will not serve our purposes. We need a deity who can seize by force, who, in whatever manner he pleases, in asserting himself, acknowledges no obstruction, suffers no pain, feels no shame. But this very slogan that has arisen in Europe—whose drinking-hall banter is it? It is the banter of those who have conquered, who have plundered, who, having shattered the world into fragments, are turning it into intoxicating relish for their own minds.

In the gatherings where our own country's mangal-kavyas were sung, this very same slogan arose. But from what quarter did this slogan rise? From the dreams of those wretched souls who have no food, no clothing, no shelter, no honour. They dreamed a dream. When?—when:

Narayan, Parashar, having abandoned Damodar,
Arrived at Kuchtyanagar.
I bathed without oil, I drank plain water,
My child weeps for its meal.
The hermitage is by the pond's edge, the offering is burnt lotus-root,
I worshipped with lotus and jasmine blooms.
In hunger, fear, and toil, I sleep in that same abode—
Chandi appeared to me in a dream.

The dream of Power on that day was merely a dream—its root lay within hunger, fear, and toil.

We are told that the songs of history are never in blank verse; their every line rhymes with another. Do we not hear, then, some marvelous rhyme between one line uttered five hundred years ago and another uttered five hundred years hence? Today Europe's worshippers of Power, puffing out their chests, are performing the worship of Power with the greatest of pomp. In their intoxication, their two eyes glow red like hibiscus blossoms; the sword is sharpened; the sacrificial beast is bound to the stake. Some among them say: we do not acknowledge Christ; and others, like Bharatchandra with his awkward reconciliation, say: it is not right to make a division between Christ and Power—there is a doctrine, in the form of Ardhanarishvara, for regarding the two as equal. That is to say: one faction drinks its wine seated upon the throne, while the other rides upon a bullock-cart drawn by a pole.

And we too are declaring: we shall not worship Shiva. To worship Shiva is cowardice. We have sat down to sing the auspicious hymn of Chandi. But that hymn of auspiciousness is born wholly of a dream—the dream of hunger, fear, and toil. Herein lies the difference between the victor's worship of Chandi and the vanquished's song of Chandi.

That our song of Chandi has its very origin in a dream, and its very end in a dream—what proof is there of this? Behold there, the plight of the hunter Byadh, and listen once to the twelve-month lament of his wife Phullara; but see what happened. Suddenly, capricious Power, without any reason, granted him such a ring that no money could stay in his house any longer. When this humble hunter went to war against the King of Kalinga, suddenly Hanuman himself appeared, took his side, and utterly destroyed the army of Kalinga with kicks and blows. This is precisely what is meant by the dream of Power—the darling child of hunger and fear. Suddenly something will happen.

It is in the hope of that very extraordinary sudden event that we, in throngs, have taken to singing "Mother, Mother, Mother" to Power at the top of our voices. That Chandi does not distinguish justice from injustice; for the sake of convenience she makes no distinction between truth and falsehood; by whatever means, fair or foul, she makes the small great, the poor rich, the powerless powerful. For this, one need not be worthy; there is no need to remove the poverty within oneself; wherever and however things stand, one may go on lazily keeping them exactly as they are—one need only cry aloud with folded hands: Mother, Mother, Mother!

When the deluge of the Mughals and the Pathans broke over the land, then the outward form of the world that man saw prevailing was precisely the form of Power. There, no reckoning of righteousness is to be found; there, the very nature of Shiva becomes obscured. If man, even then, standing amid all this sorrow and defeat, could say: I shall endure everything, yet still I cannot accept this as divine—only then would man's victory be won. In the rebellion of Chand Sadagar or of Dhanapati, we find, to some extent, glimpses of just such recognition on man's part. Blow after blow was suffered, yet devotion was not allowed to be shaken from its rightful place. When falsehood and injustice attacked from every side, Chandi said: I shall overwhelm you with fear, wear you down with sorrow, weaken you with loss, break your very spine with blow after blow, and force my worship out of you by sheer might. And if not? If not, my prestige suffers! Chandi has no concern for the prestige of righteousness—her prestige is the prestige of power. Hence, blow after blow, blow after blow!

At last, when sorrow reached its very culmination, the merchant, setting Shiva aside, bowed his head to Power. The suffering that Power had inflicted on them all this time held no humiliation to compare with the humiliation of this final submission. That very soul which is fearless, which is immortal, descending from its own dignity, comes to accept fear and death as divine, greater than itself—and it is precisely here that Power reveals its most hideous aspect of all.

We today have sat down to worship, in a dream, the deity of Europe—and it is in this very act that our defeat before Europe has been the greatest. If she wishes to strike us, let her strike; we shall endure it. But shall we, therefore, worship her? That will not do—for to worship is to worship the King of Righteousness. She will give sorrow; let her give it. But defeat? Never, in any way. There is no greater insult than death itself; but if it is possible even to die and yet become immortal, and if she manages by any means to make us forget this truth, then there is no death more calamitous than that.

"The wise man, having known the Self as great, as all-pervading, does not grieve."

5

The chariot of human history has never before received so great a shock as it has today. The reason is this: the chariot of modern history is a machine-driven carriage; its iron rails are laid by manifold ingenuity, and behind each engine a vast, long train of carriages is bound in sequence. Its path runs throughout the whole world, crossing and intersecting in countless places along countless routes. Naturally, therefore, if once a collision occurs between two trains, if they fail to give way to one another, then in that calamity the extent of the wreckage becomes utterly terrible, and the whole earth, from one end to the other, trembles and shudders.

This collision of the machine-carriages has this time occurred with tremendous violent impact; goods and passengers alike have been thrown into utter chaos. Hence the question rises on every side: what has happened, how did it happen, what must be done so that such a thing may never happen again in the future?

Now that this question and this reckoning have arisen in human history, must we not also reflect upon it? Shall we only lodge our complaint in another's name, without recalling our own responsibility?

I have hinted at this before, and I say it again now: the responsibility of the weak is a very fearful thing. Wherever, in the very air, any seed of disease floats, it is the weak who receive it as guest and, by giving it their own life, keep it alive. The coward merely goes on magnifying the causes of his fear; the abject merely goes on creating occasions for his own humiliation.

Where our eye cannot see, there our pain does not reach; we walk carelessly upon all the small creatures on the earth's surface, crushing them underfoot, yet if a bird should suddenly fall in our path, we cannot easily bring ourselves to tread upon it. The judgment we render concerning a bird, we do not render concerning an ant.

Therefore man's foremost duty is to become such that he may be clearly seen to be a man. This duty is not merely for his own convenience but also for the sake of others' responsibility. That man tramples upon man is a thing beneficial to neither the one who tramples nor the one who is trampled. He who diminishes himself does not merely lessen his own self—on the whole, he diminishes the worth of all mankind. For it is only where we see man as great that we can recognize ourselves as great—the truer this recognition, the easier it becomes for man to keep himself great.

In whatever land each and every man has his worth, the whole nation of that land naturally becomes great. There, man exerts his own effort fully in order to live greatly, and, meeting obstruction, continues to struggle to the very last. Such a man, before whomsoever he appears, is bound to be noticed—so, in the course of any dealing,

one is compelled to think and reflect before treating him in any manner whatsoever. When his case is being judged, it is not merely the judge's own faculty of judgment that is relied upon—the claim to receive due and proper judgment is itself, within the man himself, exceedingly manifest.

Therefore, one mark of a nation advancing along the path of progress is this: that progressively, the insignificance of each division and each individual of that nation is diminishing. As far as possible, all of them are gaining the right to claim the full dignity of their humanity. It is precisely for this reason that, in such places, people are pondering: what must be done so that each and every person there may dwell in a respectable home, receive an education befitting human dignity, eat well, dress well, be saved from the grip of disease, and obtain sufficient leisure and independence?

But what has happened in our country? Through particular forms of education, instruction, and social arrangement, we have kept the greater part of society debased. That they are debased does not depend upon any argument or judgment at all—we have made it into an institutionalized fact of custom. It has come to such a pass that the very person whom we have made small himself folds his hands and says, "I am small." If any effort is made to raise their status in society to equal that of the higher classes, it is precisely they themselves who object the most.

In this way, the education and habituation of accepting humiliation has become woven, in various forms, into every stratum of society. Those who lie at the bottom are the more numerous, and though the standard of their way of life is degraded in every respect, this does not offend those above them. Indeed, should their manner of living attempt to adopt the standard of those above, that itself is felt as an irritant.

Then, when these people, thus perpetually schooled in humiliation, cannot by their very nature demand respect with a firm voice in human society, when they have become so shrunken that they feel no inward resistance even when foreigners contemptuously disdain them—shall we not accept this too as a deed of our own making?

When the injustice which we ourselves have bound fast and made permanent within our own society, through elaborate rules and regulations, returns upon us in the field of politics, delivered by another's hand, what strength do we then have to object to it in every way?

I insist upon invoking that very foreigner's moral sense in my appeal—does not shame swell up even at the very act of that invocation? Does one's head not hang in shame to say this: that in society we shall keep our own ideal small, while in politics you shall keep your ideal lofty? That we shall keep all the rules of servitude powerfully bound in manifold forms within our society, while you, through your own generosity, shall hand over to us equal rights with the masters, of your own accord? Wherever our own domain lies, there, in the name of religion, we shall practice the most rigid miserliness—but wherever your domain lies, there, invoking that very same religion, we shall go on begging you for boundless generosity! With what face can we say such a thing? And if our petition is granted? If we ourselves feel no hesitation in daily insulting the people of our own country, while foreigners come and, following their own moral sense, honour those very people we have humiliated—then is our defeat, both within and without, not thereby rendered complete?

Whatever the reason, today the pain of sorrow and humiliation has grown unbearably intense; on this occasion, there is one thing in our minds that we may hope for: that when the other side is defeated in moral sense, then, in that very place, we shall rise above them. If so, then the blows struck by their hands will not diminish our honour but rather increase it. But even there, shall we say: remain, in moral sense, greater than us? The very treatment we do not hope to receive from ourselves—shall we hope to receive that same treatment from you? That is to say, must we eternally, by our own arrangement, keep ourselves debased, while you eternally, by your own virtue, elevate us? All the blame upon others, and none whatsoever upon ourselves? Such disrespect for ourselves, and such reverence for others? Is this degradation of moral sense not even more contemptible than degradation through mere physical weakness?

Not long ago I heard a discussion with my own ears, whose conclusion was this: that despite the existence of a solid dividing wall between them, Hindu and Muslim cannot dine together under one roof, even if there be nothing in that meal forbidden to either Hindu or Muslim. Those who feel not the slightest hesitation in saying this are the very ones who, at times of Hindu-Muslim conflict, suspect that foreign authorities lie at the root of stirring up this discord. When they harbor this suspicion, they consider the foreigner, in matters of moral judgment, deserving of punishment. The sole reason for this is that the claim of righteousness upon themselves is far less than the claim they place upon the foreigner. In our own country, to keep the barrier between man and man cemented in an unbearably rigid form—that we call righteousness; but should a foreigner, for any reason whatsoever, in any manner whatsoever, put that same barrier to his own use, that we call unrighteousness. We shall create weakness within our own camp in the name of religion, but the moment the opposing camp makes use of that very weakness, we shall call it injustice.

If one asks: on the far side of the solid wall, where the Muslim eats, why can the Hindu not eat on this side?—then this question does not even deserve an answer. On the Hindu's part, to apply reason to this question is itself forbidden, and how strange and shameful such a prohibition is for a rational being—even the capacity to conceive of that has vanished entirely. We are not obliged to indicate any rational cause whatsoever for the full exercise of our own prerogatives within the ordinances of society—just as trees, insects, birds and beasts are under no such obligation. In dealings with foreigners in politics, we have learned to ask questions—there we have made it a habit to believe that every rule and regulation has some rational accountability behind it; but that in society, in mutual dealings between one another, upon which each other's grave joys and sorrows, weal and woe, directly depend, reason too might have some accountability—this we have entirely forgotten even to consider.

In this way, in a country where man has kept himself enslaved, generation after generation, in matters of religious and practical judgment, the genuine strength to demand the right of self-governance can never exist within the people themselves.

In such a country, one must depend, for all these rights, upon the generosity of others.

But I have said before: where man himself keeps himself so utterly small and humiliated, there his claims naturally reach no one's heart at all. It is for this very reason that whatever powerful entities deal with such people bring about their degradation day after day; the standard for treating human beings cannot fail to sink where such people are concerned. Increasingly, for those in power, injustice, arrogance, and cruelty become natural. Since it becomes so easy for them to exercise their will upon others, respect for human independence grows lax within their minds, without their even realizing it. The more unchecked power becomes, the more it drags man downward. It is for this reason that whoever lacks the strength to check power in due proportion becomes, through his own weakness, an enemy to all mankind. Our society is an exceedingly terrible and exceedingly vast machine for removing that very check from within man. This machine, on one side, has surrounded us on every side with an army of countless divisions of doctrine, and on the other side, has utterly uprooted and cut away the very reason, the very logic, by which we might have fought against it and won our liberation. Then, on the other hand, for the most trivial faults concerning eating, sleeping, rising, and sitting, punishment is most severe. On one side, overwhelmed by the weight of ignorance; on the other, subdued by the rule of fear—man's own taste and independence, even in the smallest details of daily life, have been utterly obliterated. And then? Then, begging; and if begging fails, weeping. If this begging is granted too easily, and this weeping too easily silenced, then, more than any blow, more than any humiliation, it will become the cause of our greatest ruin. That we ourselves should keep ourselves small, while others should indulge us with great privilege—may Providence spare us this curse; for it is precisely because of this that our sorrows come upon sorrows without end.

When the hold of a ship has been filled with water, it is then that the blows of the water outside the ship become truly dangerous. The water within is not so visible, its motion not so violent—it strikes not by weight, not by impact—and so one may find satisfaction in blaming the buffeting of the outer waves. But either one must

die, or, one day, this wisdom must dawn: that the real death lies in that inner water, and it must be bailed out as quickly as possible. Even if the task be difficult, one must remember this: bailing out the sea is not easy, but bailing out the water in the hold is easier than that. One must remember this: obstruction and opposition from without will remain forever—if they remain, that is well and not ill—but it is only when obstruction lies within that the obstruction from without grows truly terrible. It is for this reason that we must look not toward begging but toward striving—by that, humiliation will depart, and fruit will be gained.

5th Jaishtha, 1326 [Bengali Era]

THE WORSHIP OF POWER

In my "Letters from a Casement," the discussion I made of the worship of Power has been answered by protests from more than one writer in periodicals.

In our country we find two streams of thought concerning the nature of Shiva and Shakti. Of these, one may be called scriptural, the other popular. The scriptural Shiva is the ascetic, the renunciant. The popular Shiva is wild and unrestrained. In the mangal-kavyas of Bengal, we find description of this popular Shiva alone. Indeed, even the character of Shiva as described by the court poet Bharatchandra in his Annadamangal does not accord with orthodox Aryan tradition.

I do not deny that a scriptural and philosophical interpretation of Shakti can be given. But the form of Shakti as described in Bengal's mangal-kavyas is the popular one, and its character corresponds to that. Those in the world who are afflicted, who are defeated, and who can see no righteous cause for that affliction and defeat, have taken the arbitrary anger of a capricious, cruel Power to be the cause of all their sorrow, and it is precisely the hope of appeasing that jealous, wrathful Power through hymns and worship that provides the inspiration for all these mangal-kavyas.

The terror of a fierce deity's arbitrary conduct is found at the very root of mankind's earliest worship. The reason is that man had not yet seen, at the foundation of the universe, the universal law, and was then surrounded on every side by fear and danger. Then the sudden acquisition of wealth by the powerful was everywhere visible, and the influence of this very suddenness was manifest most acutely in human society.

At the time when Kabikankan's Chandi and the Annadamangal were written, the sudden rise and fall of men appeared as a matter of astonishment. In every

direction, the clash of power against power was proceeding, and no one could say what awaited whom, or on what day. The person who knew how to properly praise the powerful, who did not judge truth from falsehood, justice from injustice, provided everywhere visible examples of his prosperity. To please the power of Chandi and turn it to the advantage of one's own personal desires was, at least for one class, the chief object of religious practice at that time; and the rich and prominent of that era belonged especially to this class, for the storm of that era's power struck particularly upon their exalted summits.

That the form of the deity described in scripture is the original, and that the popular form is the modern one, cannot be accepted as certain without specific proof. My belief is that India had already reached the point of purifying and accepting the deities of non-Aryan peoples through Aryan influence at some point in time. At that time, whatever deities entered the sanctified society of India could not entirely shed the inconsistencies within their characters; within them, even today, the two streams of Aryan and non-Aryan remain mixed, and in popular practice it is the non-Aryan stream that predominates.

We see this same phenomenon in the development of Christianity as well. The Jehovah of the Jews was once, principally, a partisan deity of the Jewish nation alone. What a cruel, jealous, and sacrifice-loving deity he was can be understood simply by reading the Old Testament. That very deity, gradually, through the voices of Jewish sages and prophets, and at last through the teaching of Jesus Christ, came to be revealed as the deity of universal love for all mankind. But the two contradictory aspects still entangled within him are clearly visible in popular practice even today. Even today he is the god of war, the god of division, the sectarian god. The Christian's contempt and injustice toward the non-Christian remain as vigorously alive in the strength of his name as in anything else.

In our country, generally, two distinct tendencies have gained prominence between Shakta religious practice and Vaishnava religious practice. In one practice, animal sacrifice and meat-eating; in the other, non-violence and vegetarian diet—

this is not entirely meaningless. Whatever explanation the specific scriptures may give of this animal-sacrifice and other rites, in ordinary practice such explanation is not current. It is for this very reason that I have taken, in my writing, the ordinary meaning of the word "Shakti"—the meaning embedded throughout its various symbols, rituals, and sentiments in the worship of Power, and the meaning propagated in Bengal's mangal-kavyas.

One thing must be kept in mind: the deity worshipped by the dacoit is Shakti; the deity worshipped by the thug is Shakti; the deity worshipped by the Kapalika is Shakti. There is another matter to consider: the practice of animal sacrifice, or of shedding one's own blood, even of accepting human sacrifice as a vow, is prevalent in the worship of Power. From victory in a false lawsuit to the desire for the destruction of a hated kinsman—prayers of all sorts find their place in the worship of Power. Whether there exists, hidden within some particular scripture, an idea of the worship of Power greater than this union of the deity's cruelty of character on one side and man's judgment-free fulfillment of desire on the other, was not a matter for my consideration. The meaning of the worship of Power entangled with popular belief cannot be called inconsistent, for it is precisely this meaning that predominates in popularly current tales and symbolic representations, and the worship of Power proceeds, in this very sense, in all countries, civilized and barbarous alike—injustice and falsehood feel no shame in that worship; greed is its aim, and violence is the material of its offering. Such arguments—that this greed is not bad, indeed good, that violent power is absolutely essential for humanity—are proceeding, worship of Power in hand, in Europe with full defiance, and among us too, as pupils of Europe, this proceeds; on this matter I have said elsewhere what I have to say. Here it need only be said that in the minds of ordinary people, an idea of naked ruthlessness is bound up with the worship of Power, an idea of forcibly sacrificing the weak for the accomplishment of one's own purposes—it is this very thing that I referred to in my "Letters from a Casement."

But even so, this much must be conceded: if the higher meaning of any religious practice is found spoken or living within some particular scripture or practitioner of the land, then that must be honored—indeed, it must be known as greater than

the widely prevalent common practice. It is better to judge religion not by its quantity but by its highest excellence—

"Even a little of this righteousness saves one from great fear."

1326 [Bengali Era]

THE CALL OF TRUTH

A parasitic worm or creature lives by sucking the juice or blood of another; the bodily apparatus by which it might transform food into the substance of its own frame through its own strength grows atrophied. Thus, through the sin of leaving strength idle, degradation befalls these creatures in the animal kingdom. The same holds true in human history. But by "parasitic man" is not meant merely the man who clings dully to another for his own sustenance. He too is parasitic who binds himself to whatever has come down through the ages, who surrenders himself with careless abandon to the pull of the established current. For when the outer world—which stands apart from our inmost being—drives us along merely through the compulsion of habit, our inward, dependent self grows inert, and the task of achieving the impossible that lies before every human being remains unaccomplished.

By this reckoning, beasts are, in this world, forever dependent. They drift wherever the current of custom carries them. They live and die by the decree of natural selection, advancing or falling behind. For this very reason their inner faculties could never grow, but remained stunted. For millions of years the honeybee has gone on making the same comb, and it cannot break free, even for a moment, from this single-minded compulsion to build that comb. Because of this, their combs have become well-nigh perfect, but their inner being remains confined within the narrow circle of this eternal habit; it cannot open itself out in various directions. Regarding all such creatures, one senses in Nature a certain want of courage. She keeps them sheltered within her own fold, fearing lest, should they be permitted to walk of their own will, they bring calamity upon themselves—and so, out of this fear, she has clipped the wings of their inner power to change.

But in the great experiment of Creation, when it comes to man, we suddenly find a very considerable courage. The Creator did not restrain the inner being. Outwardly the creature was left utterly naked, weapon-less, and feeble in every way, while his inner faculty was set free. In the joy of gaining this freedom he cried out: "I shall

accomplish the impossible." That is to say: whatever has forever remained the same, I will not suffer it to remain so forever; what cannot be, shall be made to be. Thus, when man first found himself amid the terrible fangs and claws of gigantic beasts, he did not seek, like the deer, to flee, nor did he seek, like the tortoise, to hide—he accomplished the impossible, chipping stone upon stone to fashion fangs and claws more fearsome still. Because the fangs and claws of beasts are nature's own gift to them, any change or improvement in these depends entirely upon the workings of natural selection thereafter. But man's fangs and claws are the creation of his own inner being; and for this reason he did not rest content even upon that stone spearhead—all his weaponry travelled from the storehouse of stone to the storehouse of iron. This proves that man's inner being is a seeker; he does not remain attached to whatever lies about him, but brings within his grasp what lies beyond his reach. Stone lies before him, yet he is not content with it; iron lies beneath the earth, and thither he presses forward and strikes; though it is easy to fashion a weapon by grinding and polishing stone, even in this his mind found no rest—he melted iron in fire, beat it with hammers, cast it in moulds, and made most obedient to himself that very substance which offered him the greatest resistance. Such is the nature of man's inner being: in exerting himself he seeks not merely success but joy; he ever wishes to pass from the surface to the depths, from the manifest to the hidden, from the easy to the difficult, from dependency to self-mastery, from the compulsion of instinct to the ordinance of reason. In this manner has he triumphed. But should some group of men declare, "This stone spearhead is the spearhead of our forefathers; should we attempt anything beyond it, our caste shall be destroyed"—then indeed a wound is struck at the very root of their humanity; what they thereby preserve may be called the preservation of caste, but it is precisely there that their claim to the greatest of all castes, the caste of humanity, dies out. Even today those who have not advanced beyond that stone spearhead are cast out of the human fold by mankind; they wander hidden in forest and jungle. They are enslaved to their outward condition; drawn by the current of custom, they walk with eyes shut tight; they have not won the sovereign realm within, and are therefore exiled from the sovereign realm without. They know not this truth: that man must accomplish the impossible by his own strength; that he must not remain bound within what has already come to pass, but must advance toward what has not yet come to be—not by beating the drum and puffing out the

chest, but through the discipline of the inner being, through the awakening of self-power.

It is now thirty years since I wrote in the journal Sadhana, attempting to say this very thing to the people of my country. In those days English-educated India was gravely preoccupied with the task of begging for rights from others. Time and again I tried only to make understood this one thing: that man must not beg for his rights, he must create them. For man is essentially a being of the inner life; it is there that he is master; gain from without brings loss within. I said then that the misery of being deprived of rights was not, for us, so heavy a burden as the burden that lay upon our heads—"the platter of petition and prayer."

Later, when Bangadarshan came into my hands, all of Bengal was in an uproar at the sound of the knife being sharpened for the partition of Bengal. In the anguish of their hearts, Bengalis, that day, cast off Manchester cloth, thereby swelling to foreign degrees the greed of the merchants of Bombay mills. Since resentment against the English government lay at the root of this rejection of cloth, it became necessary to say, that day, "This is going too far." Its overt object was the Englishman, its ostensible target the people of India, but its chief agitation was not love for the people of one's own country, but wrath against the foreigner. It was necessary, on that day, to caution the people of the country that the presence of the Englishman in India is an outward event, but what is present within our own country is our inward truth. It is this inward truth that is the eternal reality, while the outer affair is illusion. Illusion appears exceedingly great only so long as, whether in anger or in devotion, we gaze upon it with our whole heart and mind fixed outward. To rush upon someone and sink one's teeth into his heel is one kind of fierce attachment, and to cling devotedly to his feet is equally so—even to say "I want nothing to do with him" while his image turns our whole heart crimson, and to say "I want him" leaves nothing more to be said. Illusion is like darkness—one cannot outdistance it by driving a motor car through it from without, nor, wishing to wash it away with water, would the seven seas and thirteen rivers run dry before it vanished. Truth is like light—the moment its flame is kindled, illusion is nowhere to be seen. This is why scripture has said—

Svalpam apy asya dharmasya trāyate mahato bhayāt

That is, fear is the atheism of the mind; it cannot be destroyed by negation from the side of denial—though for the moment one cause of it may be removed, like the demon's blood-seed it takes birth again in another form as cause. Dharma is truth, it is the theism of the mind; even a slight manifestation of it overwhelms, going straight to the root, that vast negation. The appearance of the Englishman in India is a phenomenon of many shapes: today it appears in the image of the Englishman, tomorrow in the image of some other foreigner, and the day after, terribly, in the image of one's own countryman. If this state of subjection to another's will be chased with bow and arrow from without, it will merely change its skin again and again and wear us out. But that my country exists—this is the truth; and it is by attaining this truth that outward illusion of itself grows still.

That my country exists is a discipline, an act of faith. It is because I was born in this country that this country is mine—this is the language of those creatures who are wholly dependent upon the outward circumstance of the world. But since man's true nature lies in his inward nature endowed with self-power, that country which man, through his own knowledge, intellect, love, and action, builds up and creates, that country alone is truly his own. In the year 1905 I called out to the Bengali people, saying: create your country from within, through the power of the self, for it is only through creation that realization becomes true. The Divine Architect gains Himself alone in His own creation. To gain one's country means to realize, through the medium of the country, one's own self made manifest and vast. It is only when I go on building up my country, through my own thought, through action, through service, that I come to see my own soul made true within that country. Man's country is the creation of man's mind; and it is for this reason that within the country lies the expansion of man's soul, the manifestation of the soul.

By what means the country into which one is born may be made wholly one's own—this I discussed at length, long ago, in the essay "Svadeshi Samaj." Whatever

flaws that discussion may have contained, this much was said with force: that the country must be won not from the hands of another, but from one's own inaction, one's own indifference. Whatever occasion we have sought from the English government for the furtherance of any improvement in our country has only deepened our inertia. For the achievements of the English government are not our achievements; and so, however much benefit that achievement may bring us from without, we lose our country through it from within—that is, we gain success at the cost of the soul. Yajnavalkya has said: na vā are pautrasya kāmāya putraḥ priyo bhavati, ātmanas tu kāmāya putraḥ priyo bhavati—"It is not, verily, for the sake of the son that the son is dear, but for the sake of the Self that the son is dear." The same truth applies to one's country. When I know that my country is my own soul, and that this is why my country is dear to me, then I cannot bear to look to another for the work of my country's creation.

What I attempted to say to my country that day was nothing especially new, and there was nothing in it that would sound harsh in the ears of a well-wisher of the country. But others may not recall—I remember clearly that on account of these words the people of my country grew tremendously incensed against me. I do not speak here of the literary ruffians who traffic in abusive language, but even respected and cultured persons could not preserve their patience with me. There were only two causes for this: first, anger; second, greed. The satisfaction of anger is a kind of pleasure of the senses; on that day there was very little to obstruct us in the intoxication of this pleasure—we were burning cloth in the delight of our hearts, we were picketing, we were strewing thorns on the path of those who would not walk our way, and we kept no restraint whatsoever upon our language. Some while after these excesses, a Japanese gentleman said to me one day: "Why can you people not work with quiet, firm, and deep patience? Merely to waste one's strength in noise is surely no proper means to the achievement of one's purpose." In reply I had to tell that Japanese gentleman: "When the thought of the goal itself remains bright in the mind, then man naturally exercises self-restraint and directs all his powers toward that end. But when the satisfaction of anger, drunk with its own success, begins step by step to outstrip the purpose itself, then we find no obstacle in wasting our strength and letting it run wild." Be that as it may, at that very time, when the Bengali people were, for a while, meeting with no

particular hindrance to their intoxicating enjoyment of the satisfaction of anger—when the whole thing felt like some astonishing dream—it was at that moment that I, speaking of another path, became the target of their wrath. There was, besides, another matter—greed. Throughout history, every nation has won hard-to-attain treasures only by traversing arduous paths; we thought we should obtain the same far more cheaply—not through hands folded in supplication, but through eyes reddened in defiance; in the delight of this deception the country, that day, was intoxicated. What the English shopkeeper calls "hardly-worth-having cheap goods"—it seemed as though, in fortune's marketplace, just such a cheap season of political merchandise had fallen upon the Bengali's lot. When one's means are small, the mere mention of a bargain fills one with such excessive joy that one forgets to ask what the goods actually are, or in what condition, and rushes to attack anyone who dares express doubt. In short, that day too, our aim, our meditation, was fixed upon this same outward illusion. And so a leader of that time had said: "One of my hands is at the throat of the English government, and the other at its feet." That is, no hand at all remained free for the sake of the country. In that time, and in times that followed, this ambivalence may perhaps have vanished altogether for many—perhaps for one party both hands have risen to the government's throat, and for another both hands have fallen to the government's feet—but in either case, the path away from illusion, toward liberation, is a path leading outward. Whether the mind, embittered, wanders to the right of the English government or to its left, whether one says yes to it or no, in either case it is the Englishman who occupies the mind.

That day, the current from all sides brought its pressure to bear only upon the emotional agitation of Bengal's heart. But mere emotional agitation, like fire, only consumes combustible matter, reduces it to ash—it does not create. Man's inner being, working together with patience, with skill, with foresight, melts hard materials in this fire and gradually builds up the substance it requires. That inner being of the country was not awakened that day, and therefore, from so vast an emotional upheaval, no lasting structure could arise.

That things fell out thus has its cause not without, but within ourselves. For a long time now, on one side of our religion and our action there has lain emotional agitation, and on the other, habitual custom. For a long time our inner being has performed no work; it has been kept suppressed, timidly, in fear. And so, when it becomes necessary to extract some task from us, we must hastily draw upon emotional excitement, and resort to chanting all manner of magic spells to enchant the mind. In other words, a condition is produced throughout the country that is gravely inimical to the working of the inner being.

The loss occasioned by the inertia of the inner being can never, by any means, be made good. When somehow we wish to fill that void, we feel the urge to seek the aid of delusion; then the greed of the powerless leaps up the very moment it hears the rumour of Aladdin's lamp. All must acknowledge with one voice that there is no object so wondrously convenient as Aladdin's lamp—only, it has this one drawback, that it is to be found nowhere. But that it is not to be found is a fact that the man whose greed exceeds his capacity can by no means bring himself to assert with any force. And so his zeal awakens in full force only when someone gives him the assurance of Aladdin's lamp. If one tries to take away that assurance, he sets up such a cry as though he had been robbed of everything.

In the days of that Bengal-partition agitation, a group of young men undertook to bring a new age to the country through political revolution. Whatever else may be said, since they offered themselves as oblation in this holocaust, they are worthy of homage not only in our country but in every country, to every people. Even their failure is radiant with the splendour of the soul. Today, in the utmost sacrifice and the utmost sorrow, they have come to know one clear truth: that when the state is not yet made, to attempt a political revolution is to leave the road and walk off the path—the off-path may look shorter than the road, but should one follow it to the end, one cannot reach one's destination; along the way one's feet are torn to shreds among the thorns. For any object, if its full price be not paid, the price is lost and the object is not obtained either. Those daring young men of that day thought that though a handful of them, sacrificing themselves on behalf of the whole country, might bring about a political revolution—though this might mean utter

ruin for themselves, yet for the country it would come cheap. But the deliverance of an entire country must awaken from the inner being of the entire country—it cannot arise from any single part of it. However fine and however handsome the first-class carriage of a railway train, it cannot leave behind the third-class carriage that is coupled with it. It seems to me that those who have understood this today have understood that a whole country, taken as a single entity, is a creation of the whole country's people; this creation is the manifestation of all its emotional powers, its intellectual powers, its powers of will. This is wealth born of union—that is, wealth in which, through union, all of man's faculties become concentrated within his own creation and take shape. Political union or economic union is not union entire; the union we require is union of all powers. When we look at the history of other countries, we see the political horse first of all, and we settle within our minds that it is by the pull of that four-footed creature alone that the whole nation has been drawn forward. We fail to reckon that, behind, there is what is called the carriage of the country, and that this must be a carriage fit to move, one wheel in harmony with another, one part well jointed to another. To build this carriage requires not merely fire and hammer-and-tongs and machinery—within it lie the thought, the discipline, the sacrifice of many people over many days. We have seen, too, countries that are outwardly free, yet when the political vehicle sets to pulling them, its clatter and rattle rouse the whole neighbourhood from sleep; under the shock of its jolting, splinters lodge in the chest and back of the passenger; time and again, as it goes along, it breaks down, and days are spent tying it up with rope and cord. Even so, whether it be good or bad, whether the screws be loose or the wheels askew, this carriage is still a carriage; but that thing which lies at home, in seven scattered pieces, which not only lacks wholeness but is filled with contradiction—can that be dragged along, for the moment, tied to some single instinct's yoke, whether of anger or of greed, with a great "Heave-ho!"—and can this be called the state-god's chariot procession? Is this bondage and pull of instinct a thing built to last? Then would it not be far more urgent, first, to keep the horse in its stable and set about the task of building the carriage itself?

From what I have read and heard of the young men who have returned home to Bengal from the gates of the gallows-house, I gather that this is precisely what they have come to feel. They say: before all else, we need the achievement of union—

union in the confluence and full completion of all the vital faculties of the country. This cannot come about, from without, through any blind compulsion; it is possible only from within, through self-realization in a consciousness illumined by knowledge. Whatever fails to awaken, but only overwhelms, the inner being of the whole country, is an obstacle to this work.

The call to make the country one's own through one's own creative power is a very great call indeed. It is not a summons to some outward ritual observance. For, as I have said before, man does not, like the bee, build his hive always to the same measure, nor does he, like the spider, forever weave his web to the identical pattern; his greatest power lies in his inner being—it is to that inner being that his full claim is made, not to inert habituation. If, out of some temptation, we now say to him, "Do not think, only act"—that would be to give indulgence to the very delusion by which our country has died. For too long have we bartered away, to authority and custom, the mind's highest right—namely, the right to judge—and sat content and idle in consequence. We have said: we will not cross the sea, for Manu forbids it; we will not sit and eat beside a Muslim, for scripture is against it. That is to say, by the very method which allows that there is no need at all for what is called the human mind, by mere unthinking devotion to habit, fifteen-sixteenths of the business of our lives is carried on. Whatever helplessness belongs to the man who in all matters relies upon a slave to guide him, the same helplessness belongs also to those who are perpetually driven by outward observance alone. For, as I have said before, it is the inner man who is master; when he becomes, in an unqualified way, a creature enslaved to outward custom, then there is no limit to his degradation. The man driven by mere observance is a puppet of machinery, having attained the utmost discipline of compulsion. He is made in the workshop of servitude to another's will; and so, when he is released from the hand of one driver, he must at once be delivered into the hand of another. What physics calls inertia—the man who takes pride in his own single-minded devotion to this alone—his stillness is like the stillness of a stone, and his motion like the motion of a falling stone; in neither case does he have mastery over himself. There is no way of freeing oneself from that dead weight of the inner being which is the cause of every kind of slavery, either by shutting one's eyes and accepting bondage, or by mechanical, puppet-like ritual observance.

This time, the movement now afoot in the country, following upon the movement of Bengal-partition, is far greater in scope, and its influence extends over the whole of India. For a long time, our political leaders never once looked beyond the circle of the English-educated, for the country that was theirs was a bookish country learned from English history. That was a mirage born of the vapour of the English language, in which floated the indistinct shapes of Burke, Gladstone, Mazzini, and Garibaldi. In this there was to be seen no genuine self-sacrifice, nor any true sympathy for the people of the country. It was at such a time that the Mahatma came and stood at the door of India's many millions of the poor—in their own dress, and speaking with them, in their own tongue. This is a true and real thing; there is nothing borrowed from any book in it. And so the name "Mahatma," given to him, is his true name. For who else has ever made so many people of India his own kin? Whatever store of power lies within the soul opens at the mere touch of truth. The moment true love came and stood at the long-barred gate of the heart of the people of India, that gate flew open. No one's heart harboured any further miserliness—that is, at the touch of truth, truth awoke. The statecraft that is conducted through cunning is barren; for a long time we have needed this lesson. What power truth possesses, we have today, by the grace of the Mahatma, witnessed with our own eyes. But cunning is the easy religion of the timid and the weak, and to tear it apart one must cut through its very hide. And so, even today, many wise men of the country wish to take even the Mahatma's endeavour and count it merely as one more secret move in their own political gambling. Their minds, decayed with falsehood, can by no means grasp this: that the love which has thus been stirred in the heart of the country through love is no incidental matter—this itself is liberation, this itself is the country's attainment of its own self. Whether or not the Englishman remains in the country has no place at all in this matter. This love is self-manifest, this is affirmation itself—it does not go about arguing with any negation, for there is no need for argument at all.

Something of the music of this astonishing awakening of India's heart, at the call of love, reached my ears across the sea. I felt then, in great joy, that this time, at the court of this awakening, all of us would surely be summoned, and that whatever

diverse form of power lies hidden in the mind of India would all be brought to light. For I hold this alone to be my country's liberation—manifestation itself is liberation. One day, in India, the Buddha manifested, through his own realization of truth, the mantra of loving-kindness toward all beings; and the result was this—that under the inspiration of that truth, India's humanity blossomed into opulence in art, in craft, in science. As for rule and governance, even in that age India, again and again, after brief periods of unity, fell again and again into fragmentation; yet from the fullness of her inner spirit she gained liberation from her state of non-manifestation. So great was the force of this liberation that it could not be confined within any narrow bound of the country—wherever, across seas and deserts, it touched distant lands, it revealed there the opulence of its own inner spirit. No merchant, no soldier, of the present day, has been able to do this—wherever they have touched the earth, there they have roused conflict, pain, and insult, there they have destroyed the beauty of universal nature. Why? Because greed is not truth, love alone is truth. And so, when love bestows freedom, it does so entirely from within.

But when greed strives for independence, it grows restless to accomplish its purpose through force. This we observed in the days of the Bengal-partition—on that day we compelled the poor to accept sacrifice and suffering, not through love, but through pressure of many kinds applied from without. The reason is that greed, in a short span of time, strives after some particular, narrow gain; the fruit of love is not the fruit of a single day, nor even of a short while—the fulfilment of that fruit lies within itself.

This—precisely this—is what I had imagined, all this time, of that primordial wind of liberation blowing through our country. Having come home, there is one thing I have seen that has left me disheartened. I see a terrible pressure weighing upon the mind of the country. Under the compulsion of something from without, a fearful urgency has been laid upon everyone to speak the same word, to do the same deed.

When I try to question, to weigh and judge, my well-wishers grow anxious and, placing their hands upon my mouth, say: "Say nothing today." There is, in the air of the country today, a powerful oppression—not the oppression of the cudgel or the spear, but something more terrible still: an invisible oppression. Those who harbour even the slightest doubt about the present endeavour, though they may express that doubt very timidly, very cautiously, find that in the very next moment an inward tribunal rises up against them from within. In some newspaper, one day, in tones exceedingly mild and gentle, the faintest hint of objection regarding the burning of cloth found expression; the editor says that the very next day the readers' agitation set him ablaze. In the very fire in which cloth was burnt, how long before his paper too was consumed? I see that one party is exceedingly busy, the other exceedingly terrified. It has come to be said that the intellect of the whole country must be suppressed, and learning along with it. Only compulsion must be clung to. Compulsion owed to whom? To the mantra, to blind belief.

Why this compulsion? Once again we come back to that same passion—greed. There has arisen before the country the vision of a swift and easy path to some rare and precious treasure, obtainable at very little cost. It is as though the ascetic's mantra-power promises to turn base metal into gold. Tempted by this promise, men can with ease cast aside their own power of judgment, and grow terribly enraged against those who are unwilling to make the same sacrifice. In this way it becomes easy to obliterate the inner freedom of man in the very name of outward freedom. The most regrettable thing of all is not that everyone places complete faith in this promise, but that some say: through this temptation, a particular group of men in the country may be made to serve a special purpose. "Truth alone triumphs, not falsehood"—this is India's own maxim, yet, in the view of these men, that same India cannot possibly attain self-rule. What is more troubling still is that the gain being claimed has been given a name, but no definition. Just as a fear becomes more terrible when its cause is obscure, so too the matter grows more potent when it is left vague—for then there is no check upon the imagination, and each man may build it up entirely according to his own fancy. When one tries to seize it by questioning, it slips with the greatest ease from one hiding place to another. In this way, on the one hand, the object of greed has been magnified beyond all limit through vagueness, while on the other, the means of its attainment

has been fixed, with the greatest narrowness, as to both time and manner. Having thus bewitched men's minds, when they are then told, "Cast away your intellect, your learning, your power of judgment—let only your blind obedience remain," they do not delay a moment in complying. But when it is affirmed, with the greatest ease, by the majority of the country, without any argument at all, that through some single outward ritual, on some particular date in some particular month soon to come, self-rule shall be attained, and all argument is thereby to be silenced—that is to say, when men are ready to sacrifice their own freedom of reason and to take refuge in another's freedom of reason—is this not, indeed, a matter for the gravest concern? Do we not seek out an exorcist to cast out precisely this kind of ghost? But if the very ghost itself should appear disguised as the exorcist, then indeed there would be no limit to the danger.

The Mahatma has, through his love of truth, won the heart of India—there all of us bow before him in defeat. That we have witnessed with our own eyes the power of this truth is, today, our great fulfilment. We read of eternal truth in books, we speak of it in words; but the moment when we see it before us is our hour of blessing. After a long age, this opportunity has suddenly come to us. We can build a Congress every day, we can break it every day; to go about the provinces of India delivering political orations in the English tongue is entirely within our power—but the golden wand of the love of truth, by whose touch a hundred years of slumbering spirit awakens, that we cannot fashion in our own neighbourhood goldsmith's shop. Him in whose hand we have seen this rare treasure, him we salute.

But if, despite having witnessed truth face to face, our devotion to truth itself remains unsteady, then what has been gained? Just as we accept the truth of love on the side of love, so must we accept the truth of reason on the side of reason. It was not through any outward observance that the Congress and its like awakened the heart of the country, but through the touch of the pure and unaffected love of a great heart. Now that we can see so clearly the influence of this inward truth, shall we, at the very hour of winning self-rule, refuse to trust that same truth? Shall we accept it in the season of awakening, only to abandon it in the season of practical action?

Suppose I am seeking a master of the veena. In the East and in the West I have tested many men, but my heart found no satisfaction. They produce sound very finely, they know a great many techniques, they earn a good deal—but their virtuosity awakens admiration in the mind, not love. At last, suddenly, one man was found who, upon merely touching two or three grace-notes to his strings, made the stone that had for so long lain heavy upon the mouth of the fountain of joy within roll away in a single moment. What is the reason for this? The power of joy that dwells in this master's mind is itself a true thing; from its own flame of joy it kindles, with the greatest ease, that same flame of joy in heart after heart. I understood this, and accepted him as my master. After this, I required that a veena be made. But the truth required for the art of making this veena is truth of another order altogether. Within it lies much thought, much learning, much materiality, much measurement, much perseverance. Here, should my master, taking pity on my poor condition, suddenly say, "My son, to have a veena built requires a great deal of arrangement, more than you can manage—instead, simply tie a single string to this piece of wood and let it twang; then, on such-and-such a date of such-and-such a month, this very piece of wood will become a veena and begin to play"—that would not do at all. In truth, it is not fitting that my teacher should show mercy to my incapacity. This is what he ought to say: "These things cannot be accomplished briefly and cheaply." He alone can make us clearly understand that though a veena has but a single string, its materials are many, its method of construction subtle, that a single flaw in its rule will make it play out of tune, and that therefore the principles and rules of this knowledge must be followed with careful judgment and diligence. To draw forth a response from the depths of a country's heart is precisely this—the master's art of playing the veena. This teaching—how very great a truth love is—we have set about learning, in its purity, from the Mahatma; let our reverence toward him, in this regard, remain unbroken. But the discipline of building up self-rule is vast in scope, its method arduous and requiring time; it demands longing and emotional fervour in equal measure with inquiry into fact and the exercise of judgment. In this task, the economist must think, the engineer must labour, the educationist and the political scientist—all must be engaged, in contemplation and in action alike.

That is to say, the inner being of the country must be roused, from every side, with full and complete effort. So that the country's spirit of inquiry may remain, on every side, pure and unclouded, and that no one's intellect be made timid and inert through any covert or overt authority. Who can call up this manifold power of the country, and set it to work each according to its kind? Not every call receives an answer from the country—this has been tried, again and again, before now. It is only because no one, up to this day, has been able to bring all the powers of the country into union in the country's own act of creation, that so much of our time has slipped away thus far. And so, for so long, we have waited, believing that he who has a true right to summon the people of the country will be the one to set each and every person to work, in their own strength of self. Once, in the forest hermitage of India, our teacher of initiation, by the authority of his knowledge of truth, called all the students of that hermitage and said:

Yathā āpaḥ pravatanti yathā māsā aharjaram

Evaṃ māṃ brahmacāriṇo dhātar āyantu sarvataḥ svāhā

As the waters flow down to the lowland, as the months speed on toward the completed year, so, from every side, let the students of sacred learning come to me—svāhā! The fruit of that true initiation of that day lives on immortal in the world even now, and its call still resounds in the ears of the world. Why should our present teacher of action not likewise summon all the working powers of the country—why should he not say, āyantu sarvataḥ svāhā—"let them come from every side"? It is in the awakening of every power of the country that the awakening of the country lies, and it is in that all-sided awakening alone that liberation lies. Providence has given to the Mahatma's voice the power to summon, because within him there is truth; and so this was indeed our blessed opportunity. But he has issued his call within a single, narrow field. He has said: let everyone together spin thread, weave cloth. Is this that same call of "āyantu sarvataḥ svāhā"? Is this the call to the great creation of a new age?

When Nature summoned the honeybee to the narrow life of the hive, millions upon millions of bees, at that summons, unmanned themselves for the sake of the convenience of their labour; and by belittling themselves in this manner, this self-sacrifice of theirs took them along the reverse road from liberation. In that country where the majority of the people, without shame, does not hesitate to bring about the unmanning of its own strength through any temptation or authority whatsoever, their bondage lies within their own inner being. To spin cotton on one hand is exceedingly easy—and that is exactly why it is within the reach of every human being. The call of ease is not the call of man, the call of ease is the call of the honeybee. It is only when the fullest demand is made upon man's ultimate power that he can unfold the splendour of self-manifestation. Sparta, fixing its gaze upon a particular narrow object, tried to narrow man's power and thereby give it strength; Sparta did not triumph. Athens sought to fling open all of man's powers and thereby give him fullness; Athens triumphed—and that victory-banner of hers still flies today upon the topmost peak of human civilization. In Europe, in the barracks, in the prison-house of the soldier's life, in the factory—is not the unmanning of human power going forward there too? In the name of accomplishing a purpose in the grip of greed, is not man's humanity being narrowed and clipped short there too? And is it not for this very reason that joylessness lies today, thick and heavy, upon European society? Man can be made small through a great machine, and equally through a small one. He can be made small through the engine, and equally through the spinning-wheel. Where the spinning-wheel is natural, there it works no mischief, but does good—but where, owing to the diversity of the human mind, the spinning-wheel is not natural, there, in the spinning of thread upon the wheel, far more of the mind is spun away than is realized. The mind is not a thing of less worth than thread.

One argument that has been raised is this: that in India eighty percent of the people till the soil, and remain unemployed for six months of the year; and that, in order to encourage them to spin thread, it is necessary for a while that every gentleman among us take up the spinning-wheel. What is required, first of all, is that this claim be established, through proper investigation, by suitable means. That is to say: what proportion cultivate the land, and for how long a period do they remain idle. When cultivation ceases, do the cultivators, by whatever means, earn through

spinning a livelihood greater than what they would otherwise obtain? There is doubt, too, as to whether it is proper, for the country's welfare, to bind the entire peasantry to a single means of livelihood apart from agriculture. But the main point is this: we cannot, upon the mere authority of anyone's word, adopt any universal policy, resting on nothing more than conjecture; we demand investigation of fact by a trustworthy method. Only after that can we judge the appropriateness of any particular measure.

Some have said to me: we do not wish to narrow the country's power of thought forever, only for a very brief time. But why even for a brief time? Why should we, in this brief span, by this particular method, obtain self-rule? Where is the logic of it? Self-rule is not merely a matter of procuring one's own cloth for oneself. Self-rule is not founded upon our self-sufficiency in cloth alone. Its true foundation lies upon our mind—that mind which, through its manifold power, and through faith in that self-power, goes on creating self-rule. This creation of self-rule has, in no country, ever come to its final completion—in every country, in one part or another, some element remains bound in the fetters of greed or delusion. But the cause of this state of bondage lies in the mind of man. In all such countries, unceasing claim is being made upon this very mind. In our country too, self-rule can stand only upon the unfolding of this same mind. For this, no outward ritual, no outward result, will serve—we require knowledge and understanding. That we shall win, in a short while, by spinning cotton for a few days, this self-rule founded upon the mind of the country—where is the logic of this? Assertion cannot, by any means, take the place of argument. If we begin, upon the mouths of men, to listen to divine oracles, then, among the thousand kinds of deadly maladies that afflict our country, this oracular pronouncement will grow to be among the greatest and most virulent. Should it once be seen that nothing whatsoever moves our country except divine pronouncement, then, in the urgency of every immediate need, oracles will have to be manufactured each morning, and every other kind of pronouncement will be silenced. Where reason has authority, mere assertion may be used to beguile those who must be beguiled; but where the soul has authority, there some seat of true mastery must, of necessity, be established. Those who have cut away the very root of self-rule can gain nothing by pouring water on the branches. Granted, in our country oracular pronouncements, divine medicines, and

miraculous ritual acts in worldly affairs hold very great sway—but it is for this very reason that, in laying the foundation of self-rule, we must set, in the seat of the oracle, the pronouncement of reason firmly established in its stead. For, as I have said in an earlier essay, Fate itself has, in the material realm, crowned Reason as sovereign. And so, from this time forward, in the outer world, only those nations shall gain self-rule, and be able to defend it, who can, through the strength of their own reason, realize the glory of self-mastery—who will not, out of any greed, any delusion, sacrifice that glory to another. This burning of cloth that is now taking place, heaped up in shame at the lack of clothing, in the courtyard of the motherland—by what pronouncement does its urgency come today to the country? Is it by that same oracular pronouncement? There exists a close connection, in matters of the use or rejection of cloth, with the theory of economics; on this matter, we must speak to the country in the very language of that theory—if respect for the language of reason has, for a long time, been contrary to the country's habit, then, setting all else aside, we must contend with that very habit itself. For this habit is, for us, the flaw at the very root—the original sin. It is for the sake of that very flaw, giving indulgence to that very flaw, that it has today been proclaimed: foreign cloth is impure, therefore burn it. Economics has been driven out, and in its place religious scripture has been forcibly dragged in. The word "impure" is a word of religious scripture—a matter above the rule of economics. Why must falsehood be renounced, why is falsehood impure? Not merely because it fails to serve our purpose, or destroys it. Whether it does or not, by it our soul is defiled. And so, in this particular case, economics or political science does not apply—here the word of religious scripture alone prevails. But if there be any error in the wearing or the not-wearing of some particular cloth, that is an error of economic theory, or of hygiene, or of aesthetics—it is not an error of religious doctrine. To this, some reply: whatever error brings suffering of body or mind, that itself is irreligion. To this I reply: every error carries suffering with it—an error in geometry makes a road go wrong, a foundation go crooked; in the building of a bridge such a flaw may occur that, when a train runs over it, a terrible accident becomes inevitable. But the correction of this error is not according to the manner of religious doctrine. That is to say, when children make an error of geometry in their exercise books, this error is not corrected by declaring the exercise book impure and destroying it—the book must be corrected according to the true rule of geometry itself. But it may occur to the schoolmaster's mind that if he does not

call the erring exercise book impure, the children will not regard the error as an error. If that be true, then, setting aside everything else, this fault of character must be corrected by every possible means, and only then can these children become men. The order to burn cloth has now come upon us. I cannot accept that order as an order, and the first reason is this: we must struggle to rescue the country from the terrible peril of obeying orders with closed eyes—we cannot, turning it round from one order to another, drown it by making it drink water at every one of the seven ports of the ocean of commands. The second point is this: the cloth that is being arranged to be burnt is not my cloth; in truth, this cloth belongs to those among the people of the country who today have no cloth at all—whose cloth is that other cloth I propose to burn? If they say, "Burn it," then at least the burden of self-destruction falls upon the self-destroyer alone; the burden of killing him does not fall upon us. The man who is renouncing has plenty of cloth remaining to him, while the man whom we are forcing to endure the suffering of renunciation cannot, for lack of cloth, leave his house. Sin cannot be washed away by such an act of atonement performed under such compulsion. I have said again and again, and I say it once more: we cannot beguile the mind with the lure of an outward result. That machine whose tyranny afflicts the whole world—the Mahatma wishes to fight against that very machine, and here we are of his party. But that delusion-bound, spell-bound, blind obedience which lies at the root of all the misery and humiliation of our country—this we cannot make our ally and still fight the battle. For it is against this very thing that our chief battle must be waged; only when we have driven this out shall we win self-rule, within and without.

I am willing to burn cloth, but not at the urging of mere assertion. Let those who have expert knowledge, taking sufficient time, gather proof by proper means, and let them make us understand, through sound argument, what economic wrong our country has committed with regard to the wearing of cloth, and by what economic measure that wrong may be redressed. Without proof, without argument, how can we say with any certainty that by burning the very cloth which, in wearing, we committed some economic offence, we are not merely extending further the very root of that offence—will not the Manchester noose, as a result, grow tighter still, both in its consequence and in its extent? I raise this question not as an expert, for I am not an expert—I ask it only as an inquirer. Whatever the experts say is not, for

that reason, gospel truth to me. But it is fortunate that experts do not speak in the manner of gospel truth. In the open assembly they appeal to our reason.

There is one matter that the time has come for us to consider, and it is this: today's awakening in India is a part of the awakening of the whole world. At the trumpet-blast of a great war, the door of a new age has opened today. I have read in the Mahabharata that the period preceding self-manifestation is the period of the concealed exile. For some time, though the fact of how intimately mankind upon this earth has come to be bound together had grown clear, it remained unknown—that is, the event lay outside, it had not entered into our minds. When, at the blow of the war, the whole of mankind was, in a single moment, shaken to its foundations, then this truth could no longer remain hidden. Suddenly, in a single day, the foundation of modern—that is, Western—civilization trembled. It became evident that the cause of this trembling was neither local nor momentary—its cause lay spread across the whole earth. The relationship of man to man that binds one great continent to another—until harmony of truth be established within it, this cause shall not be stilled. From now on, any nation that regards its own country as wholly separate and apart will find itself in conflict with the present age, and shall find no peace whatsoever. From now on, the field of thought that every country must undertake, for its own sake, must be the whole world. To cultivate this world-directed inclination of the mind is the very discipline of education in this present age. For some time now we have been seeing a fundamental change of policy taking place in the governance of India. At the root of this change lies the attempt to view the problem of Indian governance as part of the problem of the whole world. The war has torn away a curtain from before our minds—it has enabled man to see, not merely upon the page of a book, but in the field of actual practice, that whatever is not in the interest of the world is contrary to our own interest as well; and he understands now that wherever there is injustice, there, though outward right may exist, true right does not exist. If true right can be won even at the cost of diminishing outward right, then there is nothing in that but gain, and no loss at all. This vast transformation that is taking place within the intellect of man, whose thought is moving from the narrow toward the vast, has, by its own hand, begun to work within this very change of Indian state policy. Within it there is ample incompleteness and abundant obstruction—selfish intent will assault well-

meaning intent at every step—yet it would be wrong, for all that, to think that this well-meaning intent is wholly hypocrisy and that selfish intent is wholly sincere. In these sixty years of my experience I have come to know one thing: that there is nothing so difficult of attainment, and therefore so rare, as hypocrisy. A perfectly hypocritical man is born but once in an age; his appearance is a very rare event indeed. The plain truth is that in every man there exists, in greater or lesser measure, a duality of character. In the machinery of logic set within our intellect, it being difficult to accommodate two contradictory elements at once, when we see good and bad together, we hasten to make up our minds—and in this it is the good that is deceived. In the universal endeavours that are proceeding upon this earth today, one will find, at every step, this very duality of man's character on display. If we judge this present state of things from the standpoint of the past age, we shall consider its selfish intent to be the genuine article, because the policy of the past was the policy of the discriminating intellect. But if we judge it from the standpoint of our coming future, we shall understand that it is the well-meaning intent that is the genuine one. For an impulse of the coming age has arrived, whose purpose is to unite mankind. That intellect which unites all is well-meaning intellect. The founding of the League of Nations, or the reform of Indian governance—these are, all of them, the pronouncement of the West regarding the coming age. Even if this pronouncement does not fully express the truth, its effort is directed toward that very truth.

Today, in this dawn of the awakening of world-consciousness, if there be found, in any national endeavour of our country, no universal pronouncement addressed to the whole world, then that very fact will expose our poverty of spirit. I do not say that we shall abandon whatever tasks are demanded by our immediate needs. When the bird awakens in the morning, its entire waking state is not devoted solely to the search for food—at the summons of the sky its two tireless wings respond, and in the joy of the light song wakes in its throat. Today the consciousness of all mankind has sent its call into our consciousness; let our consciousness answer that call in our own language—for the capacity to make a fitting answer to a call is itself the very mark of vital power. Once, when we were engrossed in a politics that looked only to others, we did nothing but recite the catalogue of another's offences, reminding the other constantly of his failures of duty; today, when we

wish to sever our politics from this dependence on another, we are still nourishing our policy of boycott through that same chant of another's wrongdoing. As a result, the mood that is growing ever more powerful within us is raising a cloud of blood-red dust in the sky of our consciousness, screening our thought off from the wider world. It is only increasing our excitement toward the swift gratification of passion. Because we have failed to let the vast form of India, united with the whole world, come before our eyes, in our action and our thought, the image of India that we have set about presenting is a very small one, without splendour—it is making our commercial instinct paramount. This instinct has never, anywhere, created anything great. Today, in the countries of the West, a longing and an effort have appeared, seeking to transcend this same commercial instinct and to awaken well-meaning intellect in its place. There I have seen many men who, carrying this resolve within their minds, have today become renunciants—that is, men who have cut the bonds of their own nationality and, in the discipline of universal unity, have gone forth as homeless wanderers, who have seen within their own hearts the underlying oneness of mankind. Such renunciants I have seen in great numbers among the English themselves—men who, in their discipline to protect the weak from the arrogance of their own people, have not hesitated to accept blows and insult from their own countrymen. Such a renunciant I have seen in France—Romain Rolland, for instance—who has been cast out by the people of his own country. Such renunciants I have seen at the far edges of the comparatively obscure countries of Europe. I have seen them among the many students of Europe; their faces shine with the radiance of their striving for the unity of all mankind. In the greatness of the age to come, they wish to bear with patience every blow of the present age, to forgive with fortitude every insult. And are we, then, only, in the manner of "let him ever remember the five maidens"—shall we, in this very dawn of this auspicious day, remember only the offences of others, and continue to found our national work of creation upon a mere quarrel? Shall we not, this morning, remember that Giver of well-meaning intellect—He who is One; He who is without colour, in whom there is neither white nor black; He who, through the union of manifold powers, has ordained for people of many colours their inherent, hidden needs; and shall we not pray to Him: sa no buddhyā śubhayā saṃyunaktu—may He unite us all through goodly wisdom!

THE PROBLEM

The students who sit for a university's entrance examination may number ten or twenty thousand, but for all of them alike there is the same question, printed in the same ink, in the same type. Only by giving the same true answer to that same question can the students pass and receive their degree. For this reason, it is possible to manage even by pilfering the answer from the candidate seated alongside. But the rules of the Creator's examination are not so simple. To each nation He has set a distinct and separate problem. Only if that nation itself discovers the true solution to that problem will it find its place, and win honour, in His university. To India too He has given a particular problem; and until its true solution is found, India's sorrow shall by no means be stilled. We are employing cunning, stealing answers from the examination papers of Europe. Once we did it foolishly, in the manner of the mouse-catching machine; today we do it more cleverly, having altered the wording somewhat. But when the examiner comes, again and again, to add up with his blue pencil all those little round marks he has made in the margin, he will find, in the end, a woeful deficit.

The thing we call a storm in the atmosphere—we know it well as a calamity. It comes on like an angry sky's blows, kicks, and thrusts, arriving as it were in the guise of fisticuffs. Now, this blow is a symptom. A symptom of what? The truth of the matter is this: among the layers of air lying side by side, among neighbours who ought to have concord between them, a rift has occurred. One part has grown too proud, another too much abased. This cannot be endured, and so Indra's thunder rumbles forth, and the conch of the wind-god sounds its booming war-cry. So long as no equilibrium is achieved between the neighbouring layers, so long as the disparity in the ranks is not dissolved, there is no peace, no rest for the god of the storm. Where there is a bond of mutual concord between things, the moment a rift occurs between them, an uproar breaks out. Then the grandeur of the forest is shattered, then the ocean falls into madness—and there is no use blaming them, no use reciting to them the hundred verses on tranquillity. Set your ear to the

ground and listen: from heaven to earth this single cry goes up—"A rift has occurred! A rift has occurred!"

What is true of the wind is equally true of mankind. When those who stand close together outwardly come to be riven apart within, that very rift becomes the root calamity. So long as it persists, no attempt—lawful or unlawful—to suppress Indra's thunderbolt, or the buffeting of the forty-nine winds, can ever still the storm's turmoil.

When we say we want freedom, we ought to consider what it is we truly want. Man is wholly free only where he is wholly alone. There, he has no relation to anyone, no obligation to anyone, no dependence upon anyone; there, not a single soul may interfere, even in the slightest degree, with his independence. But man not only fails to desire this kind of freedom—should he attain it, he feels the most grievous sorrow. Robinson Crusoe, upon his desert island, was, so long as he was utterly alone, utterly free. The moment Friday arrived, that solitary freedom vanished. Then a mutual bond was formed between him and Friday. Every bond is, in some measure, a subjection. Indeed, even in the relation of master and servant, the master too is subject to the servant. Yet Robinson Crusoe, though bound to Friday by mutual obligation, never felt the sorrow of any diminishment of his own freedom. Why? Because there was no obstacle of rift within their relation. Where does rift enter into a relation? Where mistrust enters, where fear enters, where each seeks to outwit and defeat the other, where the dealings between the two lack that natural ease. Had Friday been a savage barbarian, faithless and untrustworthy, Robinson Crusoe's freedom, in relation to him, would have been destroyed. There is no fullness in my relation to one with whom I have no true relation at all—that is, one toward whom I am indifferent does not bind me to himself; but neither, on that account, do I truly enjoy the genuine delight of freedom in regard to him. It is with him with whom my relation is complete—who is my truest friend, who therefore binds my heart—that my heart finds freedom without hindrance, in the very bond of that relationship. The freedom that consists in the absence of all relation is a negative thing; that empty, vacuous freedom brings pain to man. The reason for this is that man in isolation is not true; it is only

through relation with another, with all others, that he comes to realize his own truth. In whatever hinders this realization of truth—that is, in the rift, the incompleteness, the distortion of relation—lies the true obstacle to his freedom. For it is affirmative freedom alone that is man's true freedom. When does revolution break out in the household, or in the kingdom of man? Only when the natural relation between one and another is thrown into disorder. When suspicion, or envy, or greed enters among brothers and begins to afflict their bond, they find themselves obstructing one another, stumbling at every step, the stream of their common life obstructed at every turn until it grows turbulent and fretful. Then revolution comes upon the family. Political revolution, too, is a revolution of ruptured relation. For it is in the rupture of relation that unrest lies, and in that very unrest lies the injury to freedom. In our own religious discipline, too, what liberation do we call true liberation? That liberation in which, casting off egotism, one achieves complete union of the heart with the universal being. The reason is this: it is only in union with the universe that man is true—and it is in that very truth alone that man attains true freedom. We do not desire the emptiness of absolute freedom; we desire, in dissolving all rift, the fullness of relation—that alone we call liberation. When we desire freedom for our country, we do not desire a negative freedom; we desire to make the relation with all the people of the country as true and as unobstructed as possible. This is achieved by removing the cause of rift—but that cause may lie within, or it may lie without. We have read in the history of the West that the peoples there, in demanding freedom, have again and again raised an outcry. We too imitate that same outcry; we too say we want freedom. We must understand clearly this one thing: that when Europe said "we want freedom," it was because, under particular circumstances, for particular causes, some sorrow of rift had occurred in the body of its society—that among the members of that society, in some matter or other, in some form or other, a severance or distortion of relation had taken place; and it was by removing that very cause that they attained liberation. When we, too, say "we want freedom," we ought to consider which particular rift is the cause of our own sorrow and misfortune—otherwise the word "freedom," used merely as a phrase borrowed from history, will bear no fruit at all. There is simply no meaning in saying that those who deliberately nurture rift among themselves want freedom. How could this be so? It would be like the second wife declaring that she wishes never to look upon her husband's face, wishes to keep her children at a distance, wishes to have no

dealings whatsoever with her neighbours—yet wishes to wrest the running of the household from the hands of the eldest wife's daughter-in-law.

In certain countries of Europe, I have observed political revolution give birth to political systems of governance. The essential point in their case was this: a rift had occurred between two parties—the rulers and the ruled. That rift was not a rift of race, but a rift of class. On one side stood the king and his ministers, on the other the subjects; though they were of the very same race, the disparity of rights between them had grown exceedingly great. For this reason, their revolution had but a single task before it: to stitch up, through the machine of political needlework, this class-based rift, sewing it firmly closed. Today I see, once more, in that same land, the wind of another revolution beginning to blow. On inquiry, one finds that in the field of commerce, between those who invest capital and those who labour for wages, the disparity of rights has become exceedingly great. This rift causes suffering, and in that suffering lies the seed of revolution. The wealthy, grown fearful, do make some effort, out of compassion, from time to time, that the workers may find decent shelter, that their children may receive schooling, that they may enjoy some measure of comfort in all things—but for all that, the rift remains; a rift is not closed by a few drops sprinkled from the pitcher of the rich man's mercy, and so calamity, too, refuses to be stilled.

Long ago, a body of Englishmen went from England and settled in America. The Englishmen of England extended their rule, across the sea, over the Englishmen of America; but this rule did not heal the rift between the two shores of the ocean. In this case, the pull of the rope proved stronger than the pull of the navel-cord, and the bond had, by force, to be violently torn asunder—though the two parties were, in fact, brothers of one blood.

Once, in Italy, Austria stood at the head of the state, while Italy formed its tail; yet between tail and head there was no living connection of vital force. This lifeless bondage manifested that rift in a form unbearable indeed. Italy won liberation from it, and thereby solved the problem.

We see, then, that liberation from the sorrow of rift, from the misfortune of rift, is itself true liberation. Indeed, this is the very foundation of the religious discipline of our own country—it teaches that in the sense of duality itself lies untruth, and that it is only by dissolving that sense of duality that we find our deliverance within truth.

But, as I have already said, in the Creator's examination hall not all candidates face the same question. Rift is not of a single kind. One foot in a wooden clog and the other in a boot—that is one kind of rift; one leg longer, the other shorter—that is another kind of rift; the bone of the leg broken, severing one part of the leg from another—that is yet another kind of rift; and every one of these kinds of rift hinders free and vigorous movement. But different rifts require different remedies. Should the man with the broken leg steal the answer to his own particular problem from the man in the wooden clog, and try to pass it off as his own solution, he may only increase his own peril all the more.

As I have already said, that severance which once existed among the English people has, through a machine of political needlework, been stitched firmly and made whole. But where the cloth itself has never been woven, where the threads lie partly scattered, partly tangled into knots, there the notion of a needlework-machine cannot even be entertained; there one must go back to a much earlier stage—there, upon the loom of society itself, the many threads must be woven into a single, undivided fabric. This will take time, but a needlework-machine can never accomplish it, however great the haste.

There is a folk rhyme about Lord Shiva's three brides:

One daughter cooks and serves, one daughter eats,

One daughter, getting nothing, to her father's house retreats.

All three daughters had equal need of food—but by whatever easy means the second daughter contrived to eat, that same means, for some particular reason, was not available to the third; and so she was compelled to satisfy her hunger and her need for food by a more roundabout and delayed method—she fled to her father's house. The ancient tale's account of the first daughter's manner of satisfying her hunger is left obscure. My own belief is that she merely did the cooking, while the middle daughter alone enjoyed and was satisfied by its fruits. Such instances are not rare in history.

It might be supposed that our own motherland is the middle beloved of Lord Shiva—that supposition may be permitted to stand, for over many centuries her acquaintance has been proven again and again. And so, when it comes to the attainment of her ends, the path of the middle daughter can never be her path. Perhaps she has cooked, yet still made claim to the feast; perhaps, scolded at last by Lord Shiva, she has set off, ancient and slow, toward her father's house, letting the day slip by as she walked—or else she has cooked, has served, but come mealtime, has found that another has already emptied the plate before her. And so her true problem is this: whatever the cause that brings such things to pass—the very cause that makes her, again and again, provoke Lord Shiva to anger—that cause must first of all be uprooted; it will not do merely to plead petulantly, "Just as the second wife eats, so exactly must I be allowed to eat."

We are forever saying that the foreigner is our king, and that once this sorrow is removed, all our sorrows will be removed. I, too, do not care for a foreign king. Nor, indeed, do I relish a spleen that fills my whole belly. But for a long while now I have observed that this spleen, without waiting for my consent, has come of its own accord and settled itself, filling my belly entirely. To nurse it tenderly within the inmost chamber of the heart is perilous—but equally, to burst it open with an angry blow of the fist is fraught with grave danger. Those who have expertise tell us: all around you, on every side, lie ponds breeding malaria; unless you drain those ponds, your spleen's swelling will never subside. The trouble is precisely this—that all our anger is directed at the spleen, and none at the ponds. We say, these are

our ancestral ponds; should they be swept away, the depth of the sacred footprints of the past would be lost forever. Let that depth be filled to the very brim with the ceaseless flood of the present's tears—but let our settlements remain, forever, split a hundredfold, pond by pond by pond.

Readers, growing impatient, will say: enough of preambles—tell us plainly, now, what exactly is our particular problem. I feel some hesitation in saying it, for the matter is exceedingly simple. Hearing it, everyone will scoff and say, "Why, everyone already knows that!" It is for this very reason that, when it comes to naming a disease, if the doctor, instead of saying "sleeplessness," says "insomnia," one feels that the sixteen rupees paid as his fee were sixteen annas well spent. The plain truth is: we are not one; there is no end to the rifts among ourselves. I said at the very outset—rift itself is sorrow, and in that very rift lies sin. Whether that rift be with the foreigner or with our own countrymen matters not. When can we treat our society as one vast, undivided body? Only when there is a living connection of sensation and of action running through all its limbs and members—when, if the foot labours, the hand reaps the benefit; when, if the hand labours, the foot reaps the benefit. Let us imagine that, by some oversight of the Creator falling quite outside the proper order of creation, a certain misbegotten thing has come into being, bearing the shape of a body, yet with a fence of prohibition erected around each and every one of its members—so that between the right eye and the left eye, between the right hand and the left hand, there subsists only the estranged relation of brothers-in-law; so that if the blood coursing in its leg's veins tries to rise toward the breast, it is beaten back with a slap; so that if its forefinger tries to work in concert with its little finger, this becomes a matter demanding penance and atonement; so that if its foot needs a rub of oil, its right hand goes on strike. This exceedingly rickety contraption cannot enjoy the ease and convenience enjoyed by the well-formed body of the next household. It watches that other body go strutting about, chest thrown out, wearing shoes and coat, cane and umbrella in hand, walking every path, whether proper or improper. Then it thinks to itself: if only I too could obtain shoes, coat, cane, and umbrella, like that other body, all my sorrows would be at an end. But the Creator's original error cannot be remedied by adding to it an error of one's own. Even should it get shoes, its shoes will keep slipping off; even should it get an umbrella, the wind will snatch it and blow it away;

and even should it somehow, by hook or by crook, manage to procure a cane worthy of the name, the body from the other household might well snatch that very cane from its grasp and bring the whole rickety farce of its existence to an end—perhaps even turning it into a tragedy. Here, the problem is not the lack of shoes, coat, umbrella, or cane—the problem is the lack of a living, organic unity. But that mocking, body-shaped caricature devised by the Creator might well say: let the matter of the disunity of the limbs remain hidden for now; if, before all else, somehow or other, we can procure one single garment and cover the whole body with it, then the unity of that garment will, of itself, bring about the unity of the limbs and members. To say that it will happen "of itself" is merely to deceive oneself. Such self-deception is universal—for man loves the deception he himself creates, and feels no inclination whatsoever to put it to the test.

I recall that in my youth a debate was frequently heard in the country between two opposing camps: are we a nation, or are we not a nation? I cannot claim to have fully understood the matter then, but this much I can say: we were not one—for had any man declared himself king, we would have thrown him into prison; had any man set himself up as head of society, we would have stopped his washerman and barber from serving him. To maintain even a non-violent attitude toward such a man would have been difficult for me. In those days, one fixed argument on this matter ran thus: in Switzerland, three quite distinct races dwell side by side, and yet they are one nation—so what of it? Hearing this, I would think: well, then, there is nothing to fear. But though the mouth says "there is nothing to fear," the fear, in truth, is never actually dispelled. When a lawyer said to a man condemned to hang, "What is there to fear? Just say 'Durga' and let yourself drop"—the man found no comfort in it; for as for saying "Durga," he was quite willing, but it was that very act of dropping to which he objected. That the people of Switzerland are a nation, and that we too are a nation—what comfort is there in merely proving this by argument? When it comes to the actual result, we see that we have dropped and hang suspended, while they stand firm upon the ground. Radhika, in the old tale, fetched water in her water-jar and thereby broke her vow of chastity. That unfortunate woman who is not Radhika also has her water-jar, but her fetching of water does not break her chastity—quite the opposite occurs. It is precisely this difference in the underlying cause that produces this difference in result, and it is

this very point that deserves our reflection. In Switzerland, whatever rifts there may be, there is at least no sense of duality, no rift-consciousness. There, no obstacle of religion, or custom, or convention, stands in the way of the free intermingling of blood among the different peoples. Here, that obstacle is so formidable that the mere proposal to remove the legal impediment to inter-caste marriage was enough to send the guardians of Hindu society into a state of righteous agitation, threatening to call a general strike, sweat pouring from every limb. The deepest current of kinship runs in the very blood, not in words spoken by the mouth. If those who imagine themselves to be one great nation find that the path by which that very current of blood might mingle remains forever sealed by the decree of religion, then their unity can never become a unity of the living spirit, and it will not, therefore, be easy for them to give their lives together, as one, for a common cause. For their spirit is not, in truth, a single spirit. I once had a friend who lived in a remote frontier region of India. There, hill-bandits would occasionally raid Hindu settlements and carry off women. On one such occasion, my friend asked a local Hindu: why do you people endure such outrages upon your community? The man replied, with utter indifference: "Oh, that was only some low-caste wench abducted." "Some low-caste wench abducted"—both the Hindu who spoke thus, and the man indifferent to the abduction, were themselves Hindus; between the two there may have been a bond according to scripture, but there was no bond of the living spirit. And so the injury done to the one did not strike home in the heart of the other. The primal meaning of national unity is unity of birth; and its ultimate meaning is the very same thing.

Whatever is unreal can, by no possible means, be made to bear the weight of any great achievement. When man finds himself in dire straits, he tries, by deceiving himself, to extract from himself some work by cheating. Confused, he imagines that by cheating himself with the left hand, he might yet gain with the right. That at the root of our efforts toward national unity lies a colossal national unreality is something we all, deep down, secretly know; and it is precisely for this reason that, keeping that side of the matter carefully out of sight, we wish to display, in great and lavish abundance, the mere building materials with which we hope to erect the victory-pillar of our national fellowship. Piling a superabundance of materials upon a raw, unfinished foundation does not, by any temporary expedient, make that

foundation solid. On the contrary, one day the very weight of that superabundance will terribly and conclusively expose the foundation's weakness. The Hindu-Muslim discord of today, coming as it does right after the makeshift, hastily-patched Khilafat compact, is a shining example of this. Where the error lies at the very root, it can never be corrected by any superficial patching. On hearing all this, some, growing impatient, will exclaim: it is the third party, the foreigner, standing about us on every side as our enemy, who sows this rift among us—the fault is not ours, but his; before this we Hindus and Muslims lived peaceably side by side, without conflict, but—and so on and so forth. Scripture tells us that in this dark age, disease seeks out the wounds in men. Finding the wound of sin, it enters within and begins its work of total destruction. The peril lies without, but the sin lies within me—and for this very reason, to direct our rage against the peril while showing tender compassion toward the sin is the very worst of all perils.

There was a leak in the hold of a ship; so long as there was no storm, the ship managed to sail on. From time to time, salty water had to be bailed out, but that trouble was not worth remembering. The day the storm rose, the leak in the hold widened, growing more and more severe, until the sinking of the ship became imminent. If the captain says, "The fault lies entirely with that storm—let us all together curse it at the top of our voices, and let my leak remain exactly as it is"—then that captain and his crew of leaders will lead us not to shore, but straight to the bottom of the sea. If the third party is indeed our adversary, we must bear this in mind: they did not come, in the guise of a storm, to help us mend our leak. With terrible violence, pointing with their finger, they will show us plainly, again and again, precisely where our own bottom is unsound. They will strike the coward's chest again and again, forcing him to remember the harsh reality. They will make it clear that between right and left, which agree upon nothing, every road save the road to ruin lies closed to him. In a word, they are not the wanton waves of some inland pond—they are the salt sea itself. So long as we merely rage against them, uselessly losing our temper and wasting our time, there remains hope of deliverance only if we can, giving all we have, apply ourselves to the actual work of stopping the leak. Should Providence wish to make sport of us, He might, for the present, subdue the storm raised by this present third party—but that He should annihilate the storm's entire lineage and turn the sea itself into a calm pond, this

even so devout a Hindu as ourselves must not expect Him to hear. And so I beg of the captains, imploring them, that in their eagerness to match, shout for shout, the roaring of the storm, they do not thereby suppress altogether the urgent matter of mending the leak.

The captains say: as proof that we do indeed have our eye upon this very matter, observe that though we ourselves are orthodox conservatives, we nevertheless wish to remove the country's prejudice regarding the doctrine of pollution by touch. To this I say: this is but the surface of the matter. The doctrine of pollution by touch is merely one outward symptom of our sense of duality. If, from that eternal tree of duality-consciousness that stands blocking our path, we break off but a single twig, will the path thereby be cleared?

I have said elsewhere before that it is religion which, by dividing men into separate groups, itself bars from within the door by which they might unite. Let me try to state the matter more clearly. Everyone commonly says that the essential meaning of the word "religion" (dharma) is that which sustains us. That is to say, whatever supports we hold to be eternal and unchanging fall within the domain of religion. Concerning these, there is no room for debate. These particular supports admit of no alteration whatsoever. If we behave inconstantly toward them, if we change our views and our path with every changing word, then we cannot survive.

But there exists, in the affairs of this world, a certain sphere in which change is constantly at work, where the coming and going of the unforeseen and accidental knows no end; there, we cannot survive unless we make, again and again, fresh reconciliations and settlements with regard to ever-new circumstances. In this domain of perpetual change, if we try to set the unchanging in the place of the changeable, or the changeable in the place of the unchanging, disaster is inevitable. The soil in which a tree sends down its roots and stands firm is, for the root, rightly unchanging soil—but it does not follow that it is beneficial to bury the tree's branches and leaves also in the earth. The earth eternally sustains me; it is good for me that the earth should remain as unchanging as religion itself, and it would be

utter ruin should it begin to shift and tremble. My carriage, too, sustains me; but should I make that very act of being-borne into something unchanging, then the carriage would cease to be, for me, my earth, and would become instead my cage. Depending on circumstance, I must sometimes sell my old carriage or have it repaired, sometimes buy a new one or hire one; sometimes I must get into the carriage, sometimes I must get out of it; and should the carriage show signs of tilting over, I need not, before deciding whether or not to leap clear of it, send off first to fetch a groom from some distant village. When religion says, "Live in amity with the Muslim," then, without any argument whatsoever, I shall take that word upon my head. This teaching of religion is, to me, as eternal as the great ocean itself. But when religion says, "Do not accept food touched by a Muslim," then I am bound to ask: why should I not? This latter statement is, to me, no more permanent than water in a pitcher—whether to retain it or discard it is a matter to be decided by reason. Should someone say that such matters lie beyond the reach of free inquiry, then I must reply, standing before the very throne of all scriptural injunction itself, that upon those who accept, without discrimination, whatever ought properly to be subject to reason's judgment, there falls the curse of that very deity who, as the scripture says, "impels our understanding"—dhiyo yo naḥ pracodayāt. Such people hold their priestly intermediary in greater fear and reverence than the deity himself, and in doing so they do not hesitate even to insult the very worship of that deity.

In that domain of worldly life which is properly the domain of reason, it is only through the union wrought by reason that true concord between man and man becomes possible. There, the intrusion of unreason is a grievous obstacle. It is like some ghostly disturbance haunting the house of man. Why, and on what grounds—of this the ghost gives no account whatsoever. The ghost does not build the house, does not pay rent for the house, yet neither will it ever leave the house. Whence comes such enormous authority? No—it is not real at all, and yet my timid mind has accepted it as real. True reality is that which is governed by reality's own laws; even if it will not consent to pay rent, at the very least it pays the government's tax. To accept the unreal as real is to place it wholly beyond the reach of any rational principle whatsoever. And so one's heart merely goes thump-thump, one's flesh merely creeps, and without any reasoning at all, one simply submits. If someone

asks, "Who is it?"—I cannot answer; I can only point with my thumb over my shoulder and say, "There, that one!" And if he presses further, asking, "Where? I see nothing"—I brand him an infidel and chase him away. In my heart I think: should this obstinate fellow bring some calamity upon us—suppose, in disbelieving the ghost, it should wring his neck! And yet, should the question "why?" arise again, I answer: whatever place demands a "why," go and demand it there, not here, my good fellow; kindly take your leave—and do think carefully beforehand about who will cremate you when you die.

In the kingdom of the mind, wherever I acknowledge the authority of reason, there is my own sovereign realm; there I acknowledge myself—and in that very act of self-acknowledgment lies the acknowledgment of the universal human mind of every land and every age. Wherever I acknowledge the authority of unreason, there I am submitting to some rule utterly outside the order of creation—a rule that belongs neither to me nor to universal mankind. That, therefore, is a prison; there, I share kinship only with those, like myself, confined hand and foot within that single cell, prematurely decrepit—I have no kinship whatsoever with the countless millions of free men outside. This very persistence of rift with the greater whole is itself bondage. For, as I have already said, it is rift, seen from every angle, that is our root calamity and our ultimate misfortune. Unreason is the very consciousness of rift, for in the kingdom of the mind it severs us from the whole of humankind—we sit confined in some strange cage, passing our days reciting a few taught phrases, over and over.

At every step of life's journey, there are those whose lifelong habit is to submit to unreason—should some clerical error of fate suddenly transport them to the very heaven of self-rule, even there their pestle-and-mortar routine would find no rest; they would go on, in that same rhythm of servile pounding, beating their heads against another's feet—the only difference being, perhaps, an occasional change of whose feet they beat their heads against.

We are, these days, forever finding fault with, forever condemning, the way large machine-driven factories oppress men, turning them into mere mechanisms. In doing this, we hurl abuse at Western civilization, and, knowingly or unknowingly, derive a peculiar satisfaction from it. Why does such maiming of humanity occur in the factory? Because there, man's reason, will, and action are forced into a particular narrow mould, and their full development becomes impossible. But the factory of the iron machine is not the only kind of factory there is. Unreasoning ordinance is harder than iron, narrower than any machine. That vast system of governance which keeps forever poised the terror of merciless authority, which has for ages kept innumerable millions of men and women perpetually engaged in the mindless, senseless repetition of irrational customs—can that country-wide, man-crushing millstone be considered, by any reckoning, less severe than any machine? I know of no other place in the whole realm of man where so complete, so vast, so all-encompassing, so heart-numbing, so iron-hard a factory of prohibition and injunction, holding the very freedom of reason itself in contempt, has ever been raised up. The jute sacks that come pouring out of the jute mill are used for the passive purpose of holding a load. Likewise, those excessively "good" and compliant beings that emerge, trimmed and cut to shape, from that man-crushing mill do nothing but go on bearing external burdens. No sooner is one burden set down than another comes and claims its place upon them.

Ancient India, once, when she asked a boon of Providence, said: sa no buddhyā śubhayā saṃyunaktu, ya ekaḥ avarṇaḥ—He who is One, He who is beyond all distinction of caste and colour, let Him unite us through goodly wisdom. India desired then unity, but she did not desire the mockery of a unity forged by the machinery of politics or society. She sought union through wisdom, through goodly reason—not through the endless chain of blind subservience, not through the harsh, twisting pincers of unreasoning ordinance.

In this world, man must forever, and afresh, come to terms with the unforeseen. This very task is the great work of our faculty of reason. We observe, in the great scheme of creation, that the accidental—what science calls "variation"—arrives quite unbidden. At first it stands alone, isolated; but by being harmonized with the

universal law and the universal rhythm, it comes to be made a member of the whole—even though it introduces, at the same time, a wholly new element of diversity. In the individual life of man, and in human society, the accidental very often arrives as an uninvited guest. How to deal with it so that this strange newcomer may be brought into due harmony with all around it—that is to say, so that it does not wound and dishonour our reason, our taste, our character, our very sense of what is fitting—this can be accomplished only through vigilant, discerning reason. Suppose, once, a certain fakir, for some particular purpose, drove a post into the middle of the road and tied his goat to it there to graze at the market. The business at the market was concluded, and the goat, too, came at last to its final end. It would have been proper that this accidental post be removed from the middle of the road for the sake of all future generations. But who is to remove it? Unreason never does so, for its whole business is to accept, with eyes tightly shut, whatever already exists; it is reason alone that can, when something new arrives, deal with it judiciously through fresh arrangement. To accept whatever exists in a given country simply because it exists—to go on endlessly repeating whatever has been—is the way of blind convention; and in that particular country, the post remained standing in the middle of the road for centuries upon centuries. At last, one day, quite by chance, some devout and tearful soul came from somewhere, smeared a little vermilion upon it, and erected upon it a small shrine. From that day forward, year after year, the almanac proclaimed that whosoever, on the seventh day of the bright fortnight of Kartik, worshipped the Post-Goddess with an offering of a full seer of goat's milk and three tolas of silver, that person's worship would liberate three hundred million generations of ancestors from bondage. Thus, in the kingdom of unreason, the accidental post becomes wholly sanctified, and remaining bound in one place becomes easier than walking freely upon the public road. Those who are devoutly faithful say: we are God's own special creation, we have nothing in common with any other race; and so, though the road be closed to us, we can manage well enough—but without the post, our religion itself would perish. Even those who care nothing for the Post-Goddess, even foreign sentimentalists, say: ah, this—precisely this—is what is called "spirituality"; these people are willing to sacrifice every convenience and advantage of their own daily life, yet will not let the post be moved even a single inch from the soil. And along with this, they also say: our own particular genius lies in a different direction, and so we have no wish to imitate these people—but how charming it is that they, thus

bound by a thousand posts within religion's fencework, remain so utterly calm and composed, so perfectly serene—for, seen from a distance, it all looks so very beautiful!

I have no wish to argue about beauty—that is a matter of taste. Just as religion, within its own proper domain, is a great thing, so too is beauty, within its own proper domain, a great thing. Ignorant fellows like myself will raise the question from the standpoint of reason's proper claim: can the chariot of the achievement of independence ever advance along such a path, so thickly beset with the thorns of countless posts? Reason's pride binds up its heart and asks its impertinent question boldly enough—but at night, sleep will not come. For when the housewives, making preparations for the rites of well-being, say: with children and household to manage, who knows which post, on which day, casts its baleful glance; do not remain silent about it—for in this degenerate age there is no lack of reckless boys ready to go shaking the posts—hearing this, even bare modernists like ourselves find our hearts beginning to pound, for we cannot, after all, filter our inherited superstitions clean out of our very blood. And so, the very next morning, spending a little more than a seer of goat's milk, a little more than three tolas of silver, we breathe a sigh of relief and feel that we have escaped.

This, then, has been our most prominent problem. In that very domain where, through the path of reason, through the path of action, men might walk together toward the path of prosperity, there stands, instead, the problem of the post firmly rooted in the ground; among those between whom the way of mutual intercourse ought, in every respect, to be kept open, there stands instead the problem of raising countless fences of posts, making the rift between them manifold and permanent; where, through the union of reason, one ought to be joined with all, there stands, instead, in the immovable obstruction of unreason, the problem of remaining eternally cut off from all; there stands the problem of sacrificing judgment and discrimination, in a fervour of devotion, before that rift-embodying post! The sentimentalist, standing before this problem, says with moist and glistening eyes: ah, here it is devotion itself that is the great and the beautiful thing—the post is merely incidental. We modernists, on the other hand, say: here

it is reason itself that is the great thing, the beautiful thing; both the post and the devotion are mere useless rubbish. But ah—when the housewife, in fear of some impending calamity, joins her palms, wraps her shawl about her shoulders in reverence, and goes to bind her own right hand before the deity as an offering—what indescribable sweetness is there in that! The modernist says: the offering of the right hand is meaningful only where it contains no blindness, only where it contains courage—there alone lies its sweetness. But where the terror of calamity, in the guise of folly, in the guise of abjectness, devours that very sweetness, there the beautiful stands defeated, there the good stands overthrown.

Another of our chief problems is the Hindu-Muslim problem. That this problem is so exceedingly difficult of solution is because both sides have marked out the boundaries of their own selfhood, immovably, chiefly through the medium of their respective religions. It is that very religion which has divided the human world, cutting it, black and white, into two starkly distinct portions—the Self and the Other. In worldly affairs, there is everywhere some natural degree of distinction between self and other. It is only when the measure of that distinction becomes excessive that misfortune results. The Bushman-type of savage, the moment he sees another, strikes him down indiscriminately with a poisoned arrow. The result is that the fullness of humanity, which blossoms through true union with the other, could never be realized by the Bushman—he remains bound within the confines of the most extreme barbarism. Whichever race has succeeded, from within, in diminishing the measure of this rift has, to that very degree, been able to rise to the higher order of humanity. That race has been able to achieve, through union with all, the highest excellence of thought, of action, of character.

The Hindu identifies himself as devoutly religious; so, too, does the Muslim. That is to say, outside the sphere of religion, very little indeed remains of either's life. For this reason, both hold each other, and all others in the world besides, at as great a distance as possible, through the operation of their respective religions. This very rift of distance, which they have so firmly and thoroughly embedded on every side of themselves, has obstructed that expansion of humanity which comes through true union with all mankind. This religion-based sense of duality has kept them

narrowly cut off from the boundless nature of truth. It is for this very reason that, in their dealings with mankind, artificial and outward convention has grown so much stronger among them than eternal truth.

I have said before that the human world has been divided, to an excessive degree, into these two categories of Self and Other by the religions of these two communities. Let that Other remain forever the Other—such is the Hindu's arrangement; his wish is that this Other, whether outcaste or untouchable, should never, by any chance, slip through some crack and enter into his home. On the Muslim side, the matter stands precisely reversed. He recognizes the Other, standing outside the boundary of his faith, very intensely as the Other; but his joy lies precisely in being able to draw that very Other, that very infidel, into his fold and hold him fast forever after, as one of his own. What some carefully-selected verse in their respective scriptures may say on this point is not the matter of real concern; but in actual practice, one side, for hundreds upon hundreds of years, has made a fortress of its religion, keeping the Other at bay and remaining self-absorbed within; while the other side has made of its religion a battle-formation, attacking the Other and tearing him away, bringing him into its fold. Through this process, the inner disposition of both peoples has become, in two quite different moulds, thoroughly hardened into consciousness of duality. By the ordinance of fate, these two parties have come to stand side by side in India, each occupying a place of primary importance—the Muslim, from the standpoint of kinship, does not want the Hindu, holding him at bay as an infidel; the Hindu, likewise, from the standpoint of kinship, does not want the Muslim, holding him at bay as an untouchable.

In one particular sphere, the two parties do make repeated attempts to unite—and that is in opposition to a third party. Were Lord Shiva's rhyme available to us today in its complete form, we should see that between that first daughter who cooks and serves yet cannot eat, and that third daughter who, unfed, departs for her father's house, there existed a certain alliance—directed against that middle daughter. But on the day the middle daughter finally departed for her father's house, the remaining two co-wives would surely have fallen into a hair-pulling

brawl between these two "political currents." I have seen, during a storm on the Padma river, two crows, both driven back to the same patch of exposed sandbank, flapping their wings furiously, wing against wing, in their frantic effort to secure a foothold upon the same muddy spot. There is no need to be hastily charmed by this appearance of harmony between them. Throughout a period far longer than the duration of this storm-time truce, these two have gone on pecking and jostling one another. In Bengal, during the Swadeshi movement, the Muslim did not join with the Hindu; for the sorrow of the partition of Bengal's undivided land was not, to him, a matter of felt reality. Today, in the Non-cooperation movement, the Muslim has joined hands with the Hindu—because the sorrow of the dismemberment of the undivided territory of the Ottoman empire is, to him, a felt reality. Such a basis for union as this can never be permanent. We have not truly united at all; we are merely two parties, one facing east, the other facing west, flapping our wings side by side for a little while. Now that this flapping of wings has ceased, the beaks of both parties, no longer biting into the same patch of ground, are flying apart from one another, each in its own separate direction, with sudden violence. The leaders of political thought are pondering: with what, once again, can we distract and occupy these two beaks? But the true fault lies embedded in the very bone and marrow; it will not do to try to patch it over by mere distraction. He who imagines that by throwing a blanket over a block of ice he has thereby made it warm will one day discover that all he has actually done is to make its coldness permanent.

The difference between Hindu and Muslim is not merely one of religious doctrine—there has also arisen, between the two, a disparity of social strength. Through the force of the age-old, unbroken discipline of its religious society, the Muslim community has built up among itself a close-knit and cohesive unity; whereas, through the influence of the very same age-old discipline of its religious society, a powerful disunity has come to prevail among Hindus. The result is this: even when there is some specific occasion for it, the Hindu strikes at his own kind, but even when there is real cause, the Hindu is unable to strike at another. And the Muslim, even when there is no specific occasion at all, defends himself vigorously; and when occasion does arise, he can deal another a thorough beating. The reason for this is not that the Muslim has bodily strength which the Hindu lacks; the true reason is

that his society has strength which the Hindu's lacks. One community is inwardly strong and robust; the other is inwardly enfeebled and lifeless. How can any equitable compromise ever be reached between such unequal parties? In moments of the direst calamity, it may be possible for a while, but the moment the occasion arises for the division and distribution of rights, the lion's share grows disproportionately large—and the reason for this lies in his very claws. In the last European war, when the face of the entire English race had turned pale with dread, they called upon even a feeble race like ours, and courted us most warmly, seeking our help. Not only that—just as even the most confirmed materialist, in a moment spent at the cremation ground, is momentarily seized by a spirit of selfless universal love, so too, even some hours after the war's end, in that grand sacrifice of blood-offering, a certain tenderness had sprung up in their hearts toward their Indian collaborators. But the shock of the war soon softened, and soon after appeared the demonic slaughter of Jallianwala Bagh—and after that came the arrangement of the "crescent moon" restriction upon Indians at the very gates of the Kenyan empire. We may be angry, but so long as we have not truly risen to a position of equality, we shall never receive treatment as equals. It is for this very reason that Mahatmaji has, with a good deal of vigorous shaking, tried to make the strength of the subject party palpable and perceptible to the ruling party. His aim was reconciliation and settlement between the two sides. But such a reconciliation could never be reached where an absolute rift exists between the strong and the weak. If, through the strength of religion, we could cause the very throne of the king to tremble as in an earthquake, then the king's armed might would, of its own accord, come seeking us out to negotiate a decent settlement. In India, between Hindu and Muslim, the occasion for mutual settlement and reconciliation arises constantly. Where there is inequality, that settlement will inevitably take the shape of calamity. Once, in the fable, a debate—a kind of conference—was convened between the tiger and the lamb concerning the right to drink water from the stream. The story is recorded in the fables of Aesop. Everyone knows how the more powerful quadruped, in his summing-up, reduced the whole subject of the dispute to the very simplest possible terms. If we truly desire the welfare of India, then it is not enough for Hindus and Muslims merely to unite—they must become equal. That equality is not the individual equality of two evenly-matched wrestlers—it is the equality of the social strength of the two communities as a whole.

The ugly incident that occurred between the Moplahs and the Hindus in Malabar took place precisely at the height of the flood-tide of Hindu-Muslim amity arising from the Khilafat issue. The two parties in that conflict have, for a very long time indeed, employed religion in a manner contrary to the eternal principles of true religious morality. The religion of the Namboodiri Brahmin has despised the Muslim; the religion of the Moplah Muslim has scorned the Namboodiri Brahmin. Today, it is futile to attempt, in a mere handful of days, to build a solid political bridge out of the decayed mortar of a fraternal feeling forged upon the platform of the Congress between these two parties. And yet we keep on saying, over and over: let our age-old religion remain exactly as it is; we shall attain practical, real results even through what is unreal, and once results are gained, all these underlying flaws will, of themselves, be automatically corrected. First let us score the winning stroke—we shall think about the means later; first let us achieve self-rule, and afterward we shall become men.

So much, then, for the first point regarding the Malabar disturbances. The second point concerns the inequality between Hindu and Muslim. Dr. Munje, having examined and discussed an account of this disturbance, has sent a report to the Hindu religious leader of the South, the Shankaracharya; in it, he says:

"The Hindus of Malabar are generally speaking mild and docile and have come to entertain such a mortal fear of the Moplas that the moment any such trouble arises, the only way of escape the Hindus can think of, is to run for life leaving their children and womenfolk behind, to take care of themselves as best as they could, thinking perhaps honestly that if the Moplas attack them without any previous molestation, God, the Almighty and the Omniscient, is there to teach them a lesson and even to take a revenge on their behalf."

The meaning of Dr. Munje's remark is this: the Hindu has never trained himself to deal with worldly matters according to worldly rules; he has stirred the eternal and the temporal together into a single confused mess, and thrown reason itself into

the water. In the place where reason ought to stand, he has set up mere ordinance; and in the place where he ought to have self-reliance, he has set up God—and yet, in this self-abasement, he never realizes, thanks to the sheer torpor of his mind, that he is thereby dishonouring God Himself.

In another part of Dr. Munje's report, he states that eight hundred years ago, the Hindu king of Malabar, acting on the advice of his Brahmin ministers, granted special facilities for the settlement of Arabs within his kingdom. Indeed, so far did he go in favouring the Arabs in the work of converting Hindus to Islam that, by his royal decree, one member from every fisherman's family was required to become a Muslim. The chief reason for this was that the devoutly religious king and his ministers had come to accept that overseas voyage was contrary to religion; and so the defence of Malabar's coastal territories was entrusted entirely into the hands of precisely those Muslims who, regarding the propriety of sea-voyage, followed reason rather than the injunctions of Manu. To refuse to acknowledge reason, and to acknowledge unreason instead, is the very religion of those who, though they may sit upon the throne, never become free. They turn even the broad daylight of active labour into the deep, drowsy midnight of sleep. It is for this very reason that they suffer, as the saying goes,

Right at the stroke of noon,

The ghost pelts them with clods.

The king of Malabar once, wearing merely the mask of kingship, abandoned the actual throne to unreason. That very unreason still occupies the Hindu throne of Malabar to this day. And so the Hindu still receives his beatings, and still, gazing skyward, says: "There is a God." Throughout the whole length and breadth of India, we have made unreason our king, and stand before it with folded hands. That very reign of unreason—that terrible, gaping breach against the very ordinance of the Creator Himself—has, at various times, been filled up by the Pathan, by the Mughal, by the Englishman. We see, from without, only their acts of violence—but they are merely the occasion. They are but a handful of clods; they are not the ghost itself.

It is we ourselves who, shutting the eyes of reason even in the full light of noonday, have summoned forth the ghost of unreason—all of this is its handiwork. In setting up God Himself as a mere excuse, these people, insulting their own selves, do not even realize, in the very torpor of their minds, that in doing so they are insulting God Himself.

Right at the very hour of noon, when the awakened world of mankind is thinking, is labouring, we alone, from behind, upon our very backs, receive:

Right at the stroke of noon,

The ghost pelts us with clods.

Our fight is with the ghost, our fight is with unreason, our fight is with the unreal. It is that very unreal thing that has brought rift upon us from every side; it is that very thing that has mounted subjugation upon our very shoulders—it is that very thing that has blinded us to such a degree that, even while we curse the clod aloud, shouting ourselves hoarse, we go on treating that very ghost as our dearest kin, our most venerable object of worship, and have surrendered to it, as consecrated ground, the entirety of our homestead. So long as we keep our gaze fixed upon the clod, there can be no hope of deliverance for us—for in this world, clods are innumerable; clods lie upon every path, at every landing-place; let one clod be spent, and a thousand more will come—but the ghost is one alone. Could we but shake off that one ghost, the clods would fall harmlessly at our feet, and never strike our bodies at all. The time has come, once more, to utter with our whole heart and soul that ancient prayer of India—uttered not with the voice alone, but with thought, with action, with reverence, with our very conduct toward one another: ya ekaḥ avarṇaḥ—He who is One, and who is beyond all distinctions of caste and colour—sa no buddhyā śubhayā saṃyunaktu—may He unite us, one with another, through goodly wisdom.

1330 (Bengali calendar)

HINDU-MUSLIM

Written to Sri Kalidas Nag

Santiniketan

To the Beloved

A heavy storm has broken. And so my mind has slipped free of the century-bound fences of human history and gone racing away. Today, in vein after vein, the age-old pulse of memory—borne down through epoch after epoch, the revelry of wind and water upon the stage of the sky—has struck within me the trembling grace-notes of the Megh-Mallar. Where my sense of duty has drifted off to, I cannot say; of late I have gone and joined that ranked company standing before me—the sal, the tal, the mahua, the chhatim trees. In the kingdom of life theirs is an ancient, well-established lineage; they carry forward, entire and unbroken, the inheritance of some primordial rain-cloud. They are not modern as men are modern, and for that very reason they are eternally young. Among the human race it is only the poets who have not, in the wastefulness of civilization, blown away their own primeval inheritance. That is why the nobility of grass and creeper does not scorn the poets as mere men. This is also why, year after year, the rains stir me into such restlessness, calling me away from every bond of duty into the playground of life—so that the child who dwells within our inmost being, who is our most ancient ancestor, comes and seizes possession of my workshop. Ever since the rains fell, I have been sitting here contending with the wind, with the rain, with the trees and plants; I have set aside my work to make songs—and in this pursuit I have become, of all men, the least of men—my mind trembles like grass, flickers like a leaf. It was on some such occasion that Kalidasa said: "*Meghāloke bhavati sukhino'pyanyathāvṛtti chetaḥ*"—even the heart of the happy man turns to other ways at the sight of clouds. That "other way" lies outside the circle of ordinary human faculty. It carries us back to that distant age when life's play was in full swing, when the schooling of the mind had not yet begun—to that time when, where the thick pillars of the schoolhouse now stand, butterflies once flitted from flower to flower of grass. Be that as it may, in this season the noon lies shadowed under thick clouds, from field to field the storm-wind goes blowing its horn, and

small restless streams of water shimmer on every side like the causeless laughter of schoolgirls let loose from their lessons. Today is the seventh of Ashadh, the dark eleventh lunar day; today Ambubachi has begun. The name has proved apt—all of nature today has grown eloquent in the language of water. Under the canopy of thick-clouded sky, a festival of song and verse for Ambubachi has convened—the choir of grass-crickets has received its invitation, the frogs too have been summoned, and joining them now is the chorus of croaking toads. Do not imagine that no seat has been reserved for me at this gathering. I am not one to fall silent, unanswering, before the call of the clouds. Day after day, like cloud upon cloud, my own songs too have gone rolling on; they carry no weight, no purpose—the cloud is but "a chance meeting of smoke, light, water, and wind," and my song is fashioned, just so, from the most aimless of materials. It was exactly when, sitting by my window, I had begun humming this song—

Today the tune of the young cloud
has touched my mind;
all my thoughts have grown restless
without cause—

—it was exactly then that your question arrived from across the sea: what is the solution to the Hindu-Muslim problem in India? Suddenly I remembered that I have work in the world of men—that it will not do merely to answer the call of the clouds with Megh-Mallar; I must also turn my thoughts to those deep, cloud-voiced questions that echo through the history of mankind. And so I have had to leave the festival of Ambubachi and step outside.

There are two religious communities in the world whose opposition to every other creed is exceedingly severe—these are Christianity and Islam. They are not content merely to practise their own faith; they are bent upon overpowering every other. For this reason there is no way of coming together with them except by embracing their faith. As for the followers of Christianity, there is one point in their favour: they are the vehicles of the modern age; their minds are not bound within the depths of the medieval. Religious doctrine does not encompass the whole of their life in one unbroken sweep. For this reason they do not entirely bar the followers of other faiths by the fence of religion. "European" and "Christian" are not

synonymous terms. There is no inherent contradiction in the phrase "European Buddhist" or "European Muslim." But where a people takes its very name from a religion, that religious creed becomes its primary identity. "Muslim Buddhist" or "Muslim Christian" is a phrase self-evidently impossible. On the other hand, the Hindu people too, in one sense, resemble the Muslims: that is, they too are wholly enclosed within the ramparts of religion. The outward difference is this—that hostility to other faiths is not, for the Hindu, an active principle; toward all non-Hindu religions their attitude is one of passive exclusion and avoidance. Since the Hindu's religion is chiefly a matter of birth and of ritual observance, its fence is even more unyielding. One can, by embracing Islam, come to mingle with Muslims on equal terms; that path is exceedingly narrow for the Hindu. In matters of food and daily custom, the Muslim does not, through prohibition, reject other communities; the Hindu, even there, is wary. Thus, on the occasion of the Khilafat movement, the Muslim drew the Hindu as close to himself, in his own mosque and elsewhere, as he could—but the Hindu could not draw the Muslim nearly so close. Custom is the bridge between man and man, and it is precisely there that the Hindu has, at every step, raised his own fence. When I first became engaged in the management of my zamindari, I observed that in order to seat a Muslim tenant in the office, a corner of the carpet would be turned back, and he would be given a place there. There is no obstacle to the union of man with man more terrible than this—that the followers of another custom should be regarded as unclean. Such is India's misfortune, that here, though the Hindu and the Muslim have become one people, in matters of doctrine the Hindu's barrier is not so formidable, but in matters of custom it is formidable indeed; for the Muslim, the barrier of custom is not so formidable, but in matters of doctrine it is very formidable. Where the door stands open on one side, on the other it remains shut. How, then, shall these two ever meet?

There was once a time when India saw a free intermingling and confluence of many peoples—Greeks, Persians, Scythians. But remember, that was in the age prior to the "Hindu" age. The Hindu age is an age of reaction—an age in which the Brahmanical religion was, with deliberate effort, firmly consolidated and fixed. An impregnable rampart of custom was raised to render it well-nigh unapproachable. One thing was forgotten: that if you try to bind any living thing utterly hand and foot, you end by killing it. Be that as it may, the essential fact is this: at a particular

period, after the Buddhist age, when the Rajputs and others drew foreign peoples into their fold, it was with the deliberate purpose of guarding themselves entirely against alien contact and influence that the people of India built up the modern form of Hinduism, quite openly, as a kind of fence—its very nature is denial and rejection. Nowhere else in the world has such an ingeniously wrought barrier against every form of union been created. Nor is this barrier confined to Hindu and Muslim alone. We too—people like you and me who wish to preserve freedom in matters of custom—we too stand apart, hedged about with obstacles. The problem, then, is clear; but where lies the solution? In a change of mind, in a change of age. Just as Europe, through the pursuit of truth and the expansion of knowledge, made its way out of the medieval and arrived at the modern age, so too must the Hindu, and the Muslim as well, journey beyond the circle of their present confinement. If religion is built like a tomb, and within it the entire people is buried, in every respect, in the past, then there is no way of walking the path of progress, no way of any one people meeting with any other. Unless we can dissolve the obstruction that lies within our mental nature, we shall never attain freedom of any kind. Through education, through discipline, that root must be transformed—that superstition which is more cage than wing must be cast off—and only then can our welfare come to pass. The union of Hindu and Muslim awaits a change of age. But there is no cause for fear on hearing this; for in other lands men have, through disciplined effort, brought about a change of age, emerging from the age of the chrysalis into the age of outspread wings. We too shall break free of our mental confinement; and if we do not—*nānyaḥ panthā vidyate ayanāya*—there is no other path to salvation.

7th Ashadh, 1329

WOMAN

In the creation of humankind, woman is the elder. In the new society, woman's power might be called the Primal Power. This is that very power which, in the realm of the living, bears life and nurtures life.

Many ages passed in the rough, patient labour of moulding and shaping the earth, making it fit for habitation by living creatures. Before that labour was even half finished, Nature began the creation of living beings, and pain came into the world.

That primal pain of life's endeavour, Nature bestowed upon the blood of woman, upon the heart of woman. She wove, thread by thread, through the tissue of woman's body and mind, the whole net of instincts needed for the nurture of life. This instinct has naturally found its place, deep and ample, in the realm of the heart rather than the intellect. This is that very instinct in woman which weaves the web of bonds—to hold fast both herself and others—through love, through tenderness, through patient compassion. This is the primal binding-cord that builds and holds together the human household—that very household which is the foundation-stone of every society, every civilization. Without this foundational binding of the household, mankind would have scattered like formless vapour, unable, in any gathered or coherent way, to establish a centre of union anywhere. This first task of binding society together belongs to women.

All of Nature's process of creation is deeply hidden, its self-impulsion unhesitating. That easy self-propulsion of the primal life-force lies within woman's nature. For this reason mankind has given to woman's nature the epithet of the mysterious. That is why the sudden welling-up of feeling one often observes in a woman's life lies beyond the reach of argument—it is not like a reservoir dug according to need, by careful design, but like a spring whose cause lies hidden in its own causeless mystery.

The mystery of love, the mystery of tenderness, is exceedingly ancient and impenetrable. It does not wait upon argument to prove its own worth. Wherever its problem lies, there it demands swift solution. And so, no sooner does woman enter the household than she descends, from wherever it may be, already the mistress of the house; no sooner does the child come into her lap than she is, instantly, the mother, altogether ready. In the realm of living creatures, mature reason has come much later. It finds its own place only through search, through struggle. Its time is spent in resolving doubt. It is through hard conflict with this very doubt that it gains strength and success. In the rise and fall of this wave of doubt, century after century has rolled by; terrible errors have accumulated, again and again casting the history of mankind into disorder. Man's creation sinks into destruction, and he must build anew the foundation of his achievement. Through trial and error, man's labour does nothing but change its outward form. If, in this ceaseless cycle of experience, he presses forward, he survives; if he finds no occasion to correct his errors, then the crack in the vessel of life widens and widens

until it draws him into the jaws of extinction. From the very dawn of the civilization man has built, this making and breaking has gone on. Meanwhile, within woman—as beloved, as mother—Nature's own emissary has stood steadily rooted, carrying on her own work. And though, in the clash of violent passions, she has, now and again, set fire to the very field of her own household—that violent onrush seems like some destructive sport of universal Nature itself, like a storm, like a forest-fire—sudden, self-consuming.

Man, in his own world, is again and again a fresh newcomer. Up to this day, how many times has he built up his own code of law! Providence did not lay out for him the path of his life; in country after country, in age after age, he has had to make his own path. The path of one age has become the pitfall of another; his history has been overturned, has vanished into oblivion.

Through all the upheavals of ever-renewing civilizations, the main current of woman's life has flowed along one broad path. The wealth of heart that Nature gave her has never been left to be tested and refined by the restlessly curious hand of intellect in ever-new endeavours. Woman is the elder.

Man is driven from door to door, from office to office, in search of employment. Most men, for the sake of livelihood, are compelled to accept work toward which their own inclination, their own natural capacity, gives no easy consent. Through hard labour he must be schooled in all manner of tasks—and even so, nine men out of twelve fail to achieve due success in them. But the work that falls to women as wife and as mother is their own true work, native to their nature.

Overcoming manifold obstacles, subduing hostile circumstance by force of will, man achieves greatness. But the number of men who attain such extraordinary success is small. Women, however, who through the flowing sap of the heart have made their households flourish and fruitful, may be seen almost in every home. From Nature they have received an unschooled skill; the wealth of sweetness comes to them with ease. The woman whose nature, by ill fortune, lacks this natural savour, achieves no true success in the field of the household, by any schooling, by any artificial means.

That which is gained without effort carries its own peril. One cause of that peril is that it becomes covetable to others. A land naturally rich in resources tempts the strong to seize and hold it for their own exclusive need. It is easy for a barren land

to remain free. When a bird has beautiful wings and a sweet voice, man feels pride in imprisoning it in a cage; he forgets that its beauty belongs to the whole forest—so utterly do the covetous forget this. The tenderness and skill in service that belong to woman's heart, man has for ages kept fenced about within the strict watch of his own personal possession. Since women themselves have, by their very nature, a disposition to accept restraint, this has everywhere become so much the easier.

In truth, the work of sustaining life is inherently personal. It does not fall within the category of the impersonal; and for that reason its joy is not the joy of any grand universal principle. Even the skill of women, though it carries within it the sap of feeling, has not yet, even today, achieved sufficient fulfilment in the work of creation.

Her intellect, her customs, her conduct, have for many ages been shaped by fixed limitation. Her education, her beliefs, have not had full opportunity to be tested against the vaster experience of the outer world. For this reason she has, without discrimination, offered to every false deity the tribute of groundless fear and unworthy devotion. If we look across the whole country, we shall see how utterly ruinous is this fever of infatuation, how well-nigh impossible it makes any advance along the difficult path of progress, burdened with such an immense weight. It is not that there is any shortage, in this country, of men muddled in mind and dull in wit; they have been shaped, from childhood, by the hands of women, and it is they who are the most tyrannical toward women. These centres of muddled minds that are visibly multiplying on every side across the country depend, in the main, upon the undiscerning judgment of women. In this way the prison-house of the mind is spreading throughout the land, and every day its foundation grows firmer.

Meanwhile, in almost every country of the world, women are passing beyond the narrow circle of their own personal household. In modern Asia too we see the signs of this. Its chief cause is that everywhere the age of the breaking of boundaries has arrived. The countries that once remained wholly confined within their own geographic and political ramparts can no longer be so tightly enclosed by those old fences—they have become mutually visible, mutually exposed, to one another. Naturally the field of experience has widened; the horizon, once fixed and familiar, has receded beyond the old bounds. In collision with the outer world, the

conditions of life are shifting; with each new necessity, change in custom and practice has become inevitable.

In our childhood, the age of the palanquin prevailed for women who needed to travel beyond the household. In respectable homes, the palanquin would be curtained round. Among the first girls admitted to Bethune School, foremost was my elder sister. She used to go to school in an open palanquin, without curtains, and this gave some pain to the standards of that day's respectable families. In that age of the veil, wearing a chemise was considered a mark of shamelessness. It was no easy matter to travel by rail while preserving the accepted rules of propriety.

Today that age of the curtained palanquin has receded far into the distance. It did not depart slowly; it departed swiftly. This change has come about of itself, along with the outer changes—no one has had to call a meeting to discuss it. The age of marriage for girls has, before our eyes, steadily advanced, and that too has come about easily. If, by natural cause, the volume of water in a river increases, the boundary of its banks naturally recedes. In the life of women today, from every direction, the boundary of the shore is receding of itself. The river is rising to become a great river.

This outward change in custom does not remain confined to the outer world alone. Its work proceeds within the inner nature as well. The disposition of mind suited to a confined household cannot, of course, remain motionless within the freer, wider world. Standing, of itself, upon the vast stage of life, the mind naturally begins to think and to judge on a larger scale. The work of testing former beliefs begins of its own accord. In this condition it may make many kinds of errors, but through repeated collision with obstacles it must, in the end, pass beyond error. If the mind clings to the old habit of judging things within a narrow compass, it will bring, at every step, disharmony with its surroundings. There is sorrow in this change of habit, and there is danger too; but out of that fear the current of the modern age cannot be turned backward.

When the life of women was confined within the small compass of the household, the natural instincts of the feminine mind sufficed easily for their work. For this reason there was no particular need for their education—and it was for just this reason that, in its day, the education of women met with such opposition and such ridicule. In those days men gave free indulgence, in the case of women, to precisely

those beliefs which they themselves disregarded, which they themselves did not believe, which practices they themselves did not observe. At the root of this lay that mentality which belongs to autocratic rulers everywhere. They know that in an atmosphere of ignorant, blind superstition, the opportunity for arbitrary rule is created; this state of infatuation is favourable ground on which to remain content of heart even while sacrificing another's rightful human claims. This attitude still persists in the minds of many men in our country. But in the struggle against time, they must, in the end, accept defeat.

Under the influence of time, this—that the field of women's life has of itself been steadily expanding, this—that women have of themselves come to enter the world of free society—has made it altogether necessary for them, for the sake of self-protection and self-respect, to cultivate the intellect, to cultivate learning. And so, before our eyes, this obstacle has been steadily receding. Today the shame of illiteracy is, for respectable women, the greatest shame of all—greater than the shame that once attached, in earlier days, to women's use of umbrellas and shoes; the disgrace of ineptitude in the pounding and husking of rice, in such matters, is nothing at all beside it. That is to say, the notion that women's worth is priced by the market-rate of the household no longer holds entirely even in today's marriage-market. Learning whose value is universal, which goes beyond the exclusive demand of immediate need, is today sought after, to a considerable extent, as a means of testing the worthiness of a prospective bride.

Through this very process, the mind of the modern woman of our country is, day by day, passing beyond the society of the household into the society of the world.

In the first age, one day the earth lay veiled in the mist of its own hot breath, and could not even perceive its own place among the vast constellations of the sky. At last, one day, it found a path by which the sun's rays entered within. In that very liberation began the age of the earth's glory. Just so, one day, a thick mist of moist tenderness of heart kept the minds of our women confined within an intimate, narrow household. Today, piercing that veil, there is entering that flood of light which belongs to the open sky, which belongs to all worlds. Though the many-days-old web of accumulated custom in which their minds lay bound has not yet been wholly cut away, still, within it, much has already been rent asunder. How much, only those of our own ancient generation truly know.

Today, everywhere in the world, women have crossed the threshold of the household and come to stand in the open courtyard of the world. Now they must accept the responsibility of this vast household; otherwise theirs will be the shame, theirs the failure of fulfilment.

It seems to me that a new age has come upon the world. For an exceedingly long time, the administration of human civilization lay in the hands of men. It was man who built the state, the economy, the whole apparatus of social governance belonging to this civilization. Women remained behind him, unrevealed, in the shadow, doing only the work of the household. This civilization has been one-sided. In it there has occurred a great want of one particular kind of wealth in the human heart—that wealth lay locked away, like a miser's coin, in the treasury of woman's heart. Today the door of that treasury has opened.

In the manless earth of the youthful age, the forest that spread wide upon the layer of mud went on, for ages beyond count, day after day, storing up the vigour of the sun within the marrow of its trees. Those forests sank deep into the earth and lay transformed, hidden for age upon age. The day that gate of the underworld was thrown open, man suddenly won for his own use, in the shape of mineral coal, the sun's vigour left unused for hundreds of years; and at once, with new strength, the world-conquering modern age came into view.

Just as this once came to pass through the outer wealth of civilization, so now a particular mine of inner wealth has revealed its own hoarded store to the outer world. The women of the household are, day by day, revealing themselves as women of the world. On this occasion, this—that a new element of feeling has joined the creative heart of mankind—has brought yet another fire to civilization. Today its working proceeds, visibly and invisibly. In the civilization built by man alone, the lack of balance that so often brings signs of catastrophe may now, it is hoped, gradually move toward equilibrium. A tremendous earthquake is striking again and again at the foundation of the old civilization. The causes of calamity in this civilization have been accumulating for a long time, and so no one shall be able to halt the work of its breaking. One thing alone offers great assurance: that at this hour of cataclysm, women have come forward to stand at the work of building a new civilization—and they are making ready, everywhere in the world. Not merely has the veil slipped from their faces—the veil of the mind, behind which they had

lain hidden from most of the world, is slipping too. The human society into which they were born has today become, on every side, in every division, wholly visible before their gaze. Now it will no longer suit them to play with the puppets fashioned in the workshop of blind superstition. Their natural life-sustaining intelligence will engage itself, with steady mind and hand, in the protection not merely of the people of the household but of all people.

From the very beginning man has built the bricks of his fortress of civilization out of the ceaseless blood of human sacrifice—he has ruthlessly slain individuals, again and again, merely to establish some general principle; the wealth of the rich has arisen from the draining of the labourer's life; the fire of the mighty's glory has been kindled by the offered blood of countless weak; the chariot of the interest of the state has been driven forward with subject peoples bound to it by rope. This civilization is driven by power; in it there is little room for compassion. Making sport of the hunt, this civilization has gone on slaughtering countless helpless, defenceless creatures; in this civilization, man has been made, in the world of living things, the most merciless of all, both toward his fellow man and toward other creatures. The deer does not fear or dread the tiger, but throughout the earth of this civilization, man trembles in fear of man. It is precisely in such an unnatural condition that a civilization begins to give birth, of itself, to its own destroying weapon. That has now begun. At the same time, frightened humanity is engaged in trying to build a machine of peace—but the peace of machines will be of no use to those in whose hearts there lies no means to peace. A civilization that destroys the individual cannot endure.

Let us hope for a new plan for the creation of civilization. If this hope takes shape, then there is no doubt that in this new creation the work of women will be engaged to its full measure. If this call of the new age has reached the minds of our women, then may their conservative minds not clasp to their bosom, with single-minded attachment, the unwholesome rubbish accumulated through so many ages. May they set free the heart, may they brighten the intellect, may they apply steadfastness to the discipline of knowledge. Let them remember: blind, indiscriminate conservatism is the enemy of creativity. The age of new creation lies ahead. To gain the right to that age, the mind freed from delusion must be made, in every respect, worthy of reverence; one must draw oneself upward, away from the downward pull of the inertia of ignorance and every kind of imaginary and real

fear. The question of gaining the fruit will come later—indeed, it may not come at all—but the question of gaining the worthiness comes first, before all else.

1343

THE SACRIFICE OF WORK

Summary of an address delivered at the first meeting of the Hitasadhan-Mandali

When a child is born, its birth-ceremony must be performed; but in the case of any auspicious undertaking of man, we do not observe this rule—we hold our celebration merely upon the stirring of hope, before the thing itself is even born. In today's programme it is written that this assembly has been convened at the initiative of the Hitasadhan-Mandali; but in truth no such Mandali has yet been formed—today's assembly has come bearing only the invitation of hope. Argument, reasoning, deliberation—all these must proceed along their own course; but at the outset of a journey, provisions must be gathered, and hope is precisely that provision.

For a long time we have lived steeped in despair. The history of the good fortune of other lands lies open before us. We know full well how they have advanced toward progress. But from this no hope has sprung up in our minds; rather, we have learned only this—that because they are strong, they are strong, and because we are weak, we are weak, and there is no shifting this. This belief, entering into the very marrow of our bones, has rendered us listless and unfit for work. That we remain indifferent even while the field of work throughout the land lies wide open—this is not because we lack natural love of country. Our hearts have overflowed with sorrow—yet if we make no effort at remedy, the sole reason is that we have no hope in our hearts.

It is well that today we have seen set out before us a list of the work that lies ahead of us. It would be well, too, to learn who among the people of this land are its servants, and how they have responded. But the thing best understood of all is this: that the hope hidden in the heart of the whole country is today restless to take outward form. Ahead lies a difficult road. Whether this new endeavour possesses the provisions and the means to overcome the obstacles of that road, I do not know. But within my heart, hope speaks—no, we shall not die, we shall live, and

we shall save others. This hope is in no way capable of dying; it is rooted in the very core of life. Though I see signs enough of dying—the Hindu population dwindling in numbers, the branches of misery and misfortune spreading wider—still, within, hope says: we shall live, we must live, we shall by no means die.

The beginning of life is always exceedingly frail. Things without life can, in a single moment, be assembled to order—brick and wood gathered and openly built up—but no such command holds sway over life. Life reveals itself first, always, in its extreme feebleness—it appears no larger than an atom, though within that very atom lies hidden the being of eternity. Therefore it is not worth speaking of how small our preparations are today, how few the people, how little the enthusiasm among them; for the outward preparation is small, but the inward hope is great. How many times have we made such arrangements for meetings and assemblies, and how many times have we failed—this too is not worth discussing; that such efforts have appeared again and again, in various forms, itself means that our hope refuses to die, and it means, too, that there is life in it. It is never really true, though it may seem so on the surface, that our good intentions die every day; the truth is that good intention has never died, and can never, in any age, die. One king dies after another, but the kingship itself never dies.

The list of duties that Ramanandababu has set before us is vast. How very slight our capacity is, we know full well. If we wish to reckon by outward calculation, there is no ground for confidence at all. But the reckless joy of life sweeps away every kind of despondency. That very joy is strength—we must place our trust in that joyous strength within ourselves. We need sovereignty over ourselves. It is only because we do not honour the king who dwells within us that he cannot rule his kingdom. Go to him with your tribute; say: command me, I will give my life to your work, and by giving life I shall receive life. Today is the day appointed for the revealing of that loyalty to ourselves.

The great ones of the earth have, through the message of their lives, said only this: do not think the mountain-vast obstacle without to be great; if there is even an atom's measure of power within, place your faith in it. All the power of the universe is mine, but until my own inward power awakens, no union occurs between power and power. In this world, power alone finds power. Unless we can make our own that supreme power which, throughout the whole of creation, throughout the

whole of history, has manifested itself in myriad forms and brought itself to fulfilment—unless we can touch, in clear and manifest form, that one power who dwells as a single power throughout the universe—despair does not lift, fear does not depart. Know this: the power of the universe is my own power. It is only by opening these two small eyes that we are able to receive the flooding stream of light poured forth from world to world; just so, the moment we unveil our own small power, we shall behold, within ourselves, that same supreme power that dwells within all mankind.

Up to now we have gone on through a series of futile attempts. I do not say that as effort it has borne no fruit at all. In truth, effortless success weakens a man and diminishes the worth of the fruit itself. That our country goes groping about, that it goes on shouting itself hoarse in appeal, unable to arrive and stand at its destined goal—for this I shall not complain. It is through this very repeated failure that we must discover where our true weakness lies. We have come to see this: that wherever we have gone to imitate others, it is exactly there that we have failed. The lands that stand vast before us as examples—we have seen the outward form of their achievement, but we have not seen the source of that achievement. And so we merely discuss in our minds: other countries carry on such-and-such trade in this manner; by such arrangements such-and-such an institution is built; in the universities of other lands there is so much money, so many buildings, such rules and methods—we lack all this—and it is for this very reason that we are dying. We believe in Aladdin's lamp; we imagine that if, by some means, we could bodily transport the arrangements and resources of other lands here, we too should at once become fortunate. But we do not know what terrible burden Aladdin's lamp might, by bringing whole objects at a stroke, load upon our shoulders—who then would bear its weight? We have seen with our outward eyes the form of the work of other lands, but we have not seen its master—for we have not been able to unite with the power of mastery within ourselves. Borrowing the burdens of work from others and bringing them here can only end in danger and failure; only when we can awaken the master within ourselves will the tools of work become genuine, the form of work become real, and its fruit unfailing.

We have seen a great deal of this business of Aladdin's lamp here in our own country, and for that very reason we do not trust whatever, in this land, appears great from the very outset. Let us not give room in our minds to the temptation of

magnifying, in the twinkling of an eye, mere outward shape into something as vast as the magician's tree. Truth is not ashamed to appear small, in the very glory of its own truthfulness. If one wishes to assume a great magnitude, the peril lies in having, perhaps, to borrow that magnitude from falsehood. If, in the eagerness to dazzle men's eyes, one must from the very outset make a compact with falsehood, then however great its growth within a single night, within three nights it will be utterly destroyed. Let us not forget this, before the drums and cymbals are sounded, at the very moment of gathering wood and straw. He who granted the shelter of religion to one-half of the world was himself born, sheltered by nothing, into the lap of destitution, in a stable. However great and however successful a thing may prove in this world, we do not know in how small a place it was born, in what unknown moment it had its beginning—often it must die before it can reveal its own power. This I believe: that it is the poor man who shall conquer poverty—that very hero has been born upon a tattered rag, quite outside the advertisements of the newspapers. Into the dark corner of whatever lying-in chamber he was born we cannot enter to perceive him directly, but the sound of the conch-shell from that place has already set the outer air vibrating. We did not see him with our eyes, but our joy is this—that he has come into being. Our joy is this—that we are privileged to serve him.

We stand with folded hands, waiting; we say—you have come. You, long awaited, the treasure of much sorrow, you have descended into India as the grace of Providence.

The speaker before me has said that nowadays in Europe the talk has arisen that the improvement of mankind will come about not through love but by grinding humanity to excellence in the mill of scientific law. That is to say, as if man could simply be manufactured by burning and beating, cutting and trimming, joining and welding. It is for this very reason that the life of man has grown so afflicted. There can be no tyranny greater than establishing the machine over life itself. Its evidence we can see in the present war. The machine-demon of this iron age has driven the gods into exile from heaven, but heaven must be won back once more. Unless Shiva's third eye discharges its fire, how shall that blessed land come to be, which shall rescue heaven from the clutches of the demon?

But in our own country we are dying from exactly the opposite direction—we are not dying from trying suddenly to strengthen the dominion of Satan; we are dying of apathy, we are dying of decrepitude. We have lost that natural and powerful attraction of life for life; we do not feel even our next-door neighbour as our own kin; our joy and our cooperation are confined chiefly within our own family circle, and beyond that boundary our consciousness grows dim. This is exactly why, in our country, there is sorrow, death, ignorance, poverty. And so this time we call upon youth. Our appeal is at the door of the youth of this land—save it, save your country. Our apathy is of many days, of many ages; our life-force lies covered over—set it free! Who shall do this? The youth of the land—that youth who can trust in the new, who can feel life ever anew.

In decrepitude, individuality tends toward dissolution into the mass. For this reason, decrepitude cannot bear the flowering of individuality anywhere. Individuality means manifestation. When that vast unmanifest which surrounds us on every side finds expression by taking shelter in a single centre, that is individuality. The activity of the vast, concentrated within the narrow, is individuality. How shall our national individuality—that is, the manifestation of universal Man within our own people—come to awaken? The gods and demons had to churn the ocean before the nectar, which lay scattered through all things, could awaken. Only through the relentless churning-rod of work shall we gain, in manifest form, that power which lies scattered within us all; only then shall our national individuality become immortal, and our thought, our word, and our deed find sure and steady direction. What in English is called sentimentalism—that weak and vague excess of feeling—has for so long worn away our life. But the one way to be rescued from the grip of this excess of feeling is to engage in work. Only by engaging in work shall we be saved from the assault of hair-splitting argument and from the feebleness of mere erudition.

There can be no doubt that an eager longing for union in the field of work has awakened within the country. Today a mighty power has come into this land in the guise of a child. We feel it within us. If we do not feel it, then we have been born in vain in this land, born in vain in this age. We have been born in this country at just such a time when we shall behold the beginning of a new creation. In that first dawn of this country's new history, before the sky has yet been rent by the clamour of birds, we have awakened. But already the streak of dawn has appeared in the

eastern sky—there is no fear, we have no fear. As is a mother's joy in beholding her newborn son, such is our good fortune, such is our joy today. When the light of Providence came as a guest to this land, we opened our eyes. In this Brahma-muhurta, at this beginning of creation, therefore, I bow before Him who has summoned us to this land—not to enjoy, but to renounce. Today the wealthy nations of the earth are enjoying their riches, but He has given us birth upon a tattered rag—He has laid upon us the burden of driving away sorrow and poverty. He has said: I have sent you amid want, I have sent you amid ignorance, I have sent you amid disease—you are all my heroic sons. Because we are poor, we must, with utter and entire acceptance, own our true power. That we stand here at the fearsome gate of such a vast accumulation of ignorance, disease, sorrow, poverty, and blind superstition—this shows we are not small. We are great—this truth must surely be revealed; else why should this crisis confront us? Remembering this, I bow to Him who has given us sorrow, I bow to Him who has given us insult, I bow to Him who has given us poverty.

Phalgun, 1321

THE SPINNING WHEEL

Acharya Prafulla Chandra has branded me in the printed page, accusing me of failing to show enthusiasm for the working of the spinning wheel. But since even in dealing out punishment he cannot be entirely without mercy toward me, Acharya Brajendranath Seal too has been made to share, alongside me, in this alchemy of disgrace.

This has relieved my distress; and besides, it has furnished fresh proof of an exceedingly old truth—that some people's opinions agree with some, and with others they do not agree at all. That is to say, it was never Providence's design that all mankind should build hives of a single uniform pattern, like bees. But the architects of society sometimes do desire exactly that. In their eagerness to make their task easy, they do not hesitate to reduce man to mere clay. Through the mincing-machine they run the human plant and produce, in their thousands, slender matchsticks all cut to precisely the same measure. When wild produce is thus turned into manufactured goods, the forest deities keep silent; but when human intelligence is, for the sake of convenience, reduced to the intelligence of

the bee, there is danger, on the day of reckoning at Narayana's court, of being declared bankrupt and fined. In my boyhood, when I used to go to the Jagannath ghat for boat trips, various boatmen would seize my hand and pull me this way and that. But when a preference for any one in particular was shown, no one felt bound by any authority to object. For there were many boats, many passengers, and many destinations too. But if the country lay under such a dream of Tarakeshwar's shrine that only one single boat alone were held sacred for salvation, then who could restrain the forceful crowding of his powerful boatmen? On this side, human character would stand weeping at the ghat, crying: O boatman, though our destination be one, the ghats are many—some to the north, some to the south.

The scriptures say that the power of God is manifold. Hence in the work of creation the five elements combine to labour together. In death the manifold elements scatter and run their separate ways; in the great dissolution all becomes one. God has given man that same manifold power—hence the great wealth of human civilization. Providence wishes that within human society this manifold should be woven together, thread by thread, into the unity of oneness; rulers greedy for a particular result wish, instead, to crush that manifold flat, to knead it into the uniformity of sameness. Hence the world is full of so many single-trade labourers, so many uniformed soldiers, so many puppets of the machine bound by a single rope. Wherever the manhood in man has not been utterly frozen and extinguished, there this rebellion against the compressed uniformity of the steamroller is surely stirring. If anywhere no sign of that rebellion is to be found, if we see that there, out of dread of a mighty overseer or in obedience to a guru's discipline, men can effortlessly be kept motionless and quiescent, like the meekest of the meek, all pressed within a single mould of dust, then we may know that a day of mourning has come for that land of "sightless, nerveless, frozen carcass."

In our country, for a long time, the evil star of uniformity has held sway. This very religion of death has, in our land, assigned to every person of every caste one particular allotted task. And along with it, this mantra whispered in the ear: that at the very first court of creation, their forefather sat down and bound them, and their posterity forever, to a single fixed wage. Hence, to resign from that task is itself unrighteousness. This method may be highly convenient for running some small

trade in imitation of an ant-colony, but it is a great obstacle to becoming a man. The man who is master, who creates, loses his mind in this; the man who is slave, who labours for wages, has only the dexterity of his body perfected. This is why, for ages, India has done nothing but repeat the past. And it is by turning, over and over, the millstone of that repetition that India has come to feel such deep distaste for existence itself. And so, terrified by the notion of endless rebirth through cycles of ages, she has taken to contemplating the suppression of all mental activity, so as to kill off all action and the very root of action. This terror of repetition she has seen mirrored in the daily grinding round of her own habit-bound, lifeless labour.

The loss is not merely this: those who thus turned into machines also lost their vitality; they retained no strength to ward off any calamity. Age after age the clever have deceived them, the guru has beguiled them, the powerful have boxed their ears. They cannot even imagine any alternative to this, for they know: Providence has fixed them thus; at the dawn of creation the four-faced one wound up the key of their wheel, and that winding shall not run down till the very end of creation. They have been set afloat upon the stream of time in the raft of one monotonous life-and-death of labour. But whatever the eternal scriptures may say, this stands utterly apart from that very jest which Brahma played with man at the dawn of creation. He did not fit, within the shell of man, a rapidly whirling motor-wheel; instead He left there something exceedingly restless called mind. Unless that troublesome thing can be got rid of, it is well-nigh impossible to turn man into a machine. Whether through fear of this world or the next, through greed, or through the spell of delusion, only after half-killing this mind have the masters been able to extract, from one group endlessly, hand-woven cloth, and from another endlessly, oil from the mustard-mill; one group forever supplying their masters' cooking-pots, another forever forging ploughshares. And then, if ever it becomes necessary to engage their minds in some great work worthy of humanity, they say: Mind? What calamity is that! Why not simply command us? We shall chant the mantra.

To make a hedge by planting trees, one must trim every tree down equally short. In just such a way, this trimmed field of the mind has, age after age, forced down the moral and spiritual nature of man to one uniform height. And yet, even so, if today, in this age of disobedience, here and there a branch or two shows signs of rebellious growth, breaking past the bounds of harmonious symmetry, and if every mind today does not follow, in humble unison, a single doctrine of instruction,

murmuring softly like the chirping of crickets in the dark night, let no one therefore be alarmed or vexed; for only then will the hope for self-rule (swaraj) be genuine.

For this very reason I feel no shame in confessing (though I well know the fear of public opinion is considerable) that up to now my mind has never, from within, swayed in sympathy with the spinning-wheel movement. Many will consider this my impertinence, and will be especially angered—for when many fish are caught in the net, the one that slips free must be abused, or the heart finds no relief. Nonetheless I hope there are many others whose nature agrees with mine. It is difficult to single all of them out; for not everyone's hand moves easily with the spinning-wheel, though their mouths, indeed, move with great fluency.

Whatever society places the sphere of action above the sphere of knowledge—there, in every matter, man suffers defeat.

Beginning with the Buddha down through the saints and sages of India's middle ages, whoever has come into the world bearing some great message has been, without exception, opposed to unthinking, mechanical, outward ritual. They spoke, piercing through every barrier, directly to the inmost soul of man. They did not speak, like the miser, like the calculating man of worldly prudence, saying: first the outward, then the inward; first food and clothing, then the fulfilment of the power of the soul. They made a great claim upon man, and by that very claim they paid him great honour; and it was by virtue of that great honour that his inherent, boundless wealth was manifested in myriad forms, enriching society through literature, through music, through every art. They gave to man light, they gave him awakening; that is, they gave him the realization of his own soul—and in that alone all gifts are made complete.

If today, throughout the length and breadth of the land, poverty has come upon us, then we must know that its root lies within us. If, choosing out some single outward symptom of that inward misfortune, the whole country together seizes upon one single external remedy for it, Saturn's affliction will not be appeased.

If man were an inert object like stone, his form could be changed by hammer-blows from without; but when destitution shows itself outwardly in the form of man,

attention must be turned toward the life-force within—if we go on wielding the hammer, the blow will fall precisely upon that vital force.

The day the shock of the Mughal-Pathan invasion struck, the loosely-joined, patchwork edifices of the small Hindu kingdoms cracked and crumbled to pieces on every side. There was no lack of thread in the country then, but that thread could not weave and bind together, and so stop the breach. There was then no fundamental economic conflict with the king, for his throne stood upon the very soil of the land. Wherever there was a tree, its ripe fruit fell right there beneath it. Today, in our country, the king is not one or two persons; it is nothing less than a flood of kingship that has washed the very soil of India and carried its harvest floating away across the sea. The land thereby loses both its crop and its fertility. That we have failed to check this present onslaught is not because we lack sufficient thread; it is because we lack unity, we lack life.

Some say that in the Mughal-Pathan era we were powerless indeed, but at least we had food and clothing. When the current of a river is low, one can still, by damming it here and there, hold back small pools of water for the day's needs close at hand. But on our side, the dam itself has broken. That day is gone, and will never return, when we could sever our dealings with the outer world and remain hidden away. Besides, such isolation is itself the greatest poverty of all. In such circumstances, if we cannot awaken within ourselves the strength of mind fit for dealing with the world, then the harvest will be reaped by others, and only the husk will fall to our share. In the nursery rhymes of Bengal, children are lured with the promise that by turning their hands round and round they may win a sweet; but that mere turning of the hands, round and round, will fill the void of stillness in the mind, banish poverty, and win us self-rule—such a claim cannot be made to grown men. If we wish to drive away outward poverty, we must awaken the power of the inner self—in intellect, in knowledge, in that fellow-feeling which fosters cooperation.

The argument will arise: does not work, too, stir the mind from without? It does indeed, provided that within the very work itself there lies some suggestion of thought directed toward the mind. This is absent in clerical labour—a fact well known to everyone in our land of clerks. In work bound to narrow habit, outward dexterity alone increases, while the mind, like a blindfolded ox turning an oil-mill, goes on treading the circle of habit. It is for this very reason that in every land men

have held in contempt those tasks which consist essentially in the endless repetition of some particular physical process. Carlyle proclaimed, in a very loud voice, the gospel of work for work's sake; but the people of the world, age after age, have borne witness, in a voice far louder still, to the gospel of thought for thought's sake. Those who labour for wages become, out of sheer necessity, the tools of the greed or the rule of society, of the master, of the strong, of the clever. Their own creed runs: "when everything is lost, the wise man sacrifices half"—that is, when starvation itself threatens death, one abandons the mind and merely keeps the hands moving to fill the belly. But to say that by discarding the greater half of what is essentially human, one attains "work for work's sake," is nothing but mockery and false comfort. In truth, how to rescue the majority of the people of the world from this crippling mechanization of life—this alone is the great problem. My own belief is this: every great civilization has, if not died outright, become the living dead, precisely because a few have crushed the spirit of the many, robbing them of vitality of mind. For mind alone is man's true wealth. No outward respect can rescue man from the inward disgrace of mindless labour. Those who have, in their own eyes, already made themselves small and worthless can be made small by others as well. If Western civilization possesses, before the pursuit of science, any great moral aspiration at all, it is this: to rescue man from every kind of blow dealt by the hand of material Nature, and instead to bind material force itself, rather than man's own mind, to the machine, in order to extract from it the work required by society. It is certain that, setting science entirely aside and relying merely on manual toil, the vast poverty of the land can in no way be removed. If man's knowledge does not advance, and only his labour goes on and on, there can be no greater servitude imposed upon man than this.

We must remember one thing: the day man first discovered the wheel was a truly great day for him. The moment he gave circular form to inert matter and thereby increased its mobility, the greater part of the burden that had rested wholly upon man's own shoulder shifted onto the shoulder of matter. And that was only right, for matter is, after all, the Shudra. Matter has no inward being to accompany its outward being; man has such a being, and that is precisely why man alone is "twice-born." He must protect both his outward life and his inward life. Hence, to the exact extent that he cannot lay the outward burden of labour upon matter, he must lay that much upon man himself. To that same extent, then, man must be made

matter, must be made Shudra—otherwise society cannot function. No one can ever, by mere words, give true "work for work's sake" to those men. The wheel has freed countless Shudras from the condition of the Shudra. This very wheel, in the spinning-wheel, in the potter's disc, beneath the carriage, has, in gross form and in subtle, immensely lightened man's burden. There is no material of wealth so precious as this lightening of burden; man understood this truth many ages ago, on the day the wheel first turned. In that first chapter of history, when the spinning wheel first began to turn and serve the production of man's wealth, wealth then began to move forward like a wheel itself, and did not remain fixed at that first spinning-wheel of that early day. Is there no principle hidden in this fact? Of Vishnu's power, one part is the lotus, and another part is the wheel. The moment man grasped hold of that power of Vishnu's, he was freed from immobility. That very immobility is the root of all poverty. All divine powers are infinite; for this reason we have not yet, even now, come to any limit of the ever-turning wheel. If we accept the teaching that the primitive spinning-wheel is the final word in the path of spinning thread, then we shall never attain the full grace of Vishnu, and Lakshmi will turn her face away from us. If we forget that science, in the mortal world, is expanding the dominion of this very wheel of Vishnu, then we must perish beneath the wheel-strategy of those other peoples of the world who have kept their honour toward the wheel.

When we forget the vast form of power that science reveals in the great wheel, when we regard, and habitually use, some one particular wheel of some one particular age as the ultimate instrument for spinning thread, then the spinning-wheel remains, from within, mute to us; then the very spinning-wheel that once carried man far forward on the path of power, on the path of wealth, no longer speaks of going further. It is not that it makes no noise in the ear—but it no longer speaks to the mind.

Some have told me: we never say, do no other work besides spin. That may be so, but it is equally true that no one says, do some other work as well. Is not that very silence itself a powerful form of speech? In the pursuit of swaraj, the command for one single task is exceedingly precise, and on every side of it lies silence. Does not the spinning-wheel, against the background of this silence, appear exceedingly immense? Is it, in truth, so very immense? Will the thirty-three crore people of India, without regard to their natural diversity, offer, each according to his ability,

his own time and strength as an oblation to this revolving wheel—does the spinning-wheel really possess such greatness? To unite all mankind, by the same rite of worship, before the same deity—for this, appeals have gone out again and again in various lands, up to this very day. But has that, in truth, ever been possible? Has the ritual of worship ever become one, or has even the deity himself ever become singular? To make the deity and the worship of the deity one for all mankind—how much bloodshed, how much cruel persecution has the world witnessed! Nothing has ever come of it—shall then, in the temple of swaraj alone, the offerings of all come to be united solely before the goddess of the spinning-wheel? Such distrust of human faith? Such disrespect toward the people of this land?

There was a bearer of ours from the western provinces named Gupi. In my childhood I heard a story about him—that when he went on pilgrimage to Puri, he fell into terrible perplexity over what food or fruit he should offer to Jagannath. Again and again in his mind he ran through the list of every kind of fruit fit to be offered. None of them satisfied his mind. At last, suddenly, he remembered the European brinjal (eggplant). At once his doubt melted away; he offered Jagannath the European brinjal, and thereafter felt no regret whatsoever on the matter.

To demand the least from man before the easiest of gods is the most unjust demand that can be made upon him. To call upon thirty-three crore people to spin thread, in the name of achieving swaraj, is to offer Jagannath a European brinjal. I hope there are not thirty-three crore Gupis in India. When the great makes his call, he makes a great demand, and then man is blessed indeed; for it is then that man, startled in the very midst of his own triviality, awakens, and comes to understand that he is great.

Our country is a country of ritual observance, and that is precisely why our faith rests more upon the worship of a stone slab than upon the worship of God himself. We cannot believe that by bribing the outward, we might deprive the inward of its due claim. We think that if we place our whole devotion, with utmost effort, upon a mere piece of string, that very string will become a living nerve. This is the piety of outwardness, and it is the very initiation into man's servitude. There is no discipline more destructive of faith in one's own mastery over self than this. Into such a land, in the name of the country's deliverance, has come the spinning-wheel.

We sit at home, turning the wheel round and round, and say to ourselves in our minds: the chariot of Swaraj-Jagannath is rolling forward.

The exceedingly old truth must today be spoken anew: the foundation of swaraj rests not upon outward equality, but upon inward unity. In the field of livelihood, this inward unity has a great place indeed. In truth, for unity to become great, the field itself must be made great. But if one takes a single fragment out of the whole course of man's life and places special emphasis upon that alone, one may perhaps gain thread, one may perhaps gain cloth—but the union of life with life will remain outside the scope of one's aim.

In India, unity of all in the sphere of religion is not possible; and as for the political sphere, the practice of everyone uniting there has never before existed in this land—it has only just begun; it will be long before it can genuinely take hold of the common mind. For this very reason we must direct our minds toward establishing a great unity within the sphere of livelihood. The field of livelihood is the widest of all; here the call goes out to great and small, wise and ignorant alike—universal as the call of death itself. If this field does not become a battlefield—if we can prove that here too competition is not the chief truth of human power, but cooperation is the chief truth—then we may wrest a mighty kingdom from the grip of our own passions, from the grip of unrest! Besides, we must remember this too: in the village society of India, we have already practised union in this very sphere. Even if the thread of that union has become somewhat frayed, still it can easily be rejoined; for the very nature of our minds has, to a great extent, already been shaped for it.

Just as livelihood belongs to the individual man, so does politics belong to the man of a particular nation. The self-interest of a country's people, or of its political leaders, expresses itself in this politics. Self-interest is the consciousness of difference.

Up to now things have gone on in just this fashion. Whatever nation is engaged, one-sidedly, in the arrangement of its own self-interest, that is its politics. Its false pretensions and the burden of its sins go on growing heavier and heavier. This burden goes on increasing through mutual rivalry; there is no end to it, and no peace in the world. The day mankind clearly understands that only through a

universal, all-nation confederation can each nation's true self-interest be realized—for interdependence is the very law of humanity—only on that day will politics too become, in a large sense, the field of man's pursuit of truth. Only on that day will the political man come to accept those very moral principles which the social man already acknowledges as true. That is, cheating one's neighbour, stealing another's wealth, the ceaseless practice of self-glorification—these will be known not merely as sins against righteousness, but as offences against the true interest of united mankind as well. The founding of the League of Nations is, perhaps, the first attempt to establish, in politics, the throne of a humanity freed from self-conceit.

Just as politics is bound wholly to national self-interest, so livelihood is bound wholly to individual self-interest. This is why there is here so much rivalry, envy, deceit, so much baseness in man. But when man is truly man, his livelihood too should become not merely a field for the exercise of power, but a field for the fulfilment of his humanity—this indeed was how it ought to have been. In the sphere of livelihood too, man should gain not merely his bread, but his truth as well—that is what is wanted. Some years ago, when I first heard of cooperative livelihood, it seemed to me that a knot in a tangled problem had been considerably loosened. It seemed to me that in the sphere of livelihood, the separateness of self-interest had, until now, held truth in contempt; and there, the confluence of self-interests has today taken up the task of proving truth. This is what it comes to say: poverty lies in man's disunion, wealth in his union. This, in every direction, is the fundamental truth of human civilization—I do not believe that in the realm of mankind this truth can anywhere have a limit.

The theory of cooperation in livelihood declares this: that when man attains truth, his poverty vanishes—not through any particular external mechanical process. By this pronouncement man is honoured. This theory of cooperation is an idea, not a ritual; and for this reason many different courses of action may spring from it. At every step it must be met and matched with the mind. What in English is called a "blind alley"—the path of livelihood is not like that. I came to understand that along this path there would come, not some one particular fixed shape of bread, but Annapurna herself, the Goddess of Plenty, in whom every form of bread is united in a single truth.

Some relatives of mine were, at that time, engaged in putting the theory of cooperation into practice. My mind was much stirred by discussion with them, when there fell into my hands the book *The National Being*, written by the Irish poet and man of action, A.E. I saw before my eyes a clear and vast, practical form of cooperative livelihood. How varied is its fulfilment, how it can bring to completeness the whole course of man's life—all this became luminous to me. That the bread of the world is also Brahman, and that realizing this through the true path brings man great attainment—that is, enables him to understand, in the very midst of action, that separation from others is his bondage, and cooperation with others his liberation—this truth stands vividly manifest in the book of this Irish poet-sage.

Surely many will tell me: these are difficult words. To put the idea of cooperation into large-scale practice requires much effort, much experiment, much passing through failure, before, after a long time, it may become possible at all. The matter is indeed difficult. No great thing can be had cheaply. To call the easy path to a rare treasure a shortcut is merely a delusion. Many say that swaraj can be gained through the spinning-wheel, and many believe it too; but I have yet to meet anyone who has understood this clearly. And so argument does not proceed; in the country, argument is not proceeding either—only anger is proceeding. Those who enter into debate show, by calculation, how much thread comes from how many spinning-wheels, and how much khaddar can be made from how much thread. That is, according to their reckoning, some of the country's want of cloth would thereby be somewhat relieved. That, then, comes down to the question of removing want.

But poverty is a complex, composite thing. And the cause of its origin lies in our lack of knowledge, in the defects of our intellect, in the faults of custom, and in weakness of character. Only by grasping the whole course of man's life as one can this be remedied, from within and from without. Hence, since the question is difficult, its answer cannot be simple. If the enemy's regular army attacks with cannon and gun, the native soldier cannot repel them with bow and arrow. Some say: why not? If the whole country together should spit upon the bodies of the invaders, then even their cannon and guns might be washed away along with them. This "spitting" might be called the easy path to a difficult pilgrimage. Against the modern age's science-proud methods of warfare, there could hardly be a neater, simpler, and yet more absurd device than this. And even granting, for argument's sake, that by this method it is not impossible to wash away the government's forces

in a flood of official spittle, still, those who know human character know equally well that thirty-three crore people will never spit all at once, together. The same might be said regarding the attempt, by working the spinning-wheel, to bail out the ocean of the country's poverty.

In Ireland, when Sir Horace Plunkett first set himself to introduce cooperative livelihood, through how many obstacles, how many failures did he pass, how many fresh experiments did he have to make; only after long effort did success at last begin to show itself—this one can understand by reading *The National Being*. Fire is slow to catch, but once caught, it spreads without delay. Not only that—the very nature of true truth is this: that wherever, in whatever corner of whatever country, it is found and established, it resolves the problems of every country. When Sir Horace Plunkett achieved success in Ireland, he thereby, at the very same time, summoned success for India as well. In just this way, if any single seeker could set going the fundamental remedy for poverty in even a single village of India, he would confer upon all the thirty-three crore people of India a possession for all time. Those who measure truth's worth merely by the scale of its outward magnitude look upon truth externally, as if it were a mere lump of matter; they do not know that within even the tiniest seed lies hidden the very life-force capable of claiming dominion over the whole earth.

Just now a friend of mine remarked: even if, in your view, the aim of spinning thread on the wheel does not fully reach the level implied by "removing the general poverty of the country" or "attaining swaraj," what fault is there in that alone? When farming work stands idle, the extra time that remains on the hands of the farmer, or of the householder after finishing housework and the like, if applied by everyone together to some universally beneficial task, could bring about considerable improvement in the general condition; why not simply accept this good result alone, that the spinning-wheel has been set going in the country? I remember hearing, earlier, another remark of this same kind. In our country most people throw away the starchy water in which rice has been boiled. If, throughout India, this were preserved by everyone together, then, on the whole, a good deal of malnutrition might be considerably reduced. There is truth in this statement. To eat rice along with its starch requires some change in accustomed taste, but looking to the result, this ought not to be too difficult. There are, in the same way, many other things that could be included in the list of our means of alleviating poverty.

Whoever thinks well of any of these, let him try to carry it out—some will increase wealth, some will increase nutrition along with wealth, some will cut away, to a degree, the fault of idleness. But it does not occur to me that anyone would think of making the not-throwing-away of rice-starch, by everyone throughout the country, the chief and principal element of the special endeavour now underway in the country to attain swaraj. And is there no reason for this? Let me clarify my point on this matter by an illustration from religious practice. If, in giving instruction on this discipline, it were declared with special emphasis, again and again a thousand times, that drawing water from anyone's well brings about a fall from religion, then the chief objection against such teaching would be this: that it diminishes the moral worth of the true path of religious practice. There may indeed be a risk of impurity in the water of any particular well; that impurity may harm health; the disorder of health may lead to disorder of mind; that disorder may carry the risk of harming one's religion—granting all this to be true, still one must say: to give a value beyond due proportion to what is subordinate diminishes the value of what is essential. This is exactly why there are, in our country, countless people who do not hesitate to beat a Muslim to death merely because he has drawn water from their well. Give the small an equal seat with the great, and it does not remain equal—it exceeds the great. It is for this very reason that the religious rule for preserving the purity of water has been able, with the greatest ease, to override the religious rule against the taking of human life. In our country, by mixing the eternal moral law together with ritual custom, such calamity has come about that it cannot be told in full. It is by the force of this very deep-rooted, age-old habit of ours that today the spinning-wheel and khaddar have been able to go about, mace in hand, in the guise of the supreme political and religious duty of self-rule, and no one has found this especially strange. It is by this very act of giving it precedence that it has done harm, supplying yet another new food to the age-old weakness of our country. After this, some day, some other powerful figure may perhaps proclaim from the throne of self-rule that he who throws away the starch-water of his rice, that food-murderer, shall not be permitted to enter the council chamber. If he has sufficient power, and if his rule lasts long enough, then one day, in our unfortunate land, holy men will begin shedding human blood over the question of throwing away rice-starch, in the name of preserving their own purity. If this prohibition—that wearing foreign cloth causes impurity—is accepted by the majority of the people of the country, and if, alongside the notion of impurity

connected with food and water, it becomes rooted as one of our ingrained superstitions, then one day there will break out, over this too, as terrible a conflict between the observant and the non-observant as the head-breaking violence that occurred in Calcutta on the day of Eid. It is from that very blindness of ritual-bound superstition that the practice of untouchability arose in our country, and it is that same blindness, manifesting itself today in the political and economic sphere, that is now awakening the doctrine of untouchability centred on the spinning-wheel and khaddar.

Some will say: is not this cooperative livelihood you speak of exactly the same as everyone together spinning on the wheel? I do not agree. Even if the whole of Hindu society together preserved the purity of well-water, that would not thereby become bacteriological science; it would remain a mere ritual, not a truth. It is for this very reason that even while the well-water remains pure, the water of the pond grows foul, and in the ditch near the drain of the house, the germs of disease spread the rule of the god of death unchecked. When making pickles in our country, we are extremely careful—at the root of this carefulness lies the truth discovered by Pasteur; but because that truth, like the germ of disease, is invisible, while the outward act is visible, like the swollen boil itself, in this method of practice it is only the pickle that survives, not the man. It is only in the making of pickles that all the people of the world, uniting, follow the rule alike; it is only in the making of thread that thirty-three crore people, uniting, would preserve one particular ritual observance. By that, much thread would indeed accumulate, but the deep-rooted blindness that has, age after age, kept our poverty locked in fetters would remain untouched.

Any difference of opinion or method with the Mahatma is, for me, an exceedingly unwelcome thing. Viewed broadly, there is nothing wrong in it. And yet, still, the heart does not always accept it so easily. For what greater joy can there be than cooperation, in the field of action, with one whom one loves and reveres? His great character is, to me, a matter of the deepest wonder. The Fate of India has, through his hand, sent to us a shining, invincible, divine power. May this power not overwhelm the people of India, but make them strong; may it teach them to think with their own minds, to resolve, to renounce—this is my prayer. The very cause that lay within him, which made even so great a thinker as Rammohan Roy hesitate to call the Mahatma anything less than a great incarnation—though I myself know

that very Rammohan to be the greatest man of the modern age—that same inward temperament has given to the Mahatma's rule of conduct such a form that my own nature cannot accept it as its own. For that reason, my regret remains. But it is the will of Providence that the paths of spiritual endeavour be manifold—otherwise why should diversity of nature exist in the world at all? Drawn by personal affection, the strong desire to receive initiation into the spinning-wheel from the Mahatma's own hands has come to me again and again. But out of the fear that, in my own intellectual judgment, I might grant the spinning-wheel a dignity greater than its due, I have, after much hesitation, restrained myself. I know the Mahatma will understand me rightly, and just as in the past he has always shown patience toward me, so he will do again today; Acharya Raymashai too honours freedom of opinion without regard to popular approval, and so, even if now and then, in the heat of some lecture-hall, he should suddenly and unexpectedly rebuke me, still, in his heart, he will not be without mercy toward me. And those who are my own countrymen, in whose flowing tide of feeling so many memories, both of benefit and of harm, have sunk beneath the surface—if they do not forgive me today, tomorrow they will forget everything. And even if they do not forget, even if the blow of their hand should never fall upon my head, still, just as today I have found Acharya Brajendranath as a companion in disgrace, so perhaps tomorrow I shall find some other unhonoured countryman or other, by whose company public censure itself is redeemed of its sting.

Bhadra, 1332

THE PEASANT'S CAUSE

To dear Sriman Pramathanath Chaudhuri

Our scriptures tell us that the world is a tree rooted above, its branches spreading downward—that is, it does not stand upon its own strength but hangs suspended from what lies overhead. Reading your "The Peasant's Cause," it occurred to me that our politics too belongs to that same species. At the very origin of the Congress one could see how this thing had struck root among the circles above—for both its sustenance and its shelter, its dependence lay wholly in that higher realm.

Those of us who call ourselves gentlefolk had resolved that politics meant the sharing out of India's spoils between the ruling power and the gentry. In that politics, both war and peace alike were waged from platforms and in newspaper columns, their only weapon pure English speech—now the plaintive cooing of supplication, now the feigned heat of a manufactured passion. And while the country was thus occupied in this garrulous storm-and-cloud play at the upper reaches of the atmosphere, the men of the soil—those who are born, who die, who plough, who weave, by the ancient order of things; who feed every kind of predatory man-beast with their own flesh and blood; who prostrate themselves in reverence before the very god whose temple courtyard is defiled by their touch; who weep and laugh in their mother tongue, and, beneath a hail-storm of insult, strike their foreheads and murmur "fate"—between that country's politician and the country's common folk lay an infinite distance.

That politics has today turned its face away, as a sulking beloved turns from her lover. It says: no more shall I gaze upon the dark cloud.

There was once courtship and secret rendezvous; now there is estrangement and separation. The scene has changed, but the drama has not. Yesterday I cried, with equal force, "I want it"; today, with the very same force, I cry "I want it not." And along with this I have added the clause that I wish to better the condition of the common village folk—that is, these are my own, those are alien to me. But in the very thunder of "I want it not, I want it not," I drown out the thunder of my own voice on their behalf. Whatever slender "I want" I add to that cry comes out very faint indeed. Whatever funds we manage to scrape together by whatever means go entirely to feed the political fairground of polite society, and vanish there; whatever scrap of word is left over, once the money is spent, is left for the good of the village. That is to say, from the very beginning of our modern politics we have practised our secret patriotism while leaving out the people of the country.

The means for cultivating this unconditioned love are supplied by men who own zamindaris or factories; and the words are supplied by men who practise law. In none of this does the villager have any place at all; that is, in the ghost-realm of sovereignty which we call "the nation," they do not dwell. They are utterly without dominion—neither in word nor in wealth. If civil disobedience were the order of the day, they would indeed have to be summoned—but only to close their ledgers and perish; and those who possess the bow and arrow of their daily food are still sometimes called upon to shut their shops for a hartal, purposes meant solely to display, most ostentatiously, our political postures of defiance before our masters.

For this very reason the matter of the peasant remains fundamentally postponed. First let the throne be built, the crown be forged, the sceptre be raised, let Manchester feel a pinch—only then shall we find time to take up the peasant's cause. That is: the country's politics first, the country's people afterward. Hence, right from the start, there has been a great flurry of outfitting and equipping the politics. The convenience of it is that no living man is

needed for taking the measurements. Other peoples, keeping an eye on the dimensions of their own bodies and their own climate, have, through repeated cutting and trimming, fashioned the garment they now wear; we need only send the exact same pattern to the tailor's shop. We even know the name of the

garment—fetched fresh off the printed page of some book—for in our workshop the name comes first, the form follows after. Democracy, Parliament, the polities of Canada, Australia, South Africa—all of it we can imagine with our eyes shut; for the idea of keeping a man in front of us to take his measurements does not enter our minds at all. It is in order to enjoy this convenience unhindered that we say: first swaraj, and afterward, swaraj for those it is meant for. Everywhere else on earth, peoples have built up their own self-rule by the natural unfolding of their country's nature, strength, and need; in the world, we alone shall, on some approaching first of January fixed in an almanac, obtain swaraj first, and only afterward summon the people meant for swaraj and, by whatever means, clamp it onto their bodies. Meanwhile there is malaria, there is plague, there is famine, there is the moneylender, there is the landlord, there is the policeman's boot; there is the marriage of the girl with the noose around her neck, the funeral rites of the mother, the thousand-armed society's tax-collector, and there is the fang-baring, all-devouring court of litigation.

For all these reasons I doubt whether your "The Peasant's Cause" is fitting to the time and place in our politics. You are not joining in the effort to harness the horse to the front of the cart; more than that, you leave off the work of harnessing the horse and want to know instead whether it has had its fodder, how much breath is left in it. Among your circle of advisers there is not even one, it seems, who can tell you—first pull the cart, and we shall reach our destination at the auspicious hour; once we arrive, there will be time enough to ask whether the horse be sound or broken, alive or dead. You ought to have known that in the politics of this modern age, drawing up the timetable, packing the trunks, and seating oneself in the carriage is the paramount duty. In the end the carriage may not reach any destination at all, but that is no fault of the timetable; had the horse but moved, the reckoning would have come out right. You are the logician; in the midst of such great enthusiasm you wish to interpose an objection, saying that the horse's not moving has, from the very beginning, been the fundamental problem. You are a man of the old cautious school, wanting first the news from the stable. Meanwhile the enthusiast of the new school sits in the coach-box, restlessly scraping his foot; likening it to a house on fire, he says, we must arrive most speedily—that alone is the urgent matter. Therefore to inquire after the horse is simply to waste time.

What matters above all is to climb into the carriage. Your "The Peasant's Cause" is the talk of that horse, which might well be called fundamentals.

II

But what is worth pondering is this—that in recent times a group of vigorous men have begun to turn their minds toward the peasant. First of all, they have started clenching their fists. It appears they have found some precedent abroad. When our minds swell up with excessive pomp into patriotic fervour, one may still observe that upon every article of that pomp's furnishing is stamped the mark: "Made in Europe." In Europe, by the natural force of causes rooted in its own nature and circumstance, men are testing various kinds of social transformation—Socialism, Communism, Syndicalism, and the rest. But when we say we shall do good to the peasant, no words come from our mouths save borrowed phrases from Europe. This time, having gone to East Bengal, I saw a literature sprouting up everywhere like small, fragile mushroom-shoots. Each is a small flag of bloodshed. They cry: crush him, trample him—that is, let the earth become a merciless charnel-house. As if sin could be washed away by violence, as if darkness died from being beaten with a stick. It is as strange as if a band of daughters-in-law were to say: set thugs upon the mothers-in-law, drive them to the burning-ghat, and only then will the young wives be safe! They forget that the ghost of a dead mother-in-law wastes no time in mounting the shoulders of the living and making them mothers-in-law of mothers-in-law. Our country's scriptures say: one cannot sever the bonds of existence merely by committing suicide from without—the root of the bondage must be cut from within, from nature itself. Europe's nature is combative. It takes time to kill sin from within—they cannot bear that delay; they kill men from without.

One day, in imitation of the English, we sat down to play at puppet-theatre with our tattered politics, borrowing parliamentary statecraft. The reason was that in those days the ideal of politics was, to us, more vivid and immediate than anything else in Europe.

In that period, the European literature that had captured our minds was dominated chiefly by the strain of Mazzini and Garibaldi. Now the scene there has shifted. In the Lanka-Kanda there was the victory of the hero-king, the freeing of Sita from the demon's grasp. In the Uttara-Kanda there is the victory of the wicked mouth, the king's head bowed low, the queen abandoned for the sake of pleasing the subjects. In the days of war there was the king's glory; now there is only the glory of the subject. Then the song sung was of the household's triumph over the outsider; now the song is of the courtyard's triumph over the mansion. In recent times, whatever movements have appeared in the West—Bolshevism, Fascism, and the rest—we do not clearly understand their cause and effect, their shape and character; we have merely grasped, roughly, that the guild of hooliganism has set up its den. And at once our minds, so skilled in imitation, have begun to view hooliganism itself as the grandest thing of all. The Boar Incarnation raised the mud-sunk earth upon the strength of His tusks; these men wish to raise it upon the strength of a club. There is neither leisure nor courage to consider that brute force does nothing to remove the disparity between what is above and what is below. The cause of that disparity lies within man's own nature. For that very reason, if today's lower rung is thrust up to the top, tomorrow's upper rung will, just as before, press down upon what lies beneath. The Tsarist regime of Russia and the Bolshevik regime are both merely the same demon turned upon its other side. If the club that once lay in the left hand is now transferred to the right, and a wild war-dance performed with it, that must be called madness. Those in whose blood the fever runs high sometimes have blood rush so violently to the head that madness overtakes them—but that copy-cat madness then seizes hold of others too, whose blood runs less hot. That is called hysteria. And so, when I heard the call rising in our literature—strike down the moneylender, crush the zamindar, trample him—I understood at once that this red-mouthed rhetoric did not spring from these men's own blood. This is the peculiar genius of the Bengali for imitation, a drama dipped in magenta dye. It has arms and legs flailing above, and hollowness within.

III

I myself am a zamindar; hence it may occur to some, suddenly, that I merely wish to preserve my own seat. If I do wish it, then it cannot be granted—that is human nature. Those who wish to seize that privilege have their own kind of reasoning, and those who wish to keep it have exactly the same kind; that is, neither is truly the reasoning of righteousness—it might rather be called the reasoning of self-interest. And if those who wish to seize it succeed in their effort, then tomorrow they themselves will turn into forest-cats. Perhaps the object of the hunt will change, but the manner of using tooth and claw will not be one whit different. Today, at the moment of seizing privilege, they speak such lofty words that one understands they have "a taste for the name"; but tomorrow, when the day of "compassion for all creatures" arrives, we shall see the tongue's greedy, licking eagerness for flesh. For the name lies in the mouth, and the greed lies in the mind. Therefore, if the zamindar who has today appeared in the soil of the country's mentality is merely a thorn-bush, then even if you fell it to the ground, upon the corpse of that dead tree a second crop of thorn-bushes will only flourish the more luxuriantly. For the soil itself does not change.

My hereditary occupation is zamindari, but my occupation by temperament is sky-wandering. For this very reason I feel no inward impulse to cling to the soil of the zamindari. I have an absolute lack of reverence for this thing. I know the zamindar is a leech upon the land; he is a parasite, a creature living off another's substance. Without labouring, without earning, without accepting any genuine responsibility, we make the body inept and the mind indolent through the enjoyment of wealth. We are not of that race of men who win the right to luxury through their own valour. The subjects supply our food, and the officials place that food into our mouths—in this there is neither manhood nor honour. There is, to be sure, a certain vanity in imagining oneself a king within so petty a measure. In "The Peasant's Cause," rummaging through old records, you have set about spoiling even that sweet dream. You wish to prove that we are the hereditary land-stewards of the English royal government. On this side we eat the king's salt and call the peasants "subjects"; they call us "king"—we exist wholly within a fraud. It would be well indeed to abandon such a zamindari. But to whom shall it be given up? To some other zamindar? If we let loose the thief in a game of thief-and-police upon someone else, that does not thereby outwit the thief. Shall it be given up to the

peasants? Then we shall watch, before our eyes, ten small zamindars sprout up in the place of the one large zamindar. I cannot say there is any difference between the tendency of a large leech's bloodthirst and that of a small leech. You say: the land should belong to him who tills it. How is that to be? If the land be a commodity, if there be no bar to its transfer from hand to hand? One may say, broadly, that a book ought to belong to the man who reads it. The man who does not read, but merely keeps it shelved, deprives the book of its rightful use. But if there is no bar to selling the book in a grocer's shop, then whoever has a bookshelf but no learning—how is one to arrange that he shall not buy the book? In this world, bookshelves are far cheaper and far more plentiful than learning. For this reason the fate of most books is to end upon the shelf, not in the hands of the learned. The picture that the favoured son of Saraswati labours to create is seized instead by the favoured son of Lakshmi—not because he has any right to it, but because he has money in the bank. Those of hot temper, whose means are slender, grow furious in such a state. They cry: beat the money-man, snatch away the picture! But as long as the painter's belly has its due, the picture is bound to come to market, and as long as it does, no one can stop its pull toward the house of the wealthy.

IV

If land is indeed to be sold in the open market, then the person who himself tills it has scant chance of buying it; the man who does not till but who has money will get most of the saleable land into his hands. It is also true that the number of land-sales will steadily increase over time. For as land is fragmented, generation after generation, through inheritance, it will become an ever smaller holding relative to the cultivator's household needs; and so, driven by want, buying and selling will increase all the more. In this way small plots of land fall in swarms into the wide-spread nets of the local moneylender. As a result, between the two millstones nothing whole remains of the peasantry. Whatever right the peasant had over the land in the zamindar's own time cannot survive the conflict between zamindar and moneylender. Many of my own peasants I myself have rescued from this utter destitution by insisting upon the bar to the transfer of land. I have not deprived the moneylender, but I have compelled him to remain within bounds. Where doing so

has proven wholly impossible, their cries have gone from my court to the court of Providence—whether they shall receive any compensation in the next world is not a matter this essay need discuss.

In the days of indigo cultivation, when the indigo-planter, having caught the tenant in a snare of debt, sought to seize the peasant's land, it was the zamindar who saved the ryot. Had the dam of the prohibitory law not existed in those days, the ryot's land would have been submerged and swept away in the flood of indigo. Consider: if today, for some reason, the marwari trader should wish, with the purpose of establishing his hold, gradually to snatch away the peasant's land in the produce grown in Bengal, then very easily he could turn the whole of Bengal in the oil-press and wring out every drop of its oil. There is no reason to suppose that such a design has never crossed anyone's mind. In whatever businesses these men are engaged today, the moment their profit meets an obstacle, their locked-up capital will seek out precisely such avenues. Now the question is: is it good for the peasant that a canal be dug through which the flood of the moneylender may pour freely into his home? The essential point is this—the peasant lacks intellect, lacks learning, lacks strength, and is cursed where wealth is concerned. He does not know how to protect himself by any means. There is no creature more dangerous than those among them who do know how. I know full well how utterly ruinous is the hunger of the ryot who preys upon fellow ryots. Through what devices they swell up, little by little, until they become zamindars themselves—in that process you will find gathered every species of Satan's minions. Forgery, fraud, false suits, arson, the destruction of crops—no horror is beneath them. Passing through jail seasons their education further. Just as in America, I hear, small businesses are swallowed whole by giant corporations that grow into monsters, so too, through cunning and craft, the weak peasant's little plots are seized and swallowed until the powerful ryot gradually rises to become a zamindar. In their first stage these men themselves tilled the land, loaded goods on their own bullock-carts, and went to sell in the market; save for their natural cunning there was no difference between them and any other cultivator.

But just as the circumference of their land begins to grow, the plough slips from their hands and the mace appears. The perimeter of the belly expands; the back leans against a bolster; business grows in the conducting of false suits across the district, and there is no limit to their arrogance, their thundering, their tyranny, their extortion. The mesh of a great net is wide, and the small fish find a way to escape through it; but in the small net every last minnow gets caught—and it is this shoal of minnows that makes up the peasantry.

One thing must be remembered: to seize the hostile law for oneself is the wrestling-match of litigation. The very blow that the law comes to strike is turned about and struck back—this is the death-dealing trick of the lawyer's wrestling art. In this business great champions are engaged. Therefore, until the peasant is enriched with intellect and with wealth, even a "workable" law will, for him, remain a law "sunk in impassable waters."

It is not pleasant to say, nor pleasant to hear, that it is a duty to place restraints upon the peasant's free dealing in land. Seen from one angle, within full and complete freedom there also lies the freedom to harm oneself. But the right to so vast a freedom belongs only to one whose intellect is not that of a child. On a road where motor-traffic constantly runs, to obstruct the passage of a grown man would rightly be called tyranny; but if we place no restraint whatsoever upon a wholly immature child, that would be called folly. What experience I have leads me to say that in our country, to give the ignorant peasant unrestricted right to transfer his land is to give him the right to commit suicide. There will come a time when that right must be given to them—but if it is given now, will any of that right remain? This is the doubt I feel regarding this portion of your writing.

V

I know that the zamindar is not without wit. Hence wherever the ryot faces some restraint, more fish gather in the net of the zamindar's income. In our country the

range within which a girl may be married is narrow, and that very restriction becomes the source of the groom's family's income. This is much the same. But watching the cultivator's land pass, bit by bit, into the moneylender's hands, there is no cause to rejoice that the zamindar therefore suffers loss. For the cultivator, the moneylender's grip is far harder than the zamindar's—and even if that be not granted, one must at least grant that it is one further grip laid upon him.

That the peasant's land should accumulate as rent-debt is quite true. It is unjust that while the zamindar gains no increase of revenue in his dealings with the government, the peasant's steady accumulation of interest upon interest should compound endlessly with no halt anywhere. Besides, this arrangement is itself a great obstacle, in the natural course of things, to the improvement of the land; hence it works ill not only for the cultivator but for the whole country. Besides, restrictions upon felling trees, building permanent dwellings, digging tanks, and the like can in no way be defended.

But all this is trifling detail. The real point is: no law can save a man who does not know how to save himself. The strength to save oneself lies in the fullness of the way one lives one's life, not in some patchwork scheme. It lies not in a particular law, not in government, not in khaddar, not in the four-anna-purchased right to vote in Congress. Only when life-force circulates evenly throughout the village will that fullness of vital force be able, of itself, to generate from within the strength to protect itself continually.

How that is to come about is the very question I have been pondering, in deed and in word, for some while now. Whether I can give a good answer I do not know—answers take time to ripen. Yet whether I succeed or not, this rough answer at least must be sought out. The solution to every petty question lies within it. Otherwise, patching here and patching there, the days will slip away; and one may doubt whether the thing for which so much stitching and mending was done will survive even that long.

Ashadh, 1333

WORSHIP OF POWER

In "A Letter to a Traveller" I discussed the worship of Shakti; on that subject several persons have written protests in the periodicals.

In our country we find two distinct traditions concerning the nature of Shiva and Shakti. One of these may be called the scriptural, the other the popular. The scriptural Shiva is the ascetic, the world-renouncer. The popular Shiva is wild and unrestrained. It is this popular Shiva whom we find depicted in the Bengali Mangal Kavyas. Indeed, even in the court-poet Bharatchandra's Annadamangal, the character given to Shiva is not one that would be sanctioned by Aryan society.

I concede that a scriptural and philosophical interpretation may be given of Shakti. But the form of Shakti described in the Bengali Mangal Kavyas is popular, and its spirit corresponds to that. Those in the world who are afflicted, who are defeated, and who see no righteous cause behind that affliction and defeat, have taken the unjust wrath of a wilful, merciless Power to be the cause of all their sorrows; and it is the inspiration to placate that jealous Power, through hymns of praise and through worship, that gives rise to these Mangal Kavyas.

At the root of humanity's earliest worship one finds the terror of the arbitrary caprice of a fearsome deity. The reason is that man had not yet perceived, at the foundation of the universe, any universal law of the cosmos, and was then surrounded on every side by fear and calamity. In those days the sudden acquisition of prosperity by the powerful was ever before men's eyes, and the influence of that very suddenness was, in human society, most starkly visible.

At the time when the poet Kabikankan wrote the Chandi in the Annadamangal, the sudden rise and fall of men's fortunes appeared as a matter of wonder. On every side power clashed against power, and no one could say in whose fate lay what, on what day. He who knew how to properly propitiate the powerful, who did not weigh true and false, right and wrong—the proof of his prosperity was then plainly visible everywhere. To please the power of Chandi, and to bend it to one's own personal advantage, was then, at least among a certain class, the chief article of religious practice; and it was precisely the wealthy and eminent of that day who belonged, in particular, to this class—for in those days the storm of power struck hardest upon the very summit of their heads.

That the form of a deity described in scripture is primeval, and that the popular form is modern, is a claim that cannot be accepted without particular proof. It is my belief that a day arrived in India when the deities of the non-Aryans were, one by one, purified and reformed by the Aryan spirit and thereby accepted. The deities who in that age entered the pious society of India could not have the incongruity of their character entirely removed; within them the two strands—Aryan and non-Aryan—remain mingled even today, and in popular practice it is that non-Aryan strand which predominates.

We may observe this same thing in the development of Christianity as well. The Jehovah of the Jews was, at one time, chiefly a partisan deity, favouring the Jewish race alone. What a cruel, jealous, and sacrifice-loving deity he was may be understood simply by reading the Old Testament. That deity was gradually revealed, through the words of the Jewish saints and prophets, and finally through the teachings of Jesus Christ, as the god of love for all mankind. But even today the two contrary aspects entwined within him are plainly visible in popular practice. Even today he is the god of war, the god of factional division, the sectarian god. Nothing keeps the contempt and injustice of the Christian toward the non-Christian so vividly alive as the power of his name.

In our country, generally, two independent tendencies have gained predominance between Shakta religious practice and Vaishnava religious practice. In one practice, animal sacrifice and the eating of flesh; in the other, non-violence and vegetarian food—this is not utterly meaningless. Whatever explanation may be given in some particular scripture for this animal sacrifice and other such rites, that interpretation is not what is current in ordinary practice. It is for this reason that I have taken up, in my writing, that meaning of the word "Shakti" which is its ordinary meaning—the meaning which runs, woven through and through, in various symbols, rites, and sentiments of Shakti worship, and which has been propagated in the Mangal Kavyas of Bengal.

One thing must be borne in mind: the deity worshipped by the dacoit is Shakti, the deity worshipped by the Thug is Shakti, the deity worshipped by the Kapalika is Shakti. Another thing worth pondering is that the practice of animal sacrifice, or of one's own bloodletting, and even of vowing human sacrifice as an offering, is prevalent in the worship of Shakti. From praying for victory in a false lawsuit to praying for the destruction of one's kinsman-enemy, every kind of prayer finds a place in Shakti worship. On the one hand the violence of the character of the divine, on the other hand man's moral judgment-less lust for results—whether any worship greater than the Shakti worship in which these two are joined exists, concealed within some particular scripture, was not the subject of my discussion. The meaning of Shakti-worship that is bound up with popular belief cannot be called incongruous, for it is precisely that meaning which prevails in popular tales and symbolic imagery, and in every civilised and barbarous land, in every form, Shakti-worship goes on—unashamed by injustice or untruth in that worship, greed is its aim and violence its ritual offering. That this greed is not evil but rather good, that violent power is essential to manhood—such arguments are advanced in Europe by the worshippers of Shakti, with all the arrogance of rivalry, and, in imitation of Europe, are current among us too—what I have to say on that matter I have said elsewhere; here this much only needs saying, that in the mind of the ordinary person there clings, together with Shakti-worship, a sense of naked cruelty, a sense of forcibly sacrificing the weak for the accomplishment of one's own purpose—it was this that I referred to in "A Letter to a Traveller."

But nonetheless, this too must be admitted: that if the higher meaning of any religious practice be spoken or lived within some particular scripture or sage of the land, then that must be honoured. Indeed, we must recognise it as greater even than the abundantly widespread ordinary practice. It is better to judge religion not by its quantity but by its excellence—

Even a little of this righteousness saves from great fear.

1326

THE ATTAINMENT OF SWARAJ

In our country the wise have counselled, in Sanskrit, that one may say as much as one likes in speech, but should not commit it to writing. This counsel I have not obeyed—of that there is abundant proof. To some extent I have followed it, but only regarding rejoinders. Whatever I wish to say, I do not hesitate to say; but when debate turns to rebuttal, I lay down my pen. Every wind of opinion that blows, in verse and out of it, has its influence upon me—only the wind of rejoinder do I avoid.

That thing we call "opinion," which seizes hold of us, is for the most part not built from pure reasoning; a great portion of it consists of what may be called our temperament. That we have reasoned our way to a conclusion is our belief only in a few cases; in most cases, it is because we believe that we then go and fetch reasons to justify it. Only scientific opinion arrives at its conclusion by the pure path of proof; the opinions of every other class are, nine-tenths of the time, drawn by the pull of like and dislike to circle round the axis of personal desire.

This holds true above all when an opinion rests upon some hope of gain, and when that greed takes hold of the minds of a great multitude of people. To rouse the greed of that multitude, and, having roused it, to drive them along some particular path, requires no reasoning at all; only the path need be made very easy, and there must be the hope of swift, immediate gain. That swaraj may be won very easily, and very soon, is an idea that has, for some time now, kept the country's mind intoxicated. In such a reeling state of the popular mind, argument and counter-argument, rebuttal and re-rebuttal on this question take on the shape of a cyclone of pure rhetoric; and it is no easy matter, setting sail upon that wind, to bring any particular opinion safely into any harbour. For long we held the belief that swaraj was hard to attain; then suddenly it reached our ears that swaraj was in fact quite easy, and that it was not impossible to attain it in a very short time—and at that, people lost the taste for raising any question or exercising judgement on the matter. That a copper coin can be turned into a gold mohur by an ascetic's touch is a claim that intoxicates those who are not lacking in intellect for that reason; it is rather that, falling into greed, they do not wish to exert their intellect, and hence such excitement.

Not very long ago, the country grew agitated at the thought that swaraj had come within reach. Then, when the appointed term expired, the talk began that we had been deprived because the conditions had not been fulfilled. Very few people paused to consider that our entire problem lies precisely in the fulfilling of conditions. That we fail to attain swaraj because we do not fulfil the conditions for obtaining it is, surely, self-evident. If Hindu and Muslim could unite as kinsmen, that would constitute a great step toward the attainment of swaraj—it goes without saying. The snag lies exactly there: Hindu and Muslim have not united; had they united, then of the three hundred and sixty-five days that stand in the almanac each year, every single one of them would have been auspicious. It is true that fixing a day in the almanac breeds intoxication, but I cannot say that intoxication alone makes the road easy.

The particular day fixed in the almanac has long since floated away, but the intoxication has not fled. The substance of that intoxication is this: that the practice of swaraj has become the practice of ease. One or two narrow paths alone are its path. And into that path has fallen the spinning-wheel.

That being so, one is bound to ask: what is this thing called swaraj? Our national leaders have never given a clear explanation of swaraj. The word "freedom" carries a vast meaning. We do have the freedom to spin our own thread on our own spinning-wheel. We do not spin it because, in general, hand-spun thread cannot compete with mill-spun thread. Perhaps it could, if the many crores of people of India were to employ their unpaid leisure hours in spinning thread and thereby bring down its price. That this is not feasible is proven by the fact that in Bengal, among those who wield the pen in favour of the spinning-wheel, many themselves do not turn the wheel.

The second point is this: if everyone in the country were to spin, some measure of economic distress might be alleviated. But even that is not swaraj. Well, be it granted, it is at least wealth of a kind. And for poverty, even that much is no small matter. The country's cultivators waste their idle hours earning nothing; if all of them were to spin, their destitution would be lessened to a considerable degree.

Let it be granted that this too is a particular kind of problem in itself. The cultivator's surplus time must be put to work. That is easier said than done. If the burden of solving this problem must indeed be borne, then a most arduous exercise of intellect is required in this matter. It will not do to say briefly—let them spin the wheel.

The cultivator, through the fixed habit of tilling, has given his mind and his body a particular bent. Cultivation is his easy, natural path. When he tills, he is at work; when he does not till, he is not at work. To call him lazy because he is idle is a

slander unjustly cast upon him. Had cultivation been possible for him throughout the year, he would have worked the whole year round.

It is the very nature of manual labour such as cultivation that, for want of direction, it renders the mind inert. To pass from one deeply habituated form of labour to work of an entirely different character requires an active mind. But cultivation and its kindred tasks belong to the fixed-line labour of wage-work. They run like a tram-car. However urgent the need, a new path outside that line is not easy for such a man. If one asks the cultivator to do work outside cultivation, his mind gets derailed. Even so, by pushing and shoving, he may perhaps somehow be set in motion, but this involves a vast waste of energy.

I have an intimate acquaintance with the cultivators of at least two districts of Bengal. I have felt for myself how hard the bonds of habit are for them. One district is a land of single-crop cultivation. There the cultivators labour bone-crushingly to produce paddy. Afterward, in the land of their own homesteads, they might have grown vegetables in their spare time. I encouraged this—I got no result. Those who can labour to the last extremity for the sake of paddy will not stir an inch for the sake of vegetables. To shift their minds from the line of paddy to the line of vegetables is difficult.

In another district the cultivators are engaged in every kind of cultivation—paddy, jute, sugarcane, mustard, and the rest. But such land in which these crops do not readily grow lies uselessly fallow while its revenue still has to be paid. Yet, year after year, cultivators come from the western regions and, by growing melons, cucumbers, and the like on this very same land, take away substantial profit and return home. Even so, the local cultivator is averse to improving his condition by growing these unfamiliar crops. His mind does not incline toward it. The cultivator who tends jute cannot be reproached as naturally lazy by nature. I have heard that in other parts of the world, growing jute is not difficult, but the people there are unwilling to bear the arduous hardship of preparing jute for market. If jute has become Bengal's monopoly, the sole reason lies not in the soil of this land but in its

cultivators. And yet I have seen that this same cultivator, though he sees before his very eyes, year after year, proof of the profit to be gained from growing melons in his own sandy soil, is unwilling to venture upon this unfamiliar path.

When one must think through some problem, one must think through this difficult matter: how is a man's mind to be turned from one path onto another? I do not believe that anything is achieved by superficially patching together some easy expedient—settling accounts with the human mind is the fundamental task. Let there be unity between Hindu and Muslim—it is not difficult to issue this proclamation from without. On this occasion Hindus can lend their support to the Khilafat movement, for such support is very easy to give. Indeed, they can even sacrifice their own financial advantage, in considerable measure, for the sake of Muslims; that this is arduous is beyond doubt, and yet all this is merely "external." But the aim of Hindu-Muslim unity—to change the deep-rooted prejudice of each toward the other's mind—is not easy. That is exactly where the problem is stuck. To the Hindu the Muslim is unclean, and to the Muslim the Hindu is an infidel—even amid the greed for gaining swaraj, neither side can, from within, forget this fact. I once knew an Englishman who had a great fondness for the food at his hotel. He would eat everything else with relish, only leaving aside the Great Eastern's rice-dish; he used to say that a Muslim-cooked rice-dish simply would not go down his throat. The very prejudice by which he could not bring himself to eat that rice would, by that same prejudice, prevent him from mingling well with Muslims. The habits of mind that lie embedded within us, taking their command from religious law—it is precisely within those habits that the rigidity of Hindu-Muslim antagonism has built its eternal fortress; the goodwill of the Khilafat movement, or the sacrifice of financial interest, does not reach into that inner chamber.

It is precisely because these problems of our country are inward that they are so intractable. The obstacle lies within the mind of each one of us; when we speak of removing it, our own minds rise in rebellion. For this very reason, the moment we hear of some extremely easy, external procedure, we heave a sigh of relief. The very man in whose own heart lies the obstacle to earning wealth by the right path

is precisely the one who, gambling at dice in the mad hope of instantly becoming a great man overnight, is ready to bring about his own utter ruin.

If it be generally accepted that spinning the wheel is the chief limb of the practice of swaraj, then it must be conceded that, in the popular view, swaraj is an external material gain. It is for this very reason that, turning our minds away from the fundamental matter—those obstacles rooted in character and in social custom that stand in the way of self-reliance in the country's welfare—and fixing our attention with excessive concentration upon the turning of the spinning-wheel, people are not disturbed, but rather find relief. In such a state of affairs, let it even be granted that if the cultivators put their idle hours to profitable use, a major obstacle to our attainment of swaraj might be removed; let it even be granted that this external matter is, in our country, today the very thing most deserving of contemplation.

Then our national leaders must consider by what means the cultivator's leisure time may be properly employed. It goes without saying that if it can be applied to agricultural work, the right path is found at once. If I should fall into severe financial distress, then the friend from whom I seek advice must, above all, bear in mind that I have long been accustomed to literary composition. However much contempt he may feel for the trade of words, if he wishes to do me good he cannot brush this fact aside. He might, perhaps, work out the figures and show me plainly that if a tea shop were opened in the college quarter for students, one might expect a profit at the rate of seventy-five per cent. Leaving man's mind out of the calculation, it is easy to make the figure of profit look very grand indeed. That I would ruin myself entirely by setting up a tea shop is not because, like a skilled tea-seller, I lack intelligence—it is because, unlike the tea-seller, I lack the tea-seller's temperament. Therefore, if my well-wishing friend advises me instead to write detective stories, or to compose notes on school and college textbook subjects, then, driven by dire necessity, I might perhaps try my hand at it. I believe there would be less likelihood of my utter ruin in that than in opening a tea shop. Even if

there be some doubt about the profit, this much at least is certain: to switch a literary man's mind from the line of poetry to the line of detective fiction is no insurmountable task.

To suddenly wrench the cultivator from the education and habit that his body and mind have acquired over a whole lifetime, and thereby make him happy or wealthy, is no easy matter. As I have said before, those whose minds are less exercised are more set in their ways, and even the slightest novelty troubles them. If, out of an excessive fondness for the extreme simplicity of one's own plan, one tries by sheer force to override this law of mental temperament, the mind will remain unconvinced and the plan itself will be crippled.

The effort to enable the cultivator to realise, through cultivation itself, ever greater fulfilment has been undertaken in certain other agriculturally rich countries. In those places, men have, by applying scientific intelligence, brought about enormous improvement in farming. Comparing with our country, one finds that they extract two or three or four times more produce from their land than we do. This path illuminated by knowledge is not the easy path, but the true path. In the discovery of this path lies the proof of manhood. To fail to make the effort to fully exercise the cultivator's enterprise through the development of agricultural excellence, and instead to tell him merely to turn the spinning-wheel, is a mark of powerlessness. We blame the cultivator for being lazy, but when, with the aim of improving his condition, we advise him to take up the spinning-wheel, that itself proves our own mental indolence.

I have carried on this whole discussion on the assumption that if thread and khaddar are produced in the country in abundant quantity, this will remove the economic distress of a class of labourers. But that too is merely an assumption. Those who have experience in this matter have themselves expressed doubt; there is no use in an amateur like myself entering into that debate. My complaint is this: by tying swaraj to the spinning-wheel, the intelligence of the country's common people concerning the meaning of swaraj is being thrown into confusion.

Our conception of what the good of the country truly means must become clear to us. By making this conception excessively external and excessively narrow, we diminish our own strength. If we lower the demand placed upon our minds, the idle mind becomes lifeless. To grant government the foremost place in the country's welfare-work is a means of keeping the humiliated mind in a state of inertia. If we keep before our minds a vivid, luminous, universal image of the country's welfare, then the country's people's manifold currents of strength can dig, with the whole of their heart and intellectual power, a channel flowing toward that single goal. If we make that image petty, we make our own endeavour petty too. Those in this world who have made arduous sacrifices for their country, for humanity, have beheld the image of their country's or of mankind's welfare in a vast, luminous form before the eye of meditation. If we desire man's sacrifice, then it is necessary to assist that meditation of his. A picture of abundant thread and khaddar is not a grand picture of the country's welfare. This is the picture of a bookkeeper's mind; it cannot awaken that vast, unaccountable power which, out of the joy born of the realisation of the immense, is ready not merely to accept even death for sorrow's sake, but which also disregards the rejection and failure of the world.

A child learns language with joy. For it constantly sees, in its father's mouth and its mother's mouth, the full form of language. Even when it cannot yet clearly understand, this alone continually draws it on. Hence, for the sake of attaining the fullness of this expression, a joyous effort perpetually stirs within it. If this full-formed language did not always surround and encompass the child's mind, if all around it there circled only the threads of a primer's grammar, then it would have to be taught its mother tongue only by weeping under the rod's blows—and even so, it would take a very long time to learn.

For this reason I believe that if we wish truly to initiate the country into the practice of swaraj, we must strive to make manifest, immediately before its eyes, the complete image of that swaraj. I do not say that in a short time the magnitude of that image will grow very great; but I do insist upon this demand—that it be whole, that it be true. The fulfilment of anything possessing life follows, from the very

outset, the path of wholeness. Were this not so, an infant would at first be born as merely a big toe; then that would gradually grow into a leg reaching to the knee; and then, after fifteen or twenty years, the complete human body would appear. The ideal of wholeness exists within the child from the very beginning, and that is why we take such joy in it. It is for the sake of that joy that parents can accept the arduous pain of raising it into a human being. Otherwise, if they had to spend four or five years with only a single ankle-and-foot, that partial servitude would become unbearable to them.

If we look upon swaraj at first, for a long stretch of time, only in the form of hand-spun thread, then that same fate will be ours. Through this kind of blind practice, a man of Mahatma-like stature may perhaps, for a while, induce a section of our country's people to act, because their faith rests upon his personal greatness. It is for this reason that many count the mere carrying out of his instructions as itself the attainment of a result. I believe such a mood is not conducive to the winning of swaraj.

I consider it essential that the responsibility of one's country be taken up—not merely through the spinning of thread, but through comprehensive endeavour—and established, in small compass, in the various localities of the country. The thing called the common good is a confluence of many affairs. They are intimately interwoven with one another. If any one of them is taken in isolation, no result is obtained. Only when they are joined together with health, with intellect, with knowledge, with action, with joy, does the whole good of man become fully good. We must look with our own eyes upon that image of the good of our country. From that we shall gain more than from a thousand sermons. Instances must be held before our eyes in which, in particular localities, each individual, taking up some portion or other of the responsibility for the common welfare, has awakened the form of a sound, knowledgeable, prosperous, and united communal life. If that be so, then somewhere in some small part of India we may see clearly the very thing we wish to gain for the whole of India, and then reverence for true fulfilment will be born within us. Then we shall understand the worth of self-reliance—not through intellect, not through much hearing, but through the direct vision of it. If

the people of even a single village of India can, through the power of self-reliance, make that whole village entirely their own, then the very work of gaining one's country as one's own country will have begun exactly there. A living creature is born in a particular place, but merely by being born there the country does not become his own. Man creates his own country for himself. In the labour of that creation and of that preservation, the bond among the people of a country grows intimate, and it is that self-created country which they can love more than life itself. The people of our country are merely born in the country, they are not creating the country; for this reason there exists among them no deep occasion for mutual union, and the harm done to the country does not awaken in each of them any sense of personal harm. We must instil the practice of gaining the country precisely through the creation of the country. For the manifold work of that creation, the manifold strength of man is required. It is only through the application of that manifold strength, moving by various paths toward a single goal, that we come to realise ourselves within the country. This labour of creating the country, if begun from what lies nearest and gradually extended further afield, will alone yield fruit. If we scorn such an endeavour as too small in scope, then let us recall that saying of the Gita—even a little of this righteousness saves from great fear. The force of truth lies not in its magnitude, but in itself.

Only when the practice of collective self-governance, its familiarity, and the sense of pride attached to it, become widespread among the common people, can swaraj, upon that solid foundation, become real. As long as, village by village, both within and without, it remains lacking—and as long as that very lack has become, for the people of the country, the root of the lack of food, the lack of education, the lack of health, the lack of knowledge, the lack of joy—it is utterly beyond belief that swaraj could be established in this country by the force of any external ceremony that rises above this destitution of spirit among the country's collective people. There is a saying in English, that success draws success to itself—in just the same way, swaraj summons swaraj to itself. The very right that Providence possesses over the universe is His swaraj—that is, the right to create the universe. Our swaraj too is that same wealth—that is, the right to create one's own country by oneself. Creation itself proves that right, and creation itself brings about its perfection. It is by staying alive that one proves one has life. Some might perhaps say that spinning

thread is also a form of creation. It is not. The reason is that at the spinning-wheel, man becomes merely a part of the wheel; that is, he does exactly what a machine could have done. He turns it round. Because the machine is a mindless thing, it stands alone; beyond itself it has nothing at all. Just so, the man who is spinning thread is likewise alone; his connection to the spinning thread is not a bond of necessary connection with anyone else. Whether some neighbour of his exists or not—he has no need at all to know. Just as the silkworm weaves its silk thread solitarily around itself, his work is of that same kind. He is mechanical, he is companionless, he is disconnected. When some member of Congress spins thread, he may, at the same time, contemplate the country's economic heaven—but this initiation into that meditative mantra he has received by some other means; within the spinning-wheel itself there is no seed of that mantra. But the man who undertakes to drive out plague from his village—even if, by ill fortune, he must do the work entirely alone—yet at the beginning and end of his labour the thought of the entire village is intimately bound up. It is through this very labour that he realises the whole village within himself. In the creation of the village itself lies his conscious joy. It is in that labour that the true beginning of the practice of swaraj lies. If, thereafter, the whole village joins him in that labour, then we shall understand that the village, by creating itself through its own effort, is advancing toward truly gaining itself for itself. This very gaining is called the attainment of swaraj. Though small in measure, it is not small as truth. That is to say, though the gain be not at the rate of a hundred per cent, it may be a gain at the rate of one per cent; and this gain of one per cent is the equal, indeed the very brother, of a hundred per cent contentment. The village whose people have united fully in the matter of one another's education, health, food, and livelihood, and in the arrangement of shared joy—that very village has lit a lamp upon India's path toward the attainment of swaraj. After that, it will not be difficult to kindle the flame of one lamp from another; swaraj will of itself go on advancing itself, not along the mechanical, circling path of the spinning-wheel, but along the path of life's own self-impelled, comprehensive growth.

Ashwin, 1332

THE DELIRIUM OF SELF-POSSESSION

A hundred and fifty years have passed since English rule seized hold of India from end to end. Whether India has benefited from this rule, whether her wealth, her industry and trade have increased beyond what they were before, or whether the scope of her self-reliance and self-governance has been extended—there is no profit for us in that debate, for such debate will neither erase the past nor soothe the pain of the present. Even from the standpoint of historical curiosity its value is not very great. For there are many facts that we are under no obligation to preserve and remember, save in secrecy and silence. So what use have I for such a discussion, the outcome of which may be neither happy nor satisfying?

But there is one point about which there is no equivocation at all. This much both sides admit—that despite so long a connection, East and West have not met; rather, the gulf between them has only widened. When two races are compelled to deal with one another, and yet no true union between the two is possible, then whatever benefits we derive from this intercourse, the weight of it is very heavy indeed. Therefore when we say that, crushed beneath the burden of this unnatural separation, we have become one in flesh and bone, we do not say this as an accusation against the aim or method of the ruling system. Today that statement extends far beyond the good or ill of India herself. From our own pain we can understand that today, throughout the world, a mighty civilisation has spread out its net, a civilisation that can exploit, that can rule, but which lacks that spiritual power by which man is united with man. A civilisation that, with contempt, showers benefits from outside upon our heads, while haughtily demanding of our inmost hearts a gratitude that its own heart does not give in return—that is, it does not give its heart along with its gift, yet it sits demanding the heart's worth in exchange for its favour.

Therefore this much must be admitted: that this civilisation may well possess ample intellectual wealth, but it suffers a deficiency of that one truth which is the greatest of all things to mankind. It is for this very reason that whatever nations have grown up in the hands of this modern civilisation, the moment they meet with any difficulty, they grope first toward the outside; they think that something has gone wrong in their office, in their working method, and that by mending that very method they will find their deliverance. They believe that human society is a chess-game, that if only the pieces are moved cleverly enough, checkmate is assured. They cannot see that in this game of intellect, the very thing counted as victory may, for humankind, be the very greatest defeat.

Man had, one day—clearly or obscurely—arrived at this one belief, that there exists some Being, connection with whom has made true our mutual connection with one another. From that very day his history began. European scientific intellect declares that the root of this belief lies in the belief in ghosts. But we know that this is utter nonsense. There exists among men a profound unity, and it is within that sense of unity that the root of that belief lies, and it is this very sense of unity that forms the foundation of man's ethics of duty. It was the realisation of this one truth that infused life and radiance into the whole of man's creative power; it was through this that he attained, within his own self-realisation, the touch of the infinite.

Naturally, at the beginning of history, man's sense of unity was confined within the bounds of one particular race. Just as, before sowing seedlings in a large field, one must first sow the seed in a small seed-bed, so it was exactly here. For this reason, at the outset, man deemed his own god to be the special god of his own race, and the responsibility of his duty was likewise narrowly confined within the limits of his own race.

When the Aryans came to India, the deities and rites of worship they brought with them seemed as though they were their own peculiar possession. Conflict arose with the non-Aryans—that conflict refused by any means to be resolved; until at last, when the Aryan seer perceived and proclaimed the Universal Self within all

beings, then, from within, the very root of the discord was cut away. Unless intelligence awakens within the heart, how can union come amid diversity?

When the Muslims ruled in India, within the very turmoil of our political upheavals a work of spiritual awakening was in progress. For this reason, just as the Buddhist-era Ashoka had done, so too the Mughal emperor Akbar conceived of not merely a political empire but a religious empire. It was for this reason that in that age, one after another, so many Hindu saints and Muslim Sufis arose, who bore the worship of the one Supreme Lord at the innermost meeting-place of Hindu and Muslim religion. And it was in just this way that, even while there was disunity in the outer world of affairs, at the innermost level of the soul, truth's foundation was being discovered in the light of ultimate reality.

That endeavour toward spiritual truth in India has not become inert even in these present days. So it may be said, with emphasis, that the birth of Rammohan Roy and his austere striving are among the greatest of all events in modern India's history; for East and West shall come to feel their own indivisibility, and the world's need for this is graver today than any other need. When the West struck at India's door, it was through Rammohan Roy, before anyone else, that India gave true answer to that blow. He had realised that unity, within the spiritual wealth won through India's austere striving—that is, within this very belief, that all souls are one within the Supreme Soul—the truth of the union of all mankind.

Many other great and able men have we seen in our own time. They received their education from Western teachers. This Western schooling teaches one to feel one's own race's ego with excessive intensity—the patriotism born of this education has its foundation upon a sense of difference steeped in contempt for other races. For this reason, wherever in the world this education has reached, there a suspicion-ridden hostility toward foreign races has awakened; there men, by fraud and by force, thrusting aside the men of other lands, have roused the whole of their own strength in order to seize, entirely for themselves, every advantage the world affords. This vast, organised structure of arrogance and self-interest, this deliberate

effort to distort the vision by which man is truly seen—this too has come to reach India, along with imported liquor and other such goods. Whatever truth lies within this vast and powerful falsehood, that much we must take for ourselves; otherwise our own nature will become lopsided. But together with this, we must also bear in mind that if India has indeed realised some truth, for want of which the civilisation of other lands is losing its balance and toppling over, then to proclaim that truth today with full force is the greatest task before us of all.

Today the peoples of the Western continent have suddenly come into contact with all the races of the earth. For this momentous event their moral sense has not yet grown fully ready. Hence India's ancient commerce lies today in ruins, China is poisoned through and through, Persia trampled underfoot; hence we have witnessed the demonic revelry of the European merchant in the Congo, and the horrific savagery of Europeans in the Boxer War at Peking. The reason is that Europeans have learned to regard their own race as the truest of all truths.

This has, up to a certain point, carried them forward. But it will not carry them all the way to the end. In the years of boyhood a certain kind of reckless self-assertion is not so unbecoming, but when maturity comes the time arrives to accept social responsibility; if even then a man does not learn to consider the interests of others, then not only does inconvenience befall others, but he himself will never in the long run find true convenience either.

And so a day has now come when the people of the West are, within their own household, coming to understand thoroughly what nationalism truly means. All the convenience of that nationalism which they have themselves so long enjoyed, while heaping the whole burden of its inconvenience upon other races—the shock of that has now come to strike against the walls of their own homes.

Until now, by "man," these people have chiefly understood themselves alone. Because of this, their self-realisation, confined within this narrow limit, has grown

intensely and violently strong; and beyond this limit, weighing their own gain and loss according to their own convenience and inconvenience, they have managed to bring their moral sense down to a very comfortable and manageable size, adjusting it up or down as needed.

But when truth is trimmed to fit the measure of convenience, truth in turn comes to trim us. For some while, and to some extent, it endures such neglect. Then one day, suddenly, it comes forward to collect its due, principal and interest together. Such a time comes which is one of extreme distress, such an occasion arises which is perhaps utterly trivial. Then we count it as Providence's injustice. The man who, on ill-gotten money, spent his years in glory within polite society, if suddenly one day his accounts are exposed, considers that itself an unjust outrage. Great and powerful nations likewise consider their own prosperity so natural and so well-founded that when, on some evil day, an account of that very prosperity's history is demanded of them, they cannot even bring themselves to regard it as fair judgement.

For this reason we see that when Europe falls into severe crisis, it cannot fathom why, in the kingdom of Providence, so much suffering should occur. But why the people of other parts of the world should likewise suffer and be humiliated, this question these very people never put, with the same force, either to Providence or to themselves. Be that as it may, it was well worth their knowing this simple truth—that manhood is an indivisible truth, and that it dwells within all men taken together. When anyone fragments it for the sake of self-interest or racial advantage, sooner or later that blow comes back to strike his own breast. The measure by which the realisation of manhood has become true—by that alone will civilisation be judged—not by the abundance of its imports and exports, the length of its warships, the extent of its subject territories, or the cunning of its statecraft. In this judgement of history, we, the peoples of the East, are the chief witnesses. We must speak the truth without hesitation, however hard the consequence for ourselves, however unwelcome to others. Our voice is not the voice of sovereignty; behind it lies no force of arms. We do not stand upon that lofty throne from which commands are issued to country after country, near and far. We stand outside the

royal court, upon the dust at the roadside, along which the caravan of ages upon ages moves on; along which many a nation, hoisting the banner of victory at dawn, scattering dust to every quarter of the sky, has set forth, only to end its journey by evening in a broken drum and a tattered begging-bowl; how much imperial pride has been ground to powder beneath time's chariot-wheel upon the dust of that very road, and today the broken shards of its dated inscriptions are being gathered up, pieced together crookedly, and made to speak by historians who labour on, though dying themselves in the effort. Our voice is the voice of anguish—by the strength of truth is its strength; one day it shall rise above all this din and clamour and come to rest at the very foot of the throne of the god of history.

There was a day when Europe had set out to seek her own soul. Then, amid many distractions of thought, she had understood this: that it is not through external gain, but through becoming true within, that man attains his greatest wealth. She knew that the worth of this gain was not merely a fancy of our own minds, but that its worth lay in that supreme love which has, throughout all time, remained wide awake within the human world. Then came a day when science revealed the majesty of the external world, and forcibly wrenched Europe's devotion away from the soul and toward matter.

Science holds a truly great significance for mankind. That there exists a co-operation between the laws of nature and man's knowledge—this science proves. That it is with the help of nature's own laws that man can escape the bondage of natural selection and win the glory of the free choice of moral conscience—this is the teaching of science. That nature is no obstacle in the path of man's attainment of fulfilment, that only by dealing truly with nature can we give form to our spiritual vision and establish it upon a real foundation—of this truth, Europe bears the charge of proclamation.

Where science serves the work of relieving the sorrow and want of the common people at large, where its gift reaches out to the whole world, there alone is the greatness of science fulfilled. But where it becomes specially engaged in the work

of enriching or empowering some particular person or race, there lies its terrible downfall. For its temptation is so exceedingly vast and overwhelming that our moral sense is overpowered before it, and, donning the great-sounding names of nationalism and patriotism, turns to fight against its own very strength. Because of this, today, everywhere in the world, the relationship between one nation and another has, on the side of the weak, grown heavy with subjugation and bondage, and on the side of the strong, has become arrogant in an endless competition of savagery; in every land war and the preparation for war have become perpetual, and statecraft, the vehicle of political pestilence, has grown ever more polluted, at every turn, with cruelty and deceit.

Yet still I hope that the fruit of Europe's long austere striving will not fall, trampled to dust beneath the feet, into this terrible conflict of material greed. In the desperate crisis of today Europe is groping about for some new system, some new political arrangement. But after repeated schooling in the classroom of death, Europe will one day, if not now then some day, have to concede that faith placed solely in the building of a pyramid of administrative method is a blind idolatry; she will have to understand that it is not the outer method but the inner truth that must be sought; she will have to understand that if the fuel of desire and self-aggrandisement is gathered without ceasing, a world-consuming conflagration cannot but eventually occur. One day, waking up, Europe will have to set bounds to her own greed and mad arrogance; and then she will discover that it is not matter that is truth, but the immortal essence alone that is truth.

In the blindness of jealousy one must not deny Europe's greatness. Her geographical situation, her climate, her mingling of races have come together in such a way that her history has naturally become rich in strength, in beauty, and in the spirit of independence. In her natural surroundings there exists such a harmony of hardness and softness that on the one hand it summons the whole of man's strength to struggle, and on the other hand it does not overwhelm his mind into hopeless fatalism. On the one hand it has aroused in the hearts of Europe's children such a fervour that their enterprise and courage will nowhere admit any limit to their claims; on the other hand it has instilled in their intellect a freedom from error,

in their imaginative faculty a disciplined restraint, in all their creations a sense of proportion, and in the aim of their lives a sense of the real. One by one they have brought forth the deep mysteries of the universe, measured them, weighed them, and mastered them; they have discovered a certain unity at the innermost heart of nature—not through meditative contemplation, nor by the force of logic, but by tearing away the outer veil, by piercing through the wall of diversity. By their own strength they have thrown open the locked doors and come to stand within the great treasure-house of nature's power, and with greedy hands they plunder that hoard.

Europe's pride concerning her own strength has grown so great that she no longer judges where her deficiency lies. In a land where the form of external nature is excessively vast or overwhelming, just as man's mind there becomes overwhelmed and self-forgetful before it, so too man, before the excessive abundance of his own accumulated wealth and outward construction, becomes bewitched and defeated by his own self. As the harmony of the inner world is destroyed under the weight of outer vastness, one day man's prosperity comes crashing down, ground to dust, in a terrible cataclysm. Rome herself was once bewildered by the very vastness of her own empire. That her truth was being defeated day by day before the immeasurable magnitude of matter, she herself could never even know. Yet in that very age, the Jewish people were politically subjugated and humiliated. But it was an obscure, destitute man of that subjugated race who unveiled the treasure of a truth that triumphed over that mountainous heap of material wealth. It was the Jew who reminded arrogant Rome of just this much—that you must know your own soul to be greater than your own wealth. In this one utterance a new age dawned in the history of the world.

Through the words of the destitute, man's reverence for his own self was born; he set forth to attain his own soul. Outside, obstacles were manifold, yet, struggling ceaselessly against himself, he advanced toward gathering the divine treasure of the immortal realm. At that very moment, once again, temptation came from outside to break his austere striving. Science came and stood before him, to place the outer world into his hands. Once again Europe began to see her own

accumulation of matter as greater than her own soul. Watching, matter has gone on growing on every side.

But this is untrue. However we may name and glorify this outward thing, it cannot save us. It will drag man, without cease, through suspicion, jealousy, rivalry, deceit, blind arrogance, and finally to death by violence; for the greatest truth for man is this—Dearer than all else is that inmost Self within. This inmost Self is dearer than everything else in the outer world.

The new self-creation that history in Europe once brought forth had no foundation in any new method of administration, in any new form of state. The moment this one truth—that man's soul is truer than all else—touched her mind, her creative power was aroused on every side. In today's terrible calamity, Europe will have to remember this once again. Otherwise, one death-arrow after another will go on striking her down.

And we, today, run about pleading for freedom before this very West, pierced through with the arrows of death. But what can this dying thing give to us? One kind of political system existed before—shall it be exchanged merely for another kind of political system? But can man take up any truly great thing, passed from one hand into another's hand? Whatever true treasure man acquires, he acquires it within his mind, not from without. By the alms of another we shall not become free—not in any way at all. Freedom is the property of the inner soul.

The West cannot grant us liberation, because her own mind has not attained liberation. Where is the limit of her greed? The very hand by which she might give some true gift, greed has bound fast—she has no power to give truly, for she is the slave of her own passions. Only he who is free can grant freedom.

If, taking counsel from calculating self-interest, she comes to give us something, she will only go on fragmenting her own gift by her own hand. Whatever she gives with one hand, she will take away more with the other. When we come to test the gift of self-interest, we shall find it so riddled with holes that whether it can even keep us afloat, let alone keep us afloat securely, is doubtful indeed.

Therefore I say this: if we cling in our minds to the mistaken belief that freedom can be won from without, then that error will shatter amid the greatest of sorrows. It is only because we ourselves have not been prepared for sacrifice that our bondage exists, within and without. The hand that can give is the very hand that can take. We give exceedingly little to our own country—that is precisely why we have not attained our own country. Whoever says that only when some outsider places our country into our hands, ready-made, shall we then attain it—that person, even were the gift granted, would be unable to keep it. We give our own people sorrow, we insult them, we scorn them, we deceive them, we do not trust them—it is for this very reason that our own have become alien to us, not from any sudden external cause.

When the Jews were a subject people, they did not receive freedom as a gift from Rome's hand. Later it so happened that the Jews, driven from their land, scattered abroad throughout foreign countries. They had neither state nor political system. Yet this is not the most important fact in their history. Far greater than this is the fact that, from them, the seed of the spirit flew forth and gave new humanity to Europe. In what they gave lies their fulfilment. That which they lost, that which they never possessed—even so, despite that, they are great, and history has proven it.

Man's measure is not the measure of what lies outside him—this we forget again and again, and yet again and again it must be remembered. That Europe subdued China by force of arms and made her drink poison—that is not the great matter. But the great matter is this: that India, one day, without any force of arms at all, gave China to drink the nectar of immortality. Even if India today should sink to the bottom of the sea, still, whatever she has given as gift, by the strength of that gift

alone she remains within the realm of human thought. It is not by the strength of what she begged, what she stole, what she piled up in heaps, that she remains.

By the power of austere striving may we win the right to that gift—not the right of begging—let no temptation ever make us forget this. Because man is man, he does not live by matter alone; he lives by truth alone. This alone is his truth: Him alone knowing does one cross over death; there is no other path to go by. Knowing Him alone can man transcend death; there is no other means of deliverance. We are called upon to offer this truth as our gift. The call of Montagu is indeed a great call, and it is proclaimed, on this very ground, from assembly to assembly, from newspaper to newspaper, across India. But by this beggar's call we shall not become men. Our forefathers call to us from the world of the immortals, saying: Know that you are the children of immortality, and make this known to others; give to this death-shadowed world the gift of this truth—that not through any system of administration, not through any form of state, not through commercial arrangement, not through the ferocity of the weapons of war, but only thus: Him alone knowing does one cross over death; there is no other path to go by.

Magh, 1324

SWAMI SHRADDHANANDA

In our country, few indeed are those qualified to take up the vow of truth, and fewer still are those who possess the strength to keep that vow with their very lives—and it is precisely because their number is so small that the country suffers such great misfortune. In this poverty of spirit, wherever one looks, the death of a hero as immense as Swami Shraddhananda is a calamity so profound that there is no need to describe how far its sorrow extends. Within this there is one thing worth noting—that however lamentable his death, in that very death his life, his character, has grown only the more exalted. Again and again history shows us that upon the foreheads of those who have given the whole of themselves to embrace the vow of the common good, insult and violent death have inscribed, in just such a manner, the mark of victory. Great souls come to make life triumphant even over death, to make truth the very substance of life. Whatever materials there are for giving life to matter exist in the air, exist even in the scientist's laboratory. But until these take on organic form in plant or in creature, there is no nourishment of life. The same holds true of truth as well. How many indeed possess the power to draw truth in from the mere breath of words and make it a thing of living reality? Many there are who know truth; but he alone truly holds it who is possessed of a particular power. It is only by holding it with one's very life that we make truth the possession of all mankind. This power to hold fast is itself a mighty thing. Those who bring to society the wealth of this power give a gift beyond all price. Shraddhananda has bequeathed to this feeble nation an ideal of steadfast devotion to truth. The name he chose, fitting for the character of his austere striving, has proved worthy of itself. He held truth in reverence. Within that reverence lies a creative power. By the strength of that power he gave form to his striving, and made it a living thing. Hence even his death has risen up like a light, illuminating brilliantly the fearless, undiminished, untiring nectar-image of his reverence. This vast joy of reverence for truth we may today see manifest in fitting form within his character. This fulfillment lies not in any outward result, but in his own unfeigned reality.

This blow of sudden violence only great souls can bear; only for them does it hold any meaning. Those who have been able to raise death above petty self-interest have, while yet living, crossed over into the realm of immortality. But the shadow of this death shall not depart having merely taken Shraddhananda's life. That horror which religious fanaticism, riding upon the shoulders of religious rebellion, spread blood-stained through the streets of the city not long before—that we have already witnessed. Those whom it destroyed have nothing left to them at all. Their death is death absolute, their loss is loss supreme.

In their homes there is no solace for the boundless weeping of childless mothers, no peace for the sorrow of widows. This very ruthlessness, which settles everything at a single stroke, utterly, mercilessly—this cannot be endured. They are the weak, the frail of spirit, those whom we call the common people—how shall they bear so great a burden of violence? Now we see again that the gates of Death's kingdom have been thrown open, that once more the competition of murder between neighbor and neighbor has begun. Who shall bear this sorrow?

When Providence sends us sorrow, it comes bearing a single question. It asks us: how will you receive me? It cannot be that calamity will never come—the time of crisis arrives, no means of immediate deliverance remains; but how we make use of calamity, upon that alone depends the true answer to the question. When this sin has revealed itself, blackened—shall we be terrified by it and bow our heads before it? Or shall we set sin against sin? Shall we, upon the blow of death, upon the blow of grief, awaken the frenzy of our own base passions? We observe in the conduct of a child that when it falls suddenly, it begins to strike the floor. The harder it strikes, the harder the floor strikes back. This is the child's law. But if some grown man should stumble, he considers—where was the obstacle? If there was an obstacle, it must either be removed or bypassed. We commonly see that at the shock of a sudden blow from without, man's childish instinct returns. He then thinks that patience is cowardice, and the display of wrath is manliness. I grant that on such a day anger will naturally arise. Human nature cannot be entirely cast off. But if we allow ourselves to be overpowered by wrath, that too is not human nature. If, when fire catches, a neighborhood is helplessly reduced to ashes, it is futile to

discuss the fire's ferocity. If blame must then be laid upon someone, let it not fall upon the fire itself. The cause of calamity exists everywhere; it is those who keep no remedy for it who are truly at fault. If those whose homes have burned can say, "We received this punishment for the offense of not having dug a well," then the fear of their homes burning in the future is lessened. This is what we too must say today. We must consider the root of the offense. Hearing this, people may perhaps say: no, this does not satisfy—one finds consolation in stirring up a great cataclysmic affair instead.

The inhabitants of India fall broadly into two great divisions—Hindu and Muslim. If we think that by denying the Muslims and pushing them aside to one quarter, all endeavors for the country's welfare will succeed, we shall be gravely mistaken. To count five annas of the roof as valuable and the remaining eleven as worthless may be a matter of vexation, but it is not a matter of sound judgment where the preservation of the roof itself is concerned. Our greatest calamity, our greatest misfortune occurs when man dwells beside man and yet there exists no bond between them, or that bond is distorted. In a foreign ruler's dominion we have an external connection with the ruling officials, yet no inward bond exists. It is precisely this that pains us most under foreign rule. A partnership without true affection brings weakness and dishonor. If this be true of foreign rule, how much truer is it concerning our own countrymen. To have to live side by side within one land, and yet to have no bond of heartfelt cordiality between us—perhaps there may be a bond of mere necessity—it is exactly there that lies the fissure—not a fissure, but the very gate of Hell. Between two neighbors, where such a gulf as this exists, it is precisely there that the trumpet of calamity splits the sky asunder. In our country, whenever all have joined together in an attempt to draw the chariot of common welfare—through the Congress and various other endeavors—where does that chariot come to a halt, where does it break down? Precisely there, where the pits have stood gaping for a thousand years.

When the Swadeshi movement arose in our country, I was myself part of it. The Muslims at that time did not join it—they were opposed to it. Some of our national leaders, growing indignant, said: let us simply deny them altogether. I know they

did not join. But why did they not join? At that time such powerful participation arose among Bengali Hindus that it was a marvel! But this vast fervor remained confined entirely within Hindu society; it never touched Muslim society! Even then we did not learn our lesson. We have deepened, in the name of society, the ditch of separation between us. To preserve that ditch and yet demand that it be leaped over at will—such a wish cannot be granted. One might say: the ditch, after all, is ancient, but the terrible calamity that has now arisen within it is indeed new; therefore some modern ghost has secretly contrived to break our necks—the ditch itself bears no fault, it is merely the pressure of Brahma's ancient thumb that made it so. One thing must be remembered: when a broken carriage is kept in the carriage-house, no disturbance arises. Children may even play within it; indeed, it might even serve as a resting place at noon. But the moment we try to draw it forward, conflict arises at every broken joint. So long as we did not move it, so long as we stood side by side upon the path of nation-building, performing the duties of the village, we were not jolted at all. When I first entered upon my zamindari office in my youth, I saw one day that my agent had, in his reception hall, rolled back the carpet slightly in one spot. When I asked why, I received the answer: this arrangement is for those respected Muslim tenants who have the privilege of entering the reception hall. They must be seated on the same dais, and yet made to understand that we are separate. This custom has, after all, continued for a long time; for a long time Muslims accepted it, and Hindus too accepted it. Upon the carpeted seat sat the Muslim; upon the bare floor sat the other. Later I said to them: we are brothers—you too must accept sacrifice alongside me, must walk the path of imprisonment and death. Then suddenly I saw the other side, donning bright new red fezzes, saying: we are separate. We ask in astonishment—where, then, lies the obstacle to standing side by side in matters of the state? The obstacle lies within that vast gap of many years embodied in that carpeted seat. It is no small thing. There lies a boundless, bottomless dark water. One cannot cross it merely by standing on a platform and shouting across.

It is precisely because national consciousness has awakened in this present age that every fissure, every gap, has become plainly visible. That is exactly why we suffer this blow. This blow comes in many forms—but today it has appeared writ large in the death of this great soul. Great souls take this blow to their breast and thereby

reveal its utter horror to us. Through that alone do we come to consciousness. Now that this consciousness has come, shall we, becoming slaves to our own passions, destroy this auspicious opportunity? Shall we not say to that awakened good sense: wherever we have created division, there we have strung the altar of sin—save us from that very thing!

That this fearsome sin has revealed itself in such terrible form is, in one sense, actually a good thing. Today there is no escaping the need to consider how this may be vanquished forever. The question may arise: what immediate measure should we adopt? I do not have the capacity to give any ready-made, definite answer to this question all at once. Beginning the trial, we shall gradually, one day, find that means. Today is the preparation for beginning that trial. Today we must see where in our Hindu society lies what fissure, what sin, so that it may be attacked most ruthlessly. Bearing this purpose in mind, we must today call upon Hindu society; we must say: we have suffered, we have been shamed—not because of blows from outside, but because of the sin within us. Come, let us all join together today to remove that sin. For us this is no easy matter. For within us lies deeply ingrained, long-habituated discriminatory thinking, and outside too stands the exceedingly hard wall of division, built up over many years. When the Muslim called upon Muslim society for some purpose, he met no obstacle—in the name of the One God he called out, crying "Allahu Akbar." And today when we shall call, "Come, O Hindus"—who will come? Among us how many petty sects, how many factions, how many provincial loyalties—rising above all these, who will come? How many calamities have passed by. Yet still we have never truly become one.

When Muhammad Ghori first came from outside bearing that initial blow, even then, in the very days of that impending peril, the Hindus did not unite. Afterward, when temple after temple began to be demolished, when divine images were shattered into dust, they fought, they died, fighting piecemeal, dying divided into fragments. Even then they could not unite. Because we were divided, we perished—age after age we have furnished this proof. Sometimes we try, by excavating history, to find contrary proof; we say: the Sikhs, after all, once removed an obstacle. But that obstacle the Sikhs removed precisely through Sikh religion

itself. Various castes and peoples from all corners of the Punjab were able to unite at the call of the Sikh faith; they were able to give obstruction too; they stood united even to protect their religion. Shivaji once laid the very foundation of a righteous kingdom. Through his extraordinary power he was able to unite the Marathas. That collective strength shook all India to its foundations. When there is harmony between horse and rider, the horse in no way throws its rider; those who fought that day for Shivaji's sake had achieved just such harmony with Shivaji himself. Later that harmony no longer remained; among the Peshwas, division of thought and conduct, fragmented self-interest grown sharp and keen, tore that momentary structure of nationhood into pieces. My point is this: this sin that we have nurtured within ourselves—is it only our own misfortune, or through that sin do we not also do injustice to our neighbors, do we not stir up hatred within them? The weak man provokes the strong and thereby draws him onto the path of sin. The principal refuge of sin lies within weakness itself. Therefore, if the Muslim strikes and we, falling again and again, only receive blows—then let us know that it is our own weakness alone that has made this possible. For our own sake, and for our neighbor's sake too, we must remove our own weakness. We may appeal to our neighbors: do not be cruel, be good, no religion can rest upon the foundation of the murder of men—but such an appeal is the wailing of the weak. Just as a storm arises of its own accord when the air in the atmosphere grows light, no one can stop it merely by invoking the name of religion; so too, if weakness is nurtured and preserved, oppression arises there of its own accord—no one can prevent it. For a while, perhaps taking hold of some pretext, we may bind ourselves in artificial bonds of friendship, but this cannot last forever. Until the very soil in which the thorn-bush grows is purified, no fruit whatsoever shall come of it.

He who has made even his own kin into strangers, who has no kinship even with strangers—he has surely arrived at the shore's edge; where, then, is his home? And how long, indeed, is his very breath to last? Today is our day of repentance—today we must wash away our offense. Only if we perform a true atonement shall the Enemy become our friend, only then shall the Terrible One be gracious toward us.

Magh, 1333

HIJLI AND CHITTAGONG

Let me say first of all that I am not a political leader; my field of work lies outside political agitation. Taking up some wrong or fault committed by the authorities and entering it into our political ledger is not something in which I take particular delight. This matter of the firing of shots at Hijli, which is today our subject of discussion—whatever I have to say about its lamentable cowardice and brutality is addressed solely to that dishonored humanity within us.

To join so vast a public assembly is harmful to my body, distressing to my mind; but when the call came, I could not remain still. The call came from those very sufferers whose voices the so-called protectors have, through murderous cruelty, silenced forever.

When it is seen that, treating public opinion with contemptuous disregard, such horrors can be perpetrated with such utter ease, one must conclude that the character of British rule in India has become corrupted, and that from now on there arises the fear of our misfortune's terrible tyranny increasing ever further. Where it is so easy for the people of a country to be afflicted with reckless insult and violent death, and yet where the hope of due process and just redress is so obstructed, there the responsibility for protecting the subjects, resting upon those very rulers and upon the moral judgment of their own kith and kin, will inevitably become corrupted, and there the very foundation of civilized statecraft cannot but grow rotten.

My reason for coming to this assembly is nothing other than this: I wish, on behalf of my countrymen, to warn the rulers that however powerful a foreign ruler may

be, the loss of self-respect is, for such a ruler, above all else, a source of weakness. The establishment of this self-respect lies in righteousness, in unwavering devotion to truth despite all cause for outrage. It may not be difficult for a king to compel his subjects to submit to oppression, but when the subjects' minds, taking their appointed rights, come themselves to judge the king, what power then can restrain them? We must not forget that ultimately it is upon the subjects' favorable judgment and heartfelt support that the permanence of foreign rule finally depends.

I do not wish today, by dressing up fierce and inflammatory words, to make a futile display of my own emotional agitation, and my request to the speakers of this assembly is this: that they remember that whatever height this event's own banner of shameful infamy may already occupy, our words of condemnation, however forcefully spoken, cannot possibly reach any higher. This too must be remembered: that we ourselves must preserve within our own hearts that grave tranquility by which we retain the patience to consider the fundamental remedy for this sin, and that in response to the harsh, severe suffering forced upon our persecuted brothers, we too may prepare ourselves for harsher sorrow and sacrifice.

In conclusion, I offer our heartfelt condolences to the grief-stricken families, and I also declare this: that even should this heart-rending calamity come to a complete end, the grieving memory of it, held by all the people of this land, shall grant the bright radiance of sanctification at the altar of the disembodied soul.

II

Toward the guards of Hijli jail who murdered two political prisoners there, a certain Anglo-Indian newspaper has, with crocodile tears, repeatedly proclaimed its Christian love of mankind. The reason given for sympathy toward the offenders is this: according to the writer, amid various provocations, such unbearable strain fell upon their nerves that no steadiness grounded in sound judgment could be

expected of them. These extremely well-fed, well-clothed persons enjoy freedom and unblemished self-respect; their dwellings are comfortable, their food and manner of living wholesome; and it was they who, one dark night, mounting a murderous expedition all together, charging in attack, so distressed the nerves of those wretched men who, bound in the manner of savages, were awaiting an indefinite, uncertain fate for an unspecified period, that their nerves grew continually tormented. The editor, applying the soothing balm of his own compassionate paragraph, has offered consolation to the tortured hearts of these murderers.

At the root of most crimes lies nervous overwhelm, and greed, grief, and anger stir such ungovernable turbulence that it makes one wholly forget social responsibility and the consequences of one's actions. And yet, even though such offenses may arise from nervous distress or mental derangement, the law does not condone them; it is precisely because it does not condone them that man, through the force of self-restraint, can hold back the impulse toward crime. But if the nectar of compassion is, by special arrangement, supplied separately only to the class of government-employed murderers—to those who from the very outset harbored within them the hope of impunity, who, though appointed as guardians of the rule of law, trampled that very rule of law underfoot with defiant swagger—if, invoking the excuse of the nerves of these very "gentlemen," a separate standard of judgment is to be sanctioned for them alone, then the fundamental principle of justice recognized throughout the civilized world will be dishonored, and the effect this will produce in the minds of the general public cannot be achieved even through the spread of countless seditious pamphlets.

On the other hand, I do not hope even for a moment that in our country those fanatical bands of political zealots who shall be proven guilty by properly constituted courts should escape the sentence of justice—even though, before our very eyes, the extremity of nervous strain among cowardly oppressors, witnessed in horrifying spectacles, may lead to their deliverance without punishment. If, regarding their outraged kinsfolk and their own insulted humanity, they conceive of some harsh duty, then let this too be kept firmly in mind: that the full price of

that duty must be paid by them alone. It is well known to all that it is through the guidance of European schoolmasters that the students of our country have thoroughly absorbed, in accordance with their own perspective, the history of the winning of freedom in Western lands, and it goes without saying too that that very history is strewn with horrors, openly or secretly perpetrated by both crown and subjects alike, in violation of law—not long ago its terrible example was made vivid and clear in Ireland.

Nonetheless, unlawful crime must be recognized as crime, and its just consequences must be made inevitable—this alone is desirable. And yet it is equally a matter of historical record that those in whose hands lay military might and royal power, or those nurtured under the patronage of such power, have not hesitated to evade justice and, forcibly suppressing the voice of the common people, to go to the utmost extremity of villainy on a vast scale and through secret methods. But fortunately for humankind, such a policy cannot in the end succeed.

In closing, I particularly urge the Government, and along with it my countrymen, that this endless cyclical dance of violence and counter-violence should now, at once, come to rest. That releasing the expression of anger and resentment unchecked is natural to common human nature, there is no doubt; but this is no mark of sound judgment on the part of either ruler or ruled. Such mutual frenzy of wrath on both sides is utterly ruinous—as a result our sorrow and our failures will only increase, and it will bring about a complete collapse of our trust in the moral courage of those who govern; for the establishment of such courage in the eyes of society is proven only through its own generosity.

Kartik, 1338

HINDU-MUSLIM

Our national leaders have pledged that they shall awaken a great nation, founded upon the unity of every province and every society of India, and shall thereby construct for it a single, undivided seat.

That seat—that is, what is called a constitution—is an external thing, one that must be shaped and molded by settling the question of our mutual rights within the framework of state governance. Various models of it we have seen in the histories of various lands, and from among these we have set about selecting and choosing to fix our plan. The belief was that the obstacle to firmly establishing and setting it up lay outside, that is, within the will of the present authorities. It is with reconciling that will, with negotiating and bargaining over that, that we have for some time now risen up and set to work.

When it seemed the work was progressing, we suddenly received a jolt and found the great obstacle lay among ourselves. Even if the charioteer should agree to the proposal of bringing the chariot to its holy destination, when the time comes to push it out of the stable, we come to our senses—the two wheels of the little cart are so contrarily mismatched that to attempt to drive it at all risks its overturning.

With the alien power with whom our relation lies outside ourselves, though it is difficult, it is not utterly impossible to expel it forcibly through struggle, one day driving it from the threshold—there our contest is one of victory or defeat. But in a quarrel among those within the household, even if one party wins, on the whole that is itself a defeat, and even in defeat there is no deliverance. There is no possibility of excluding either party, yet if we try to keep either subdued, that will only keep the mischief perpetually inflamed. If the right-side teeth try to boast by loosening the left-side teeth, then in the end one's own self will not remain firm.

All this while we gave our whole mind to the seat of state alone—engrossed simply in thinking what form it should take. It is precious and covetable. Watching our neighbors build their imagined seats, we feel envy at the pomp of their assemblies. But alas, we have long forgotten the essential preparation for welcoming the bridegroom himself. And so today, over this very pledge, the wedding party breaks into quarrel. We never gave a thought, from the very beginning, to the ill-omened planet threatening this auspicious ceremony—we merely spent our days debating the furnishings of the seat.

That the need for creating a great nation, in the political sense, is far greater in our country than the mere building of a great political throne, goes without saying. In our society, our religion, our language, our customs, there is no end to our divisions. This fragmentation is opposed to our political integrity; but what makes it worse still is that this division has caused grievous injury to our very cultivation of humanity. Men live cheek by jowl with one another, and yet somehow their minds never meet, no cooperation exists in their work, at every step quarrels and conflicts arise—this is the mark of barbarism. Yet the self-governance we are demanding is not something befitting barbarians. Those in whose religion, in whose social custom, there exists such a deep-rooted, disruptive calamity that they tear one thing into seven pieces at the drop of a word—by what instrument shall that scattered, fragmented crowd awaken a unified national existence?

The country in which it is chiefly religion that unites men, and by no other bond can they be bound together, is an unfortunate country indeed. That country, by means of religion itself, creates a division that is, of all divisions, the most calamitous. To acknowledge readily, with easy affection, the worth that belongs to man simply because he is man—that alone is true religious sensibility. Can the country whose very religion afflicts that sensibility save itself through political self-interest?

History has shown, again and again, that whenever some great nation, inspired by new life, has brought about political revolution, its religious hatred too has manifested itself with equal force. This was seen vividly in the French Revolution of

a hundred and fifty years ago. Soviet Russia stands resolutely bent on destroying the established religious order. Recently in Spain too this fire of religious destruction has flared up. In Mexico, rebellion has time and again struck at the Roman Church.

The new Turkey, though it has not uprooted the established religion, has forcibly reduced its power. The underlying point is this: the original founders of particular religions gave their teachings, in the name of divinity, for the sake of uniting mankind, for the sake of freeing them from greed, hatred, and pride. Afterward, the followers of these sects took the words of these great souls, bound them into rigid systems, and distorted and narrowed them; with that very religion they have struck man such terrible blows—not through the giving of material wealth, but through striking at life and reason and strength, trampling underfoot man's most magnificent glory, all in religion's name. The unspeakable cruelty of the Spanish conquerors in ancient Mexico has no parallel. Just as, wielding unchecked power, kings have grown drunk on terrible tyranny time and again, never hesitating to bring about the utter ruin of their subjects in the very name of being their protectors—and it is for that very reason that, in the history of our own time, kingship has been increasingly disappearing from kingdoms—so too, for that very same cause, in matters of religion, many attempts have been made, time and again, to curb the cruel irreligiousness of religious institutions, to save mankind from religious oppression. Today, true freedom has been attained precisely by those countries where religious infatuation has not been permitted to overwhelm the mind of man and to spread, in various forms, mutual indifference or hostility among the inhabitants of a single land.

Hindu society has taken up custom in the name of religion. For this reason, the disparity of custom brings about a rigid division between one and another. It is difficult for a fish-eating Bengali to consider a vegetarian province's neighbor as his own kin. Generally the Bengali, traveling to another province, nurtures within his mind a contempt for any deviation from his habitual custom. The mentality that assigns such enormous value to external custom is bound to have a narrow sense of fellow-feeling. This deficiency reveals itself, time and again, even at national

assemblies, and we see that the invisible barrier we carry with us is grounded in an exceedingly subtle and, for that very reason, exceedingly difficult-to-cross prejudice. Even when we verbally deny it, it lingers within our inner being, beyond our own awareness. Religion has not been able to unite us; rather, having erected a hundred thousand fences, it has fixed those very obstacles as eternal, timeless truths in history. The Englishman identifies his own people simply as English. Had he said "Christian," then the Englishman who is Buddhist, or Muslim, or an atheist would have found himself entangled in awkward difficulty in the very building of the nation. Our chief identity is Hindu or Muslim. One party we call, for special identification, "Hindustani," yet their Hindustan lies outside Bengal.

Some years ago I was traveling in Malabar with my English friend Andrews. The moment we set foot within the boundary of a Brahmin quarter, an educated gentleman belonging to Theosophical society, who had accompanied us, suddenly broke away and fled. Andrews, astonished, went and caught hold of him, and upon inquiring learned that entry into that neighborhood was forbidden to people of his caste. It goes without saying that, by the rules of Hindu society, Andrews's own customs and conduct were, by many degrees, far more objectionable than this Theosophist gentleman's. Because he belongs to the ruling race, he has that strength; but a Hindu, though himself a Hindu, has no such strength of kinship in the eyes of another Hindu. Regarding him, even the Hindu's deities preserve their caste; even Lord Jagannath himself is not visible to all eyes. Even a stepchild may claim a share of his mother's lap—why, then, in Mother India's universal lap, should there be so much division? We have kept this lack of kinship deeply rooted in our customary practice, and yet we are astonished when, in matters of national necessity, we fail to find kinship from them. I have heard that this time, in parts of East Bengal, during outrages against Hindus, the Namasudras joined most cruelly with the Muslims. Should we not consider why their affection failed—where, precisely, did the sense of kinship-duty meet its obstacle?

The countless hidden recesses of this lack of kinship have, over long ages, openly frustrated our political destiny and even today are causing us sorrow from within. In loud voice we proclaim, "We are one"; yet on some subtler plane, the departed

spirit sitting in our inmost being says: "In matters of religion, of action, of custom, of judgment, you possess no generosity sufficient to become one." The result of this is now bearing fruit; and we are angry at the fruit, not at the sowing of the seed.

When Bengali sentiment was in an uproar over the ominous proposal of the Partition of Bengal, the Bengalis attempted, out of necessity, to adopt a policy of boycott. Taking ruthless advantage of Bengal's misfortune at that time, the Bombay mill-owners hesitated not at all to increase their profit margins and thereby thwart our desperate efforts. Alongside this it was seen that on that day the Bengali Muslims turned their faces away from us. It was in that very era that the shameful, disgraceful sectarian rioting between Hindu and Muslim first began in Bengal. There is no need to argue over which side was chiefly at fault, or from where this sudden disturbance drew its impetus. What we must consider is this: that if Bengal were divided in two, the crippling weakness that would be created within the Bengali nation would be harmful to every community of Bengal, and indeed to the whole of India—we lacked the unity of feeling to understand this with true sympathy, and it was for that very reason that on that day such alien non-cooperation from Bengali Hindus proved possible. This fact must be remembered when constructing the framework of the national idol. We cannot deceive Providence by deceiving ourselves.

Many people grew angry over this affair at that time. But when water leaks from a pitcher with a hole in it, of what use is it to fix one's eyes upon the water or upon the pitcher? However great our zeal, the hole will naturally behave like a hole. The disgrace is ours alone, and that disgrace shall be exposed in due time; by no favor of fate shall shame be averted.

It has been said that instead of a single unified state governance in India, a federal system of governance should be introduced. That is, there will be no illusion whatsoever that the joints will not show at all—we have had to accept that our country lacks a unity so complete that this can be so thoroughly resolved. Let us

grant this as a practical settlement of our national problem. But even so, one hard knot remains—the division and hostility between Hindu and Muslim. This separation has, for many reasons, come to stand fast, having become deeply internal. Its cracks cannot be mended by any political veneer applied from outside; should the temperature rise but a little, for whatever reason, the crack will open again.

Where genuine division exists among ourselves, there alone does the calculation of political power break down into separate, independent accounting in separate compartments. There, the notion of everyone's undivided interest in the nation's wealth does not naturally come to mind. In such an unfortunate carriage, difficulty arises when two horses try to pull it in two different directions. From this very point onward, uproar has arisen over the division and allotment of rights. Is there any hope that, even after passing through the Round Table Conference with the aid of political acumen, this uproar will grow steadily less rather than more? In the reign of self-interest, quarrels break out even among brothers born of the same womb. In the end, the ultimate settlement falls into the hands of hooligans, at the door of Death, mediated by staff and stick.

A group of Muslims oppose joint electorates; they demand separate electoral rights and wish to increase the weight on their scale through various special concessions. If Muslims, all or the majority, agreeing unanimously, demand separate electoral rights, and wish to increase the weight of their own side, then it appears that even accepting such a demand, Mahatmaji is inclined to agree to a compromise. If that is so, it would be best to accept his proposal with bowed head. For the entire vivid image and the whole method of striving toward the political rights we must win on India's behalf exist, in their entirety, within his mind alone. Up to this point he alone has, with extraordinary skill, brought this whole matter forward against formidable obstacles. Keeping in view the ultimate accomplishment of the task, it is fitting that the responsibility of leadership should, in the end, rest in his hands alone. Yet, relying on the personal tolerance of one man or of one party, we must not forget that if favoritism is shown toward any one side in the distribution of rights, then ordinary human nature will not tolerate that injustice, and an unrest over this

matter will forever remain smoldering, ready to erupt into violence. In truth, this is no way of settling a mutual quarrel. If all parties, becoming united, agree wholeheartedly to a single, unanimous compromise, there is no cause for worry. But the human mind! If any one of its strings is pulled too tightly, the pitch goes awry, and then even invoking the harmony of music will not restore concord. I do not know precisely how Mahatmaji is considering this matter. Perhaps he feels that at the Round Table Conference, keeping our collective demand's force intact is, for the present, the most urgent necessity of all. If both sides remain equally rigid, insisting upon their own point, the work will not proceed. This is true. In such a case, if one side accepts sacrifice and settles the matter, the immediate situation is preserved. This is what is called diplomacy. In politics, if from the very outset one insists upon the full sixteen annas of one's due, one risks losing the entire sixteen annas altogether. Those who, unlike short-sighted misers, do not haggle excessively but know how to compromise—it is they who win. The English have this virtue: to save the ship from sinking, the Englishman can throw a great deal of cargo into the sea. My own belief is that in the present compromise proposal, the enormous sacrifice we are demanding from the English would not be accepted at all by any other nation in Europe; they would raise the stakes ever higher and try to bury the matter altogether. The English are renowned for their good sense in political affairs; the Englishman, keeping the whole picture in view, can tolerate a great deal. That we ourselves lack the need for such good sense is the talk of the obstinate; in the end it is the obstinate who suffer defeat. To allow the mutual estrangement of Hindu and Muslim to proceed too far, over a stubborn, one-sided bargaining regarding political rights, is the chief means of gladdening the enemy's heart.

My point is this: even if some settlement is somehow achieved by lowering one's own demands for the sake of the immediate task at hand, still the fundamental matter remains unresolved. In the field of politics, whatever patchwork unity may be achieved from outside, that unity will not satisfy our need forever. Even in politics, one cannot hope that this patchwork will remain intact indefinitely; the joint of that deception will be pulled at again and again. Wherever the root itself is severed, it is impossible to keep the tree forever fresh by merely pouring water at the top. We must unite at that very root—otherwise there is no welfare in anything.

Until now there was a certain kind of unity at that very root. Even while accepting our differences, we remained close to one another. There was no need to stumble over the barrier of sectarian boundaries; even crossing beyond it, there was sufficient room for union between man and man. Suddenly, at some point, it was seen that both sides had begun to elevate the pride of their own religion. As long as our sense of religion remained simple, though bigotry existed, no disturbance arose from it; but at some point, for whatever cause, when religious pride grew fierce, from that time the thorn-fences of sectarianism began to obstruct and prick one another. We too, when passing before mosques carrying idols in procession, added to the drumbeat some additional stubbornness; the other side too, increasing their enthusiasm for cow-sacrifice beyond what it had been, girding their loins more tightly than before—this was not done out of the necessity of fulfilling one's own religious duty, but out of the arrogance of wounding the other's religious pride. All this turmoil has begun in the cities, where, precisely because there is no true fellowship between man and man, there is no mutual sympathy either.

Regarding religious belief and social custom, one must admit that between Hindu and Muslim there exists not merely difference but outright opposition. Therefore our task must be to strive, despite this, to achieve true harmony. We cannot afford to fail in attaining success in this endeavor. But we have not yet, with our whole heart and mind, even begun to consider the absolute necessity of this. Once, by supporting the Khilafat, Mahatmaji thought he could build a bridge of unity. But "this too was merely external." This is not the fundamental matter; I do not think it wrong that there be difference of opinion regarding the Khilafat—indeed, it has been proven that such difference can exist even among Muslims themselves.

On many occasions and without occasion, we need at all times each other's company and direct conversation. If we walk side by side, if we draw close to one another, then we shall see that it is easy for man to consider man his own, simply because he is man. Regarding those with whom there is no fellowship, differences of opinion and the like become excessively rigid, appearing far greater than they are. The moment mutual visiting and closeness begin to be cultivated, differences

of opinion recede, and the human being comes forward. At Shantiniketan, Muslim students and teachers have come from time to time; we have never felt any difference with them, and in establishing intimacy and bonds of affection, not the slightest obstacle has ever arisen. Among the villages connected with Shantiniketan, there are Muslim villages as well. Once, when Hindu-Muslim rioting, aided by messengers, spread from Calcutta into the countryside, a false rumor was spread in the Bolpur region that Hindus intended to demolish the mosque. Along with this, hooligans were also imported from Calcutta. But we did not have to face any difficulty in keeping the local Muslims calm, for they knew for certain that we were their genuine friends.

Most of my tenants are Muslim. Once, when a certain tension over cow-sacrifice grew intense throughout the country, my Hindu tenants complained to me, asking that it be entirely prohibited within our estate. I did not think that complaint justified; but when I told the Muslim tenants that the matter should be carried out in such a manner that it would not needlessly wound the feelings of the Hindus, they accepted this at once. We have never had any disturbance there to this day. I believe the chief reason is that my relationship with my Muslim tenants is simple and free of obstruction.

We cannot hope that the difference in belief regarding religious matters among the various communities of our country can be entirely erased. Nonetheless, for the sake of our common humanity, we must hope that unity will be achieved among us. If we do not keep one another at a distance, that unity itself will naturally become easier. In terms of companionship, Hindu and Muslim have grown apart in many respects nowadays, aggravating sectarian discord and burying the unity of mankind beneath it. I speak from the Hindu side: let the Muslim's faults be set aside—if we have failed to draw the Muslim close to us, then let us at least acknowledge our shame for that. When I first went, at a young age, to see the estate office, I saw that our Brahmin manager, seated cross-legged on his cushion, held court in a place where, on one side, the carpet was rolled up—that spot being meant for the Muslim tenants to sit; while upon the carpet sat the Hindu tenants. Seeing this, I felt disgust rise within me. And yet this manager belonged to the

modern nationalist faction. He himself enjoys the use of harsh language against the dishonoring of Indians at the English ruler's court, yet he is so miserly when it comes to showing his own countrymen the courtesy due to gentlefolk. This meanness has penetrated deeply into our society and into the field of action; in the end, it has come to this: wherever there are Hindus, the door is narrow for Muslims; wherever there are Muslims, the obstacles for Hindus are immense. So long as this inward division persists, the disparity of self-interest will not be dissolved, and in matters of state governance, reluctance to entrust the welfare of one party to the other's hands will inevitably grow. The very conflict that has arisen today over joint electorates has its root exactly here. When we grow impatient over this conflict, why do we never think of its natural cause?

Meanwhile, in Bengal we have had to endure unspeakable barbarity, time and again. Such oppression was almost commonplace in Russia under Tsarist rule. Before the emergence of the present revolution-prone political age, such inhuman conduct was never heard of in our country. Under British-ruled India, the treasure of many glories—the very jewel of human life itself—began to be insulted, defiantly and repeatedly, before the vigilant eyes of police watch, in the very great cities, precisely at this particular moment. The sorrow of that blow passed not merely over our backs but penetrated into the very depths of the heart. This occurred at precisely the time when, had Hindu and Muslim been able to stand united in voice, our fortune would have grown truly auspicious, and our heads would not have hung low before the eyes of the world. Such inhuman events have embittered public sentiment forever, have increased sectarian division, and have suppressed the unity of mankind. I speak from the Hindu side: let the Muslim's fault remain aside—if we have not been able to draw the Muslim close, we must acknowledge that shame. In our own country's ancient glorious wealth—life, property, and honor—began, in the great cities, to be repeatedly dishonored before the very watchful eyes of police vigilance, precisely at this special time. The sorrow of that blow did not remain confined to our backs alone—it has entered into the very heart. And this occurred precisely at a time when, had Hindus and Muslims been able to raise their voices together, our fortune would have turned truly auspicious, our heads would not have bowed before the assembly of the world. Such inhuman incidents make public memory forever bitter, greatly aggravate sectarian discord, and

suppress human unity. Yet, precisely because of that, we cannot simply abandon the helm; because the knot has grown complicated and tangled, to pull at it in a fit of anger and tighten it further is folly. To let the bitterness of the present render the very seed of the future infertile is a method of national suicide. For various immediate and distant causes, through offenses accumulated over many days, the problem of Hindu-Muslim unity has become difficult; and it is precisely for that reason that we must engage in its resolution promptly and with firm resolve. To grow angry at one's own displeasing fate and thereby double its misfortune is like eating rice mixed with dirt out of spite against the thief.

One of the reasons the present political movement in Bombay was able to proceed with the greatest momentum is that there was not sufficient material there to inflame Hindu-Muslim discord. Among the Parsis and Hindus, it was not easy to set the two sides against each other. Because Parsi society is generally an educated society; Parsis know how to think rationally about their country's welfare, and besides, there is no religious fanaticism among them. In Bengal we live in a house of straw; it takes very little time for fire to catch. In Bengal, precisely at the very moment we set out to negotiate with others, managing our own household becomes impossible. This calamity's cause has struck deep roots here—this fact must be accepted. In this state of affairs, if we are incapable, in calm and rational spirit, of devising means of reconciliation among ourselves, and if, following the natural impulse of Bengali emotional temperament, we simply provoke stubbornness and heighten defiance, then our sorrows will have no end, and the path to national welfare will become utterly impassable.

Some among us, closing their eyes, say: everything will become easy once we hold the country in our own hands. That is, there is this evasion of remaining unconcerned, in the confidence that we shall be able to shift our own burden onto the shoulders of a change in circumstance. Let us examine this a little.

Let it be granted that after the Round Table Conference we ourselves shall obtain the reins of governance over the country. But between now and the handing over

of the country there lies a considerable interim period of very long duration. The term of the Civil Service will have to continue for some time yet. But the Civil Service of that day will be like a wounded wolf. Its temper is bound to run hot. During that very interval, it will need to drive home, again and again, to the people of the country and to the people abroad, the message that the moment British vigilance is relaxed, the serpent of anarchy, coiled in its many pits, will lift its hood from every direction—that we are, therefore, wholly incapable of assuming the responsibility for our own country. It will naturally desire to make even our own people confess that things were better under the earlier regime. In this transitional period, wherever the wounds of our internal enmities lie hidden, it is precisely there that the probing will be most deliberate and most incisive. That will be our time of severest trial. That trial belongs to the whole world's judgment. From now on we must be prepared in every way, so that before the eyes of the entire world, our new history's face is not blackened by folly and barbarism.

Shravan, 1338