ESSAY

THE CO-OPERATIVE PRINCIPLES

Rabindranath Tagore



Contents

PREFACE 2
SAMABAYA (COOPERATION) — I 3
SAMABAYA (COOPERATION) — II 9
THE DISTINCTIVE CHARACTER OF COOPERATION IN INDIA 14
THE PRINCIPLE OF COOPERATION 23
APPENDIX 37

PREFACE

The true form of the motherland lies within the village; there is the resting place of life; there Lakshmi seeks and finds her seat.

That seat has long since ceased to be prepared for her. Kuvera, lord of wealth, has drawn the hearts of the countryfolk toward the city's realm of the Yakshas. We have long forgotten to invite Shri to her rightful place, the granary of our homes. And with her going, beauty departed from the land, health departed, learning departed, joy departed—little indeed of vitality remains. Today the village tank stands dry, the air is fouled, the roads impassable, the granary empty, the bonds of society grow slack, and envy, strife, and evil custom deepen with every passing hour the decay of a decaying people. Little time is left. In a land bereft of grace and uncared-for, the rule of Death's own lord grows ever more terrible and fierce.

Those who today have taken the vow of pouring life's milk into the parched breast of the village, who kindle lamps to bring light into joyless, darkened homes—may the Giver of Good look upon them with favor; and through sacrifice, through austerity, through service, through bonds of mutual friendship, through the union of scattered strength, may these seekers, in time, absolve the people of India, together with the age-old torpor and negligence-born sins of the past, from the curse of the gods. This is my earnest and single-hearted prayer.

Rabindranath Tagore

SAMABAYA (COOPERATION) — I

In every country the poor outnumber the rich. If this be so everywhere, by what right do we single out one land and call it poor? The answer is this: in a land called poor, the means of livelihood for the poor are scant, the roads are closed. In a land where the poor retain hope of becoming prosperous, that very hope is itself a great wealth. To say merely that our country lacks money is not to say all; the deeper truth is that our country lacks hope. And so, when we die of hunger's torment, we blame our fate; we lie half-dead upon the dust, waiting, hoping that Providence or some kind stranger from without will show us mercy and thereby save us. We cannot even conceive that some means might lie within our own hands.

For this very reason, what our country needs above all else is not alms placed in the hand but hope placed in the heart. That a man should die of starvation for want of learning, that he should be reduced to a degraded state through circumstance—this is never merely misfortune; in most cases it is his own fault. To believe that there exists no path of deliverance from misery is not the true nature of man. Man's nature is to conquer, not to accept defeat. Wherever man has forgotten that nature, there he has made his own misery a permanent possession. Man suffers pain not that he should accept and bear it, but that with fresh strength he should discover new paths. It is thus that man has achieved such great advancement. If in any land it is seen that men lie inert amid poverty, gazing only toward the hand of fate, then we must understand: in that land, man has fallen short as man.

Where does man fall short? Where he cannot join well with his fellows. Man united with others is whole man; solitary man is but a fragment. We have all observed this: in childhood, left alone, we felt the fear of ghosts. In truth, that fear of ghosts was nothing but the solitary child's fear of his own weakness. Nearly all our fears are, at root, this same fear of ghosts. Its underlying truth is this: we have not joined together, we remain scattered and apart. On reflection it becomes clear that the fear of poverty, too, is this same fear of ghosts, and it vanishes the moment we can bind ourselves into a united body and stand firm. Learning, wealth, power, righteousness—whatever is precious and great among the possessions of man,

man has gained only by binding himself into fellowship. Sandy soil yields no harvest, for it does not hold together; hence no sap gathers in it, and everything drains away through its gaps. To cure the poverty of such soil, one must add to it things like silt and rotted leaves, so that its gaps close and it gains cohesion. It is exactly the same with men: when there is too much gap between them, their strength fails to serve any purpose—it is as good as not existing at all.

Let us examine, at its root, this matter of how man, by joining with others, became truly man. Man speaks; man has language. Beasts have no language. What is the fruit of this human language? The mind that is bound within myself, I am able, through the medium of language, to fuse with the minds of others. By the power of speech, my mind becomes the mind of many; the minds of many become mine. Thus can man think in company with others. His thought grows vast. It is by the wealth of this vast thought that the poverty of man's mind has been dispelled.

Thereafter, when man learned to set down this language in writing, the bond between mind and mind grew wider still. For spoken words do not travel far. Spoken words man gradually forgets; from mouth to mouth, one utterance becomes another. But written words cross oceans and mountains, yet remain unaltered. Thus, the more minds are joined, the vaster their thought becomes; and then each man gains the wealth of thought of a thousand thousand men. By this his mind grows rich.

Nor is that all. Through language set down in letters, the bond of mind with mind reaches even beyond the living; the gulf between the mind of a man born a thousand years ago and my mind of today is dissolved. It is by so vast a union of minds that what we call civilization has come to be. What is civilization? Nothing other than that state in which such a field of union is created for man that the strength of each gives strength to all, and the strength of all makes each man strong.

The chief reason our country today is so grievously poor is that we have become scattered and separate, each bearing his own burden alone. When a heavily laden man stumbles, there is no possibility of his rising with head held high. In Europe, when the first engines driven by fire appeared, many who had earned their bread

by the labor of their hands found themselves without work. How was man, with bare hands, to contend against the machine? But in Europe men do not know how to surrender the reins. There, men learned to think on one another's behalf; wherever any cause for anxiety arose in that land, many joined together to bear the burden of that anxiety upon their own heads. Thus, for the sake of unemployed artisans, men there set themselves to thinking. Without vast capital, machines cannot run; must, then, those without capital merely toil for a pittance in the factories until they die, and if even that toil be not found, must they wither away, helpless, for want of food? Where the strength of civilization exists, where there is life, there mankind cannot endure that any section of the people should die of starvation or sink into utter ruin; for the union of man with man for the good of all—this is the very life-breath of civilization.

It was for this reason that in Europe, those who set their minds to thinking solely for the sake of the poor came to understand this: that those who bear their burden alone, alone, can never attain prosperity by any means whatsoever; but if many poor could unite their separate strengths in one place, that very union would become their capital. I have said before: it is by the union of many minds in thought that civilized man's thought has grown great. In the same way, if the union of many labors is achieved, labor itself may of its own accord grow great. This—this path of union—is, in Europe, the way by which the poor attain to sufficiency, and it is steadily widening. I believe this path shall prove, in all the world, the greatest road to prosperity.

I have occasion to visit a certain village now and then. Standing there upon the veranda and looking southward, one sees field after field stretching away for five or six miles. Many people till this land. Some hold two bighas, some four, some ten. The plots are unequal, their boundaries winding and irregular. When the cultivation of this land proceeds, the first thing that strikes one is this: the plough-oxen suffice for some plots, for others they are more than sufficient, for others less. According to the cultivator's circumstance, tilling begins on time in some places, while elsewhere the season slips by. Then again, much of the oxen's labor is wasted in repeatedly turning the plough along the winding boundaries. If each cultivator did not see his own small plot as wholly separate from the rest, if all the land were treated as one and all cultivated it together in unison, then far less ploughing would

be needed, and much useless toil would be spared. When the crop is cut, separate arrangements of carts and separate wages are needed to bring that harvest to each cultivator's own granary, storehouse by storehouse; each householder must maintain his own separate granary and make separate arrangements for selling. If many cultivators together could bring their grain to one granary and arrange to sell it from one place, much needless expense and needless labor would be spared. He who possesses great capital, having this advantage, can make greater profit; the waste and inconvenience of piecemeal work he escapes.

Victory belongs to him who, in the least time, can accomplish the most work. It is for this reason that man uses tools in his labor. A tool turns one of man's hands into the equivalent of five or ten hands. The savage who merely scratches the earth with his bare hands must inevitably yield to him who wields the plough. In tilling the soil, in weaving cloth, in bearing burdens, in travel, in extracting oil, in the making of sugar—in all such tasks, man has triumphed not by bodily strength but by the ingenuity of machines. The plough, the loom, the bullock-cart, the horse-carriage, the oil-press, and the like—all these have reduced the measure of man's time while increasing the measure of his work. It is by this that man has achieved such great advancement; otherwise there would be little difference between man and the beasts of the forest.

Thus, by the union of hand with tool, our work went forward. Then came steam and electricity, and out of their union arose the machinery of this present age. The result has been this: just as once bare hands alone had to yield to the tool, so today the tool alone must yield to the machine. However much we wail over this, however much we beat our brows in grief, there is no help for it.

Today the time has come for our cultivators, too, to think upon this matter. Otherwise they will not survive. But these are not matters to be pondered while standing outside the door of another's factory. Only by handling the matter oneself, in practice, does it become truly clear. All the cultivators of Europe and America are rushing headlong down this very path. They plough by machine, reap by machine, bind sheaves by machine, load their granaries by machine. What advantage lies in this becomes clear upon a moment's reflection. For good cultivation, one must often wait long upon the rain. One day rain comes; that day, with great effort, a

little scratching of the plough is given to a little land. If thereafter good rain fails to come for a long while, that year's sowing, being thin and scattered, may be submerged and lost in the monsoon floods while yet unripe. Then again, calamity may strike at harvest time—too few hands to reap, laborers must be brought from outside, and if rain comes while the reaping is in progress, the cut grain lies rotting in the field. But with machine-plough and machine-harvester, every opportunity can be seized at once, and fully exploited. Before one knows it, the ploughing is finished and the reaping done. Thus the dread of famine is greatly diminished.

But to run machines, more land and more money are needed. Therefore, if at the very outset we abandon hope, saying, "This is impossible for our poor cultivators," then we must resign ourselves to this: that in this age of machines, our cultivators and other artisans, falling ever further behind, are bound to sink into some vast pit of ruin.

Those without hope in their hearts speak thus, and thus they perish. None can save such people by giving alms, by nursing and tending them. They must be made to understand this: what one man cannot achieve, fifty men, banded together, can achieve. You who have for generations tilled side by side, each his separate plot—if only you could unite your land, your ploughs and oxen, your granaries, your labor, into one—then, poor though you are, the opportunity for great capital would come to you of itself. Then bringing in machines, working with machines, would present no difficulty at all. If in some cultivator's cowshed there remains, beyond his own need, but a single extra seer of milk, he cannot start a business with that milk alone. But if a hundred or a hundred-and-fifty cultivators pool their surplus milk, they can bring in a butter-churning machine and run a business in ghee. In Europe, this manner of enterprise flourishes in many places. In small countries like Denmark, ordinary folk, banding together in just this way, have opened enterprises in butter, cheese, and the like, and thereby driven poverty utterly from the land. Through the union created by such enterprises, the ordinary cultivator and ordinary dairyman there have come to understand their vast connection with all the people of the world. Thus, not merely in wealth, but in mind and in learning, they have grown great. This manner in which many households, many people, unite as one body to secure their livelihood has, in Europe nowadays, been given the name "cooperative system," and in Bengali, "Samabaya."

It seems to me that this cooperative system is the one and only means of saving our country from poverty. Not our country alone—one day this system shall grow great in every land of the earth. In today's world of trade and commerce, men wish to defeat one another, to outwit one another; the rich man, by the strength of his money, wishes to buy up the strength of the powerless at a cheap price. Because of this, money and power come to be concentrated only in certain places, while in the remaining places the small strengths cannot lift their heads under the shadow of that great wealth. But in the cooperative system, none wishes to grow great by trickery or by some special advantage over another—they wish to grow great by uniting together. When this system spreads throughout the world, the terrible rivalry that today exists between man and man in the marketplace of livelihood will vanish, and here too men shall be able to unite as true friends and helpers of one another.

Today in our country many educated persons feel eager to work for the country's cause. One often hears the question: which work is truly needful? Many wish to serve the country by nursing the sick, by feeding the starving, by giving alms to the poor. When a whole village is ablaze, to try to put out the fire by blowing upon it—this is much the same thing. The symptoms of our sorrow cannot be removed from without; the causes of that sorrow must be removed from within. If we wish to do this, there are two tasks before us. First: to give education to the common people of the country, and thereby join their minds with the minds of all mankind—for, cut off from the world, their minds have become provincial and confined; we must raise them into the fellowship of all humanity, and give them honor; in the realm of thought, we must make them great. Second: in the sphere of livelihood, to unite them with one another, and thereby join their labor with the labor of all the people of the world. Cut off from the world, they have grown weak and isolated in worldly matters. Here too we must call them, with open arms, into the great household of mankind; in the matter of wealth, we must make them prosperous. That is to say, we must see to it that, through their roots, they gain ample right to the soil, and that, through their branches and leaves, they may fully partake of air and light. Thereafter the fruit will ripen of itself; none need trouble himself further on that account.

Shravan, 1325

SAMABAYA (COOPERATION) — II

It is man's very nature that he desires to dwell together with many, as one. Solitary man can never become whole man; only through union with others does he come to possess himself fully, in all sixteen parts.

Since it is man's nature to live banded together, to work banded together, man's welfare, his advancement, lies precisely in the complete fulfillment of that nature. Greed, wrath, delusion, and the like—why does man call these the ripus, the enemies? Because these very passions, by seizing hold of the mind of an individual or of a particular group, strike at the very truth of man's bond with man. He whose greed is strong sees only his own gain as great, and in that measure regards all others as diminished; then it becomes easy for him to injure others, to cause others pain. Such passions, under whose spell we forget others, are enemies not merely to others but to our own selves; for—as I have said before—it is through union with all that man attains his own fulfillment, and it is precisely this that such passions obstruct.

It is by the pull of this innate nature that man dwells thus, many becoming one; and by virtue of that very nature each man gains the fruit of the strength of many. By spending four paisa, no single man, by his own unaided strength, could ever send so much as a simple letter from Chittagong to Kanyakumari; the post office is the fruit of the union and cooperative endeavor of countless men; that fruit is so vast that even the poor man, in the matter of sending a letter, enjoys a privilege beyond the reach of the wealthy. Through this one instrument, the post office, in matters of religion, of wealth, of education, immeasurable benefit accrues to all mankind—its extent cannot even be reckoned. As for religious striving and the pursuit of knowledge, how much the combined effort of men accomplishes in every society need hardly be specially stated; everyone already knows this.

From all this it becomes clear: wherever in society there exists the opportunity for all to unite in furthering the good of each, there lies the welfare of all and of each. And wherever, through ignorance or injustice, some obstruction arises to that opportunity, there lies the greatest calamity.

In nearly every society of the world, this obstruction occurs at one particular point: in the matter of the acquisition of wealth. Here man's greed outstrips his social conscience. Wherever man has declared, "In wealth or power I shall be greater than another," there man has struck a blow at his own self; for, as I have already said, no man is complete in himself alone. That this truth has indeed been struck is proven by all the strife, all the deceit, that goes on among men over money and over power.

If the earning of wealth, the earning of power, could become a matter of mutual cooperation among the members of society, then every individual in that society could, by an easy natural process, reap the vast fruit of the combined effort of all. There has always persisted, addressed to the rich, this one religious precept: that you shall give in charity. What this means is that wealth, like religion and learning, is subject to the claim of the common good—not to honor that claim is unrighteousness. The claim of the common good stands opposed to the claim of self-interest, and is a thing higher than self-interest. In the precept concerning charitable giving, an attempt has indeed been made to bind the rich man's self-interest to the welfare of the common people—but the common good has been made subordinate to self-interest; it has not been made paramount. For this very reason, poverty is not removed by charity—rather, it becomes entrenched all the more firmly.

Because the precept of religion has failed—because in every society the conflict between wealth and want has remained irreconcilable—many of those who wish to remove this baneful division from society seek to achieve their end through the use of mass force. By plunder, by bloodshed, by seizing the wealth of the rich, they attempt to establish economic equality in society. Such attempts are chiefly to be seen in the Western hemisphere in the present age. The reason is that Western man has greater bodily strength, and it is therefore in bodily strength that he places his trust; even in seeking the common good, he cannot help but rely on bodily force.

As a result, both wealth and righteousness are destroyed. We see the illustration of this in the Soviet state-policy of Russia.

Therefore, neither the invocation of religion nor the invocation of brute force is the true path to the alleviation of poverty in human society. What must be shown to man is this: that with the aid of great capital, it will not be possible to confine the accumulation of wealth strictly within the bounds of individual self-interest forever. If today some millionaire, merely to arrange for the carriage of his own private correspondence, were to set up a fleet of camel-post, he would find himself outdone even by the humblest cultivator; yet there was once a time when it was the rich man alone who possessed the camel-post, and the cultivator possessed no post at all. In those days, had the rich man's spiritual preceptor come and given him religious instruction, he might perhaps have consented to carry, along with his own letters, the letters of a few others in the village as well—but even so, the want of communication throughout the country could not have been truly removed. The power to relieve the poverty of the common people does not lie in the wealth of the rich.

It lies within the strength of the common people themselves. This truth must be made known, and its illustration must be made plainly evident to all. There is no benefit in redistributing wealth by artificial means; wealth must be produced by true means. If the common people undertake to unite their own power of earning, then this truth can be clearly demonstrated: that the value of capital, when united among all, is infinitely greater than the value of the same capital in the hands of any single individual. Only by demonstrating this can capital be disarmed—it cannot be done by force of arms. In the heart of man there exists the desire to enjoy wealth; that desire cannot be crushed and killed by artificial means. Only by fulfilling that desire on a truly vast scale can it be freed from its narrowness.

In the history of mankind there exists a conflict between two forces: on one side, the power of the sovereign; on the other, the power of the subject. To the king was addressed this religious precept: that the welfare of his subjects is his sole duty. This precept some kings heeded, some heeded but half-heartedly, some did not heed at all. Such a condition still exists in many lands of the world even today. In most such cases, the king, making his own enjoyment and the increase of his own

power the chief concern, treats the welfare of his subjects as merely secondary. As this system of monarchy has fallen away, democracy—or "demokrasi"—has, in many lands today, come into flourishing existence. The aim of this democracy is this: that the desire and the capacity for self-governance which exists in every subject should, through their combined cooperation, be given expression as the power that governs the state. The United States of America prides itself greatly upon this democracy.

But where an extreme division exists between capital and labor, democracy is bound to be thwarted at every step. For the chief vehicle of all manner of power is wealth. Where there is inequality in the earning of that wealth, royal—or governing—power cannot possibly flow equally among all the subjects. Thus, in the governance of the United States, one finds at every turn evidence of the rule of money. There, public opinion is manufactured by the power of money; there, by the arrogance of money, every kind of hindrance to the interests of the rich is trampled down. This cannot rightly be called self-governance of the common people.

For this reason, the fundamental means of making a due measure of freedom the common possession of all lies in uniting the strength of the common people in the earning of wealth. Then wealth, in the form of money, will not accumulate in the hands of any single individual or any single group; but the fruit that millionaire crorepatis now have the privilege of enjoying from wealth, all shall be able to enjoy equally. Only when many, through the cooperative system, learn to convert their own strength into wealth, will the foundation of universal freedom be truly laid.

The discussion and experimentation of producing wealth through this cooperative system has recently begun in our country. The need for it in our land is exceedingly great. Unless we are rescued from poverty, we shall go on receiving blows at the hands of every manner of death-demon. Within each one of us lies wealth, hidden and unrealized; only when we understand this simple truth, and put it into practice, shall we be saved from poverty.

Every village in the country must be made self-sufficient in every manner of its needs. For this, a certain number of villages must be gathered together to form a

single association, or mandali; and if the leaders of that association can so arrange the affairs and remedy the wants of the village that the association becomes adequate unto itself, only then will the practice of self-governance become a living reality throughout the land. To help the village people establish their own schools, technical training centers, places of religious gathering, cooperative stores, and banks—for all this, education, assistance, and encouragement must be given. Only when the villages of our country become self-reliant and firmly bound together in this manner shall we be saved. How to build up such well-knit village societies—this is our foremost problem...

Falgun, 1329

THE DISTINCTIVE CHARACTER OF COOPERATION IN INDIA

Long ago, when many of those present here today were yet children, or not even born, I once reflected that in former times a particular system of vitality operated soundly and unbrokenly through the body of our society. In the West, particular centers gather together the vital force and, at those very centers, create the intellectual, spiritual, and economic wealth of the people. It is from precisely such centers that their true wellspring of strength derives. In India, on the other hand, the universal life-current of religion, action, and enjoyment flowed everywhere, through every village. It was for this very reason that, through the ages, the blows and shocks of various foreign ruling powers never proved fatal to it. There was no village that lacked a school offering elementary education, accessible to all. The courtyards of the well-to-do households of the village served as the seats of these schools. Among every four or five villages, there was at least one scholar versed in the scriptures, whose vow it was to impart learning to students. Upon such men rested the charge of preserving the purity of the enduring ideals of the society's religious and moral life. In those days, the enjoyment of wealth was not narrowly confined to the individual. From the source of a single great fortune, many branching irrigation-canals of common use spread out in every direction, serving the various needs of the community. Likewise, the treasury of the wise man's knowledge lay open to all. The guru not merely imparted learning but took no fee at all, not even for the food and clothing of his pupils. In this manner, the universal life-force was diffused throughout every village. Hence in those days there was no want of water, no want of food, and the human heart never had to remain unfed. It was precisely by striking at this that, following the European model, the cities alone came to be regarded as the vital centers of the country. Formerly, in every village, there prevailed a certain universally acknowledged and simple arrangement wherein rich and poor, learned and ignorant, were all bound together by a social bond; when this social nerve-network was severed, piece by piece, by the blow from outside, our vitality drained away, village by village.

When once I was in constant contact with the villages of Bengal, it was precisely this thought that stirred my mind. I saw then, plain before my eyes, that the broad

system which once kept the common people of our country human in every sense had now suffered grievous injury—that the channels through which the life-sap of the country once flowed freely to every part were now obstructed everywhere. It seemed to me that until this problem were resolved, all our efforts toward national advancement would remain baseless, our welfare would remain forever distant. This very thought I expressed, then, in the lecture titled "Swadeshi Samaj" (in the year 1311 of the Bengali era). But mere words can only stir the listener's mind; from that alone little fruit is gained for the country. And so, though I lacked practical skill, I myself set about the work of taking up certain villages and awakening them from within. At that time a few young men were my companions and helpers in this endeavor. From this endeavor I learned one thing—this: whether it be poverty or ignorance, the deep sorrow that man endures has, at its root, a flaw in truth itself. The truth within man has its root in his moral sense, his dharma-buddhi; it is by the strength of this sense that the union of man with man grows deep and fruitful. The moment this truth becomes distorted or weakened, its reservoir holds no water, its field yields no full harvest; it sickens, it grows blind with ignorance. That poverty of mind by which man cuts himself off from others is the very poverty that dooms him on every side—and then no help from outside can save him.

Fire broke out in a village. It was seen that the fire would not be quenched until it had reduced the whole village to ashes. This is the outward story. The inward truth is that men could not join well together, heart to heart; and it is through that very gap of disunion that the fire spread unchecked. That same gap of disunion corrodes the intellect, saps courage, hinders every kind of endeavor—that is why no reservoir of water had been prepared anywhere close at hand beforehand; that is why, standing before the burning house, all could do nothing but mingle their voices in mere lamentation, their strength never once uniting in common action.

Human civilization has advanced era by era. In every era, man has discovered this same truth in ever fuller measure. When man dwelt in the forest, there existed a natural obstacle to his union with his fellow. At every step he was hemmed in from without. For this reason, the obstruction within him, too, was never dissolved. When he emerged from the forest and came to the river, he found so swift a highway that his bonds could extend far and wide outward, and, by that same opportunity, inward as well. That is to say, by this means man came to possess his

own truth in fuller measure. Beyond the forest, upon the open banks of this river, began a new chapter of civilization. In ancient India, the Ganga performed the sacred work of bringing civilization to fruition and to fullness. It was for this very reason that the land consecrated by the waters of the Ganga was once known by the people of India as the sacred land. And the Ganga, along with the current of human fellowship carried upon her waters, also carried the current of knowledge, of religion, of action, spreading it from the western mountain-boundary of India even to the eastern sea-coast. That truth India has not forgotten even to this day.

In the forest-chapter of civilization, we see that man sustained his livelihood through the herding of cattle; then, each man individually met his own private needs of enjoyment. When the science of agriculture was mastered, the food of the many came to be produced, in common, by the many. It was through this systematic, abundant production of food that the settled dwelling-together of many people became possible. Thus, in the union of many lies man's truth; in that very union lies his civilization.

Once, King Janaka was the representative of ancient Indian civilization. He united within himself the two currents of that civilization, food-giving and knowledge-giving—that is, the economic and the spiritual. Between these two lie the two paths of the striving toward unity. Sita, after all, was no mere daughter born of Janaka's body. As Draupadi of the Mahabharata was born of the sacrificial fire, so was Sita of the Ramayana born of the tilled furrow. Along the line of the plough's furrow, Janaka found her. This same Sita, this very embodiment of the science of agriculture, journeying from Aryavarta to the land of the southern demon-slaying hero, became his companion, and in the bond of unity of that era's civilization, bound Aryan and non-Aryan alike, spreading from north to south.

In the sphere of food-production, agriculture alone was able to raise man from individual fragmentation to the unity of a vast, united society. In the sphere of religious striving, the knowledge of Brahman performed that self-same office. When each performer of sacrifice, through the magic of his own sacrificial hymn and outward rite of worship, hoped to exert some special influence upon his own particular deity—then, through the very notion of divinity, man came to attain a

sense of unity, deep and vastly extended, between soul and soul, and between the individual soul and the Supreme Soul.

In scientific circles, there was once current the doctrine of the separate creation of each species. Man's conception of the nature of living beings was then a fragmented one. When Darwin discovered and proclaimed a fundamental unity in the origin of species, this one illumination of truth opened wide, throughout the living world, the path of scientific unity of understanding.

As in the sphere of knowledge, so in the sphere of feeling, so too in the sphere of action—everywhere, the realization of truth leads toward the sense of unity, and it is by that very sense of unity that all manner of prosperity is created. Through the sense of unity in worldly affairs, Europe has achieved a wondrous excellence of knowledge and of power. We know of no time in human history when such advancement was ever achieved in this sphere. Another reason for the attainment of this excellence is that the minds of every nation of Europe have united in the work of bringing the knowledge-wealth of Europe to fullness.

But, on the other hand, we see that in political and economic rivalry, Europe has utterly denied the great unity-based truth of mankind. Thus, in this direction, in the sacrificial fire of destruction, Europe has sat down to offer oblations of human blood in such terrible force and such vast measure as has never before occurred in the history of man. Through this great sin of betrayal of truth, there is no longer peace anywhere in the whole world. Everywhere throughout the earth, the political and economic mind of man lies shamelessly defiled with falsehood, with treachery, with murderous cruelty. Seeing this, one feels that man, having strayed from truth, has set himself, with all his wealth, knowledge, and power, to the task of a world-wide self-destruction.

In the social sphere, man has acknowledged religion, but in the economic sphere he has not. In matters of the production, ownership, and enjoyment of wealth, man regards himself as wholly independent; it is here that he is unwilling to have his ego, his self-centeredness, curtailed. Here his mental attitude is that of solitary man; here his sense of moral responsibility grows faint.

When, in this connection, we take up a revolutionary attitude, we generally voice our indignation only with regard to the relation between capitalist and laborer. But this is equally true of other kinds of businessmen as well, though we often forget it. A lawyer, having perhaps merely glanced at a single document, or having stood in court, may demand from a poor client five or seven hundred, a thousand, two thousand rupees; there, exploiting to the fullest the other party's ignorance and helplessness, they extract their fee as much as possible. Factory-owning capitalists do exactly the same. It is upon the very inequality of each other's dire need that their power of exploitation rests. In our country, the groom's side demands an excessive amount of dowry from the bride's side; the reason is the inequality between bride and groom regarding the necessity of marriage. Marriage is a necessity for the girl; for the man it is optional. It is by pressing upon this very inequality that one side is able, unhindered, to demand tribute from the other. In such cases, preaching morality bears no fruit; removing the underlying inequality between the parties is the truly effective path.

In the present age, ever since science discovered the various keys to unlock the various sealed chambers of Nature's storehouse of power, in the diligent pursuit of wealth, the inequality between those who have mastered that power and those who have not has become exceedingly great. Once, the power to produce goods, along with its instruments and its profit, was limited in measure; hence it could not disturb the harmony of society. But now wealth has so outstripped all other resources of society as to create an inequality so vast that the very life of society is afflicted, and human nature itself is being overwhelmed. Wealth today seems to have transgressed the bounds of human power and become a demonic power; the great claims of human dignity have become powerless before it. Between machine-aided, accumulated wealth and the natural strength of the ordinary man there now exists so extreme a disproportion that the ordinary man is forced to accept defeat at every step. Those for whom this disproportion works to advantage exploit the other side to the very last degree, secure their own excessive nourishment thereby, and, growing ever more swollen, continue to destroy the balance of the social body.

The very foundation of society is harmony. Therefore, whenever that harmony is destroyed—whenever such enemies grow strong, whenever such disruptions of order occur as run counter to society, whereby the few destroy the sustenance of

the many and use all of them merely as means to increase their own private wealth—then either society, worn down by that oppression, remains half-dead under the burden of the misery and servitude of the many, or its instinct of self-preservation rises up in rebellion.

In Europe, the force of this rebellion has been steadily gathering for a long time. In Europe, to correct every kind of inequality, the tendency has, from the very outset, always leaned toward the path of bloodshed and violence. The reason is that there exists, in the blood of the European, a certain destructive impulse. At home and abroad, they satisfy this predatory instinct by needlessly destroying beasts and birds; and it is for this very reason that when some particular state of affairs displeases them, before ever laying hand upon the underlying idea at the root of that condition, they wish first to crush and destroy the man himself. When the seeds of disease drift about in the air, killing the man in whom that seed has taken hold does not kill the seed of the disease. The root cause of the excessive economic inequality that has, in the present age, been allowed to flourish in society, is greed. Greed has always existed in man. But the ordinary measure within which it did no particular harm to society—rather, served some use—has now been vastly exceeded. Today the pull of that greed has become tremendously powerful; for the scope of profit has grown immensely vast. The means of producing wealth are far more potent than before. So long as the causes of greed remain outside, if it is driven out of one man it will simply press upon another; indeed, the very man who drives it out today runs a very real risk that tomorrow it will settle upon his own shoulders. If the means of satiating greed without limit becomes concentrated in one place, it continues, through the very intensity of its power of attraction, ceaselessly to unsettle the minds of men. Only by distributing it as widely as possible among all can rescue from this turmoil become possible. Great capital captures for itself, and thereby entraps into its grand enterprise, the financial power that lies scattered and dispersed among many men; before this concentrated power, scattered power must inevitably submit to defeat. There is but one remedy for this: if the scattered powers could of their own accord unite, and jointly produce wealth. Then the stream of wealth could flow among all. This cannot be accomplished by destroying the rich; it can be accomplished only by liberating wealth into the hands of all—that is, only if the truth of unity can be made

to prevail within economics itself can man be saved from the discord and calamity born of inequality.

In ancient ages, monstrous beasts had concentrated in a single body vast quantities of flesh and strength. Man did not defeat them by assuming a monstrous form of his own. Small, weak men came into the world. They were able to defeat the strength of one vast creature by realizing unity among the strengths of many scattered creatures. Today, each man possesses, in the unity of the inner and outer strength of countless men, a vast and mighty power. It is thus that man has conquered the animal kingdom of the earth.

For some time now, man has been discovering this very truth in the sphere of economics as well. This new discovery has been given the name: the earning of wealth through the cooperative system. From this it may be understood that a day has come when the power of monstrous wealth shall, divided into many bodies, gradually diminish and disappear. Man shall gain freedom from the calamity of economic inequality not through bloodshed, but through the establishment of the principle of unity among divided powers. That is to say, in economics—where the principles of human ethics had no place, and hence there was so much unrest—that very truth of human ethics is now making its appearance. Once the weak creature triumphed over the domain of the mighty; today too the weak shall triumph—not by slaying the mighty, but by making its own strength mighty through unity. That banner of victory I can already see, far off, in the distance. Through the strength of cooperation, in our country, the herald of that victory is already being proclaimed.

The speaker before me has made mention of Denmark. But he has forgotten one thing: the condition of India and the condition of Denmark are not quite alike. Whatever advancement Denmark has achieved today in dairy farming is not due to cooperation alone; there, through the will and effort of the government itself, a vast system of education for the common people has been established for the sake of the advancement of dairy farming. Only in a free country like Denmark is such assistance to the common people, on the part of government, possible.

Denmark enjoys one great advantage: that country is not burdened by the enormous weight of military preparation. All its wealth can, in ample measure, be devoted to the manifold welfare of its people. In our case, even the relief of our revenue-burden for the education, health, and other welfare of the people lies beyond our own control. Whatever surplus remains from revenue for the benefit of the people is meagre indeed for purposes such as the spread of education. Here too our problem is the perpetual inequality between the power of the state and the power of the people. For the education, health, and other welfare of the people, we must, through the cooperative system, through the realization of our own strength, achieve victory from within over the misery and misfortune born of inequality. This truth I have repeated again and again for a long time; even today it must be said again and again.

There was once a day in our country when society made its claim upon the wealth of the rich. The rich man was compelled, by the pressure of public opinion, to acknowledge his responsibility for his wealth. In those days, this arrangement worked; society survived. But because this system of charitable dependence prevailed, the common people never learned to become self-reliant. They never realized that the food and water, the education and health, the religion and joy of the village depend upon the cooperative union of the good will of each and every one of them. It is for this very reason that today, when the structure of our society has changed, when the enjoyment of wealth has become wholly private, when the responsibility for wealth is no longer naturally directed toward the welfare of the people, the common people have become wholly incapable of securing their own welfare. Today the rich have come to the cities to enjoy their wealth, and it is for this very reason that the common people of the villages lament the poverty of their own fate. They lack the power to believe that the means of their own salvation lies in their own hands. If, in the very beginning, in the matter of food, this belief can be awakened, if this belief can be proven true and effective, then gradually the country will be saved on every front. Therefore, to spread this truth among the common people through the principles of cooperation is our duty this day. It was the united strength of small, humble monkeys that slew Ravana of Lanka—devourer of countless morsels, possessor of ten heads, gluttonous for wealth beyond measure, owner of a hundred hands. That union was bound together by the attraction of a single love. He whom we call Ramachandra—it was he who,

through love, united the weak, and awakened within them a tremendous manifestation of strength. Today, for our deliverance, we need that very love; we need that very union.

Shravan, 1334

THE PRINCIPLE OF COOPERATION

In a particular stage of civilisation, the city naturally attains dominance over the village. It is not that the vital essence of the country flourishes more fully in the city; rather, it is that the strength of the country becomes more densely concentrated there—this alone is the city's glory.

Sociability is the very lifeblood of human settlement. This sociability can never truly congeal in the city. One reason is this: because the city is vast in extent, the social bonds of humankind naturally grow loose there. Another reason is this: in the city, owing to the demands of commerce and other particular needs and opportunities, the population grows extremely dense. There, man principally desires the satisfaction of his own necessities, not the company of his fellow men. This is why, in a city, even those who live within a single neighbourhood feel no shame in remaining strangers to one another. As the complexity of life increases, this estrangement grows ever more pronounced. In my childhood I saw how the people of our own neighbourhood mingled constantly and intimately with our household, as kin. Everyone nearby bathed in our pond; many neighbours would come to our garden to take the air, and none was forbidden to pluck flowers for worship. On our veranda, anyone might spread a mat and demand tobacco whenever he pleased. In the feasting and merrymaking of household ceremonies, all the people of the neighbourhood held both a right and a welcome. In the architecture of that age, the arrangement of several courtyards adjoining the main house was meant not merely for the free passage of light and air, but for the free passage of the common people as well. In those days, space had to be kept, in the very midst of one's own needs, for the needs of all; one's own property was never so tightly measured as to be confined solely to one's own enjoyment. The rich man's storehouse had one door facing himself, and another facing society. In that age, whoever was wealthy had his good fortune scattered among the people on every side. In those days, what was called ceremonial observance meant, in essence, an occasion for admitting into one's own home all persons, whether invited or uninvited.

From this we may understand that the very social character found in the villages of Bengal had, in those days, found its place in the cities as well. Though the outward appearance of city and village were never quite alike, their inner character was one and the same. Without doubt, the great cities of our country in ancient times belonged to this class. Despite their pride in their own urbanity, they acknowledged a kinship with the villages. It was somewhat as the outer and inner apartments of a great household stand to one another: in the outer rooms there is more splendour and display, but in the inner rooms there is more comfort and leisure; yet between the two, the path of the heart's connection remains open.

Now that is no longer so—this we can see quite plainly. Before our very eyes, within the past fifty years, the city has become an utterly separate city; not even through its back windows and doors does any path remain for the coming and going of the village. This is precisely what is meant by the saying, "the courtyard has become foreign to the house itself." The villages still encircle the city on every side, and yet they lie a hundred leagues away.

Such an unnatural disparity can never be beneficial. It must be said that this is not merely a modern symptom peculiar to our own country; it is a common symptom of the present age itself. Indeed, the seed of this social self-division has drifted in upon the winds from the West and scattered itself across the whole earth. Not only does this destroy the happiness and peace of humankind—it is, at its core, deadly to life itself. Therefore this problem must today be pondered by the people of every land.

What is called civilisation in the languages of Europe feeds upon the common vitality of life in order to concentrate particular forms of power; it is like a bamboo bearing flowers—that flowering exhausts the very life of the whole plant. As distinctiveness grows and grows, it tips ever more to one side; under the weight borne outward from its centre, cracks begin to appear throughout the whole structure, and in the end, collapse becomes inevitable. In Europe, we can see the signs of this cracking in self-rebellions of every kind and shape. Ku Klux Klan, Soviet, Fascist, labour uprisings, the revolt of women, and other such various forms of self-destructive upheaval reveal to us the fractures within the fabric of society there.

What in English is called exploitation is, in truth, the very principle upon which present-day civilisation rests. The lesser part feeds upon the greater part in order to grow large; this causes the swelling of a particular fragment, but does not nourish the whole of the greater mass. Through this, an anti-social individualism continues to swell ever larger.

I have already suggested that the cities are the field of a nation's power, while the villages are the field of its life-force. For the cultivation of economic or political strength—that is, for the cultivation of national dominion—special systems of regulation are essential. That system is not a social system; in this arrangement, the law of the machine prevails over the law of humanity. Whoever can master this mechanical system gains power thereby. For this reason the city is chiefly a field of competition; here, the spirit of cooperation does not receive its due encouragement.

For the generation of power, ego and competition are necessary. But the moment these exceed due measure, their effect becomes calamitous. In modern civilisation, that due measure has been left far behind. For this civilisation is not sparing in its demands but excessive; its manifestation and preservation require vast organisation, and its expenditure must needs be immense. In this civilisation, scarcity of resources becomes almost a kind of crime, for civilisation stands upon a foundation of abundant materials; wherever there is poverty of means, there this civilisation finds its adversary. Whether it be learning, health, amusement, roads, courts of law, transport, food and shelter, warfare, or the maintenance of peace—everything demands vast wealth. This civilisation insults the poor man at every turn, for poverty continually obstructs its progress.

For this reason, wealth in the present age has become the root of all influence, and the most revered thing of all. Indeed, at the very root of modern politics lies not the desire for royal dominion, but the desire for commercial expansion in the pursuit of wealth. When civilisation was not as excessive as it is today, the honour accorded to the scholar, the virtuous man, the hero, and the philanthropist for the fame of their achievements far exceeded the honour given to the wealthy; and through that honour, the true dignity of manhood was properly esteemed. In those days, there existed among the people an indifference toward the mere

accumulator of wealth. But the whole of modern civilisation has become a parasite feeding upon wealth. Hence it is not merely the acquisition of wealth but the worship of wealth that has grown overpowering. The worship of a false deity corrupts man's sense of righteousness—proof of this can be seen across the world today. Man has never before had so formidable an enemy in his fellow man, for there exists no impulse so cruel and so given to injustice as the greed for wealth. In the countless mechanisms of modern civilisation, this very greed lies awakened everywhere, and the apparatus built to satisfy this greed has, in scale, outstripped every other endeavour of humankind.

But this we must surely know: that greed is sin, and sin is death. For greed is an impulse hostile to sociability. Whatever weakens man's sociability creates self-division at every step; the fire of unrest is never extinguished, until in the end the unity of human society is torn apart and fragmented.

In Western lands today we see that between those who have acquired wealth and those who serve as its instruments, no reconciliation is ever achieved—nor is there any means of achieving one. For the greed of the man who makes the money is no less than the greed of the man who supplies the labour that produces it. Both parties equally require abundant wealth if they are to enjoy the advantages of civilisation to the full. In such a situation, one cannot hope that this mutual pushing and shoving will come to rest at any fixed point.

The excitement of greed, the worship of power—in a society where these, for whatever reason, break free of restraint, man cannot turn his mind toward the cultivation of his whole humanity; he wishes to become powerful, not to become complete. It is precisely in such a state that the dominance of the city becomes excessive, while the villages continue to be neglected. Then all manner of advantage, all manner of provision for enjoyment, accumulates entirely within the cities. The villages, like slaves, supply the food, and in return manage merely to sustain a bare existence. Thus a division arises within society whereby fierce light falls on one side, and deep darkness on the other. The urban civilisation of Europe divides the wholeness of humanity in precisely this manner. The entire civilisation of ancient Greece was concentrated in its cities; for a brief span it created splendour, and then was lost. Between master and slave there existed an absolute

division. Ancient Italy too was urban. For a time it pursued the cultivation of power with great vigour. But the nature of power is inherently anti-social—it utterly divides the possessor of power from the instrument of that power; and thus a small number of masters come to feed as parasites upon a vast number of slaves. This parasitism destroys the very foundation of humanity.

The civilisation of the Western continent is urban; the people there divide the world of mankind into light and darkness—not merely within their own countries, but across the entire globe. Their ambitions are so vast that the satisfaction of that ambition cannot possibly be contained within what rightfully belongs to them. The Englishman, who regards opulence as an indispensable part of civilisation, must, in order to gain and preserve it, keep India in subjection; and should he wish to renounce it, he has no means of doing so without diminishing the very standard of his own excessively self-indulgent civilisation. That pursuit of power which is his ultimate goal requires, as its instrument, a subject race. This is why the entire British nation today lives as a parasite upon the whole of India. For this very reason the great nations of Europe are so eager to divide Asia and Africa amongst themselves; otherwise their civilisation of excessive enjoyment must remain but half-fed. For this reason, the parasitism of the smaller portion upon the larger has grown excessive even within their own countries. The resources for excessive enjoyment can never be equally distributed among the common people; to make the accumulation of the few abundant, the many must inevitably be deprived. In the Western world, this very problem stands today in its most acute and menacing form. At the root of the conflict there between labour and capital lies precisely this concentrated greed born of unrestrained enjoyment. Thereby arises an absolute division between the capitalist and the instrument of his capital—a division as absolute as that between a foreign ruling race and a subject race. They stand utterly apart. This utter separation is contrary to the law of humanity; wherever human unity is thus oppressed, there the power of destruction—whether open or concealed—inevitably grows great. It is for this very reason that the master of human society strikes the slave directly, but the slave deals the master a blow far greater still, though indirectly: he destroys the master's very sense of righteousness. For humanity, that is the most fatal wound of all, closest to the very root; for while the beast dies from want of food, man dies from want of righteousness.

There is a fable of Aesop in which the watchful deer is struck dead by an arrow from the very side toward which he was blind. In present-day human civilisation, the blind side is its material side. Today we see a vast and remarkable cooperation among the nations of Europe in the pursuit of knowledge, but a fierce and ruthless competition in the pursuit of material gain. As a result, in this present age, the light of knowledge has blazed up in a thousand flames from a single lamp of Europe, illuminating the modern era to a dazzling brightness. Through the power of knowledge, Europe has raised its head above every other continent on earth. In the great sacrifice of human knowledge, it is the European race that today serves as the officiating priest; into that sacrificial fire it gathers fuel from every quarter, as though it should never be allowed to go out—such is the scale of its preparation and its influence. Never before in the history of mankind has there been so vast and far-reaching a cooperative principle in the pursuit of knowledge. In earlier times, each country independently developed its own learning. The learning of Greece was chiefly Greek; the learning of Rome, Roman; and so too with India and China. Fortunately, the countries and regions of the European continent lie closely clustered together, and their natural boundaries are not insurmountable—they were never entirely separated from one another by vast deserts or towering mountain ranges. Then, at a certain point in time, a single religion came to hold sway over every country of Europe; not only that, but the centre of this religion remained, for many centuries, fixed in the single city of Rome.

For many centuries, adopting a single Latin tongue, every country of Europe pursued the study of learning together. From this very unity of religion, a unity of learning came to be established across the whole continent. The particular character of this religion was likewise founded upon unity: the love of the one Christ was its centre, and the service of all mankind was its discipline. At last, emerging from the nursery of Latin, each country of Europe began to cultivate learning in its own tongue. But, in accordance with the principle of cooperation, this learning, though pursued in many different countries, began to circulate through a single system and to accumulate within one common treasury. From this very process was born Western civilisation—a civilisation of cooperative knowledge, a civilisation unified through the confluence of countless streams within the field of learning. We are accustomed to use the phrase "Eastern

civilisation," but this civilisation is not a cooperative synthesis of the diverse minds of Asia's different countries; its only unifying character is a negative one—namely, that this civilisation is simply not European. Otherwise, it is not merely that the learning of Arabia and the learning of China fail to converge—in many respects they stand in direct opposition to one another. If one compares the outward forms and inner character of civilisations, one finds an immense disparity between the Hindu of India and the Semitic peoples of West Asia. The riches of thought belonging to these two have accumulated in entirely separate treasuries. For want of this cooperative pursuit of knowledge, the civilisation of Asia stands fragmented into wholly distinct chapters within the history of ancient times. In certain instances, through historical collision, some exchange has indeed taken place, but the mind of Asia has never assumed a single unified body. This is why, when we use the phrase "Eastern civilisation," we are, in truth, each looking separately only at our own particular civilisation.

This fragmented civilisation of Asia has been unable to exert influence over the present age, whereas Europe has succeeded in doing so; the reason is that the principle of cooperation is the fundamental law of humanity—man has become man only through the strength of cooperation. The very meaning of the word "civilisation" is the coming together of mankind as one.

But within this very civilisation of Europe, in what quarter has the seed of destruction been sown? Precisely where it stands opposed to the law of humanity—that is, precisely where its cooperation could not be achieved. That is the sphere of its material affairs. Here, the various countries of Europe stand independent of, and opposed to, one another. This material opposition has swollen to an unnatural and monstrous scale, because, with the aid of science, the scope and scale of material enterprise has today become immeasurably vast. As a result, a strange internal contradiction has awakened within European civilisation. On one hand, I see that the science of preserving human life advances there daily at tremendous speed—never before has man gained such mastery over the fertility of the soil, over the healing of the body, over the material obstacles of daily existence; these people seem to have set about drawing nectar itself from the realm of the gods. Yet on the other hand, precisely the opposite is true. Never before has such a colossal endeavour toward death been witnessed. Every country

of the West is engaged, with tremendous zeal, in this very pursuit. Never before could man have imagined so vast a suicidal enterprise. That tremendous power which Europe has seized through the cooperative pursuit of knowledge, Europe now stands ready to employ for its own self-destruction. Never in history have I seen so monumental an example of the opposing consequences of cooperation and its absence within humanity. In the quest for knowledge, mankind in the present age moves along the path of preservation; in the quest for material gain, along the path of destruction. It has become difficult, in the end, to say which of the two shall prevail.

Some say that if machines were altogether banished from human use, then the trouble would resolve itself. This suggestion is wholly unacceptable. Four-footed beasts have legs but no hands; whatever labour is needed for their survival, they manage after their own fashion. But in that very "managing after some fashion" lies their poverty and their subjugation. Man, by good fortune, has received two hands, meant solely for work. Through this, his capacity for labour has grown immeasurably. It is precisely this advantage that has made him victorious over every other creature in the animal kingdom; today the whole earth lies under his dominion. Ever since then, whenever man, by any means, augments his own working power through the aid of tools, his triumphant march along the path of life advances further still. This deficiency in working power belongs to the realm of beasts; its fulfilment belongs to man alone. To say that this power of man's must somehow be curtailed is simply untenable—and even if it were said, mankind would not listen. Whatever nation fails to master the machine, the instrument of man's working power, must inevitably suffer defeat in the world, just as inevitably as the beast is defeated before man.

That power should not be curtailed, and yet that no one should be struck by concentrated power—how these two conditions might be reconciled is precisely the matter that must be pondered.

Whenever the means and instruments of power fall, through some opportunity, into the hands of a particular individual or a particular group, difficulty inevitably arises for everyone else. Under monarchical rule, in every land, political power was once concentrated narrowly in the hands of a single person and those who followed

him. In such circumstances, the will of that one person, or of a few persons, overwhelms and suppresses the will of all others. In those times, to escape from injustice, from arbitrary rule, from the tyranny of governance, one had to appeal to the powerful in the name of religion. But "the thief heeds not the tale of righteousness." In most cases, the ear of the powerful is not inclined to listen to the tale of righteousness. And so, in certain countries, the subjects seized the ruler's power by force. They declared: "The ruler's power is made up of the power of all of us together. It is precisely through the concentration of that power in one place that we are deprived. If we can find a way for each of us to wield that power ourselves, then, through this cooperative gathering of our strength, it shall become our own collective sovereignty." In England, this opportunity has been realised. That it has not been realised in many other countries is because not every nation possesses the education and the mental disposition needed to divide power and unite it again in action.

The same holds true with regard to economic power as well. In the present age, economic power has become trapped within the grasp of a particular class of the wealthy. From this arises the dominance of the few and the suffering of the many. And yet it is precisely because they have been able to gather into their own hands the labour-power of countless people that the wealthy possess their influence. The very meaning of their capital is this: that the labour of countless people lies embodied, in symbolic form, within their money. That very labour is the true capital; this labour exists directly, in reality, within each and every worker. If the workers could say, with proper clarity, "We shall combine our individual strength in one place," then that very combination would itself become capital. Those who, through fault or weakness of character, lack the capacity to combine, and to be combined, in any matter whatsoever, must inevitably suffer for it. Cursing others, or resorting to plunder, will bring them no lasting relief.

In matters of material affairs, mankind has for a long time neglected his own humanity. In this sphere, he has made his power entirely the instrument of his own greed. It is precisely here, therefore, that man's suffering and humiliation in the world assume such varied and far-reaching forms. It is precisely here that the chariot of wealth is driven by binding countless slaves with reins and striking them with whips. Those who suffer, and those who befriend the sufferers, have appealed

only to the name of religion, saying: "Go on accumulating wealth, but do not forfeit your righteousness." But even to this day, the attempt to protect the weak through the moral conscience of the powerful has never proven fully successful. In the end, the weak must one day come to this realisation: "It is our own scattered strength that, gathered together, has given him his strength. We may attack him from outside and break him, but we cannot join him to ourselves; and unless we can join him to ourselves, no lasting result can be achieved. Therefore we must strive to unite the labour of us all, and thereby win economic power for the benefit of all in common."

This very principle is called cooperation. It is through this very principle that man has become supreme in knowledge; it is this very principle that, in the conduct of human affairs, expresses man's moral conscience. It is for want of this very principle that, in the spheres of politics and economics, mankind across the world suffers such sorrow, such envy and malice, such falsehood and cruelty, such unrest.

Across the world today, the clash of power against power rages like a conflagration. Individual greed today stands engaged in a worldwide sacrifice of human blood upon its altar. If we cannot check this, then a great catastrophe must inevitably be created in human history. The powerful, united together, can never resist this; only the union of the powerless can bring about its remedy. For it is precisely the divide between the powerful and the powerless in material affairs that stands today as the most perilous rift of all in the world. There exists a divide between the learned and the ignorant, but mankind does not raise walls over the possession of knowledge; intellect and genius do not submit to power organised in factions. But over the excessive personal acquisition of wealth, walls of division have arisen in every country, in every household; and to acknowledge these walls, man must strike his forehead against them at every step, must bow his head in submission. Such disparity existed in earlier times too, but its walls were not then so impenetrable. Generally, the scale of profit and the machinery for its pursuit were far more limited than they are now; consequently, man's sociability did not, in that age, fall into such darkness under its shadow—the greed for gain did not so thoroughly overshadow and corrupt literature, the arts, politics, and domestic life as it does now. Beyond the pursuit of wealth, the field for human fellowship was, in those days, far more expansive.

Therefore, in the endeavour of the present age, it is not the wealthy who hold primary importance, but the poor. Upon them rests the burden of saving society, of saving mankind's happiness and peace, from being crushed beneath the colossal weight of wealth's tread. It is in their hands that the path for humanity's entry into the harshly fenced field of economic acquisition must be constructed. The weakness of the poor has, until now, kept human civilisation weak and incomplete; today, it is the poor themselves who, by gaining strength, must set this right.

Today, in the field of commerce, the principle of cooperation continues to advance in Europe. There, the advantage lies in this: that the intelligence and habit of coming together as human beings are, there, far greater than in our own country. We—at least those of us within Hindu society—are weak in this regard. But it may be hoped that the union whose root lies in the longing for food and clothing may, gradually, in this country too, become easier under the pressure of unbearable poverty and suffering. If, in the end, it truly cannot be achieved, then nothing whatsoever can save us from poverty. And if it cannot be achieved, no one shall be to blame.

It is sometimes said that if our manner of living could once again become as utterly sparse and simple as it was in some earlier age, then poverty might be uprooted at its very source. What this really means is: once total ruin has occurred, there remains no further possibility of falling. But that is not to be called deliverance.

That mankind once carried on its work with certain means does not mean that it must continue with those same means forever—no such lesson is written in the history of humankind. If man's intellect fails, age after age, to express itself through new invention, then it must fall behind. Each new age demands of mankind a new tribute; those who fail to supply it are discarded. Man, through the very force of this inventive power, creates ever-new opportunities for himself. Thereby his resources naturally grow greater than those of the preceding age. When there was no plough, mankind still managed, in some fashion, to live by eating the fruits of the forest; no one even imagined that there was any deficiency in this. But the very moment the plough came into being, alongside it there arose, of their own accord, land settlement, cultivation, granaries, and laws. Along with this, much disturbance

too has accumulated—much violence, much theft and plunder, fraud and deceit, falsehood. How all this is to be checked is a question that must be pondered by that very humanity which created the plough. But if, upon seeing this disorder, one were to advise the abandonment of the plough itself, then one would be setting man's head upside down upon his own shoulders. History shows that certain races of mankind, instead of advancing along the path of new creation, have turned their backs upon it and sat motionless, fixated upon the accumulated treasures of the past; such people are worse than the dead—they are the living dead. It is true that the dead incur no expense. But who, for that reason, would call death a good solution to the problem of poverty? It does not befall mankind to survive in the present age on the meagre resources of a bygone era. Man's needs are many, his enterprises vast, and his power to supply those enterprises is manifold as well. What then shall we call luxury? Shall we call it luxury to abandon the castor-oil lamp for the kerosene lantern, and the kerosene lantern for the use of electric light? Never. If, once daylight has ended, you consider the artificial kindling of light itself unnecessary, then indeed you would reject electric light altogether. But for the very need that once required the lighting of a castor-oil lamp at evening, electric light now serves as the refinement of that same necessity. If we use it today, that is not luxury; if we fail to use it, that itself is poverty. On the day when the man who once walked on foot created the bullock cart, his prosperity found expression in that very cart. But within that same bullock cart lay concealed, in embryo, the austere discipline that would one day become the motor car. If the man who once rode in the bullock cart does not ride in a motor car today, his very failure to do so reveals his poverty. What was once the wealth of one age becomes the poverty of another. To return to that former poverty, in the name of escaping poverty, is the counsel of powerless cowardice.

It is true that most of the opportunities created for mankind in modern times fall to the lot of the wealthy. That is to say, they come to the enjoyment of the few, while the majority remain deprived. This is a sorrow belonging to the whole of society. From this arise vast diseases, afflictions, and crimes, for which the whole of society must, at every moment, pay atonement. The resolution of this lies neither in curtailing wealth, nor in seizing it by force, nor even in its generous donation through charity. The remedy lies in awakening, as far as possible, in

everyone, the power to produce wealth—that is, in spreading the principle of cooperation among the general populace.

I do not believe that the inequality of wealth can ever be entirely removed by force or by cunning. For inequality of power is inherent within humanity itself. The outward manifestation of this inequality of power must inevitably take various forms. Besides this, there is also a natural diversity of temperament—some love to accumulate money, others have no inclination to accumulate at all; in this way, disparities of wealth naturally arise. In no department of human life is an unbroken, uniform levelling either possible or desirable. Nor would there be any благо in it. For, in the natural world as in the human world alike, complete equality paralyses initiative and dulls the intellect. On the other hand, excessive disparity, too, is a fault. For the gulf it creates obstructs, beyond due measure, the bond of sociability between man and man. Wherever such an obstruction exists, misfortune, in one form or another, makes its home in that very darkness. I have said before that in the present age this inequality has become excessive, and it is for this very reason that unrest has today engaged, on every side, in vast preparations for the destruction of society.

The present age has created, for the people of the present age, such opportunities for education, health, and livelihood as ought not to remain beyond the reach of the majority; the means for these ought to lie within the hands of all. A provision merely sufficient to allow one to somehow eat and clothe oneself and survive is unworthy of any human being—it is, in itself, an insult to him. A sufficient surplus of wealth, and a sufficient surplus of leisure for the cultivation of one's humanity, is the rightful need of every human being.

Today the burden of preserving civilisation's glory rests in the hands of the few. But the burden of sustaining these very few rests upon the unwilling labour of the many. As a result, a vast multitude of humanity must pass their lives deprived of knowledge, of enjoyment, of health—reduced to ignorance, to stunted and distorted growth. This immense burden of ignorance, misery, ill health, and self-degradation weighs upon human society; because it has become habitual, because we have accepted it as inevitable, we give no thought to the vast injury it inflicts. But there is no longer time to remain indifferent. Today, across the entire world, a

social earthquake is shaking its head on every side. It is precisely from the excessive weight of power concentrated within narrow bounds that such dire portents have arisen. Today, power must be set free.

In our own country, founded as it is upon the village and predominantly agricultural, the principle of cooperation was once, to a considerable degree, in practice. But in those days, human life was sparing in its needs. Since requirements were few, cooperation among people came easily. In those days too, naturally, the number of the wealthy was comparatively small; but whereas the wealthy today create obstacles through self-indulgence, in that age the wealthy created bonds of union through self-sacrifice. Today, in our country, because expenditure has increased and income has grown constrained, self-sacrifice on the part of the wealthy has become exceedingly difficult. Perhaps that is well; for now the common people themselves must awaken their own power from within themselves, and therein lies their lasting welfare. Following this very path, if livelihood in India today can be established upon the principle of cooperation, then the villages—the very cradle of Indian civilisation—shall revive once more, and shall save the entire country. In India today, poverty is vastly widespread, yet the towering, impenetrable fortress of concentrated wealth has not yet, in every quarter, blocked the path of the small capitalist. For this very reason, we have no other recourse but the principle of cooperation—and in our country, the obstacles to it are comparatively few. Therefore, with my whole heart, I pray that the liberation of wealth may be fully accomplished in our land, and that here, at this sacred confluence of every man's endeavour, the seat of Annapurna, the goddess of abundance, may find its everlasting place.

1335 (Bengali Era)

APPENDIX

Just as politics remains bound entirely within the self-interest of the nation, so too does livelihood remain bound entirely within the self-interest of the individual. This is why there is here so much competition, envy, deceit, and so much baseness among men. But when man is truly man, his livelihood too ought to become not merely a field for the cultivation of power, but a field for the cultivation of his very humanity—this is how it ought to have been. Even in the sphere of livelihood, man should gain not merely his bread, but his own truth as well—this is surely what we desire. Some years ago, when I first heard of cooperative livelihood, it seemed to me as though some knot in a tangled problem had, to a great extent, loosened itself. It occurred to me that the isolation of self-interest had, until now, denied man his truth in the sphere of livelihood; but here, the union of self-interests has today undertaken to prove that very truth. This very idea sets out to explain that poverty lies in man's disunion, while wealth lies in his union. In every direction, this is the fundamental truth of human civilisation; I do not believe that this truth can ever have any limit within the realm of humanity.

The doctrine of cooperation in livelihood declares this: that once man attains truth, his poverty is dispelled—not through any particular external mechanism of action. Through this doctrine, mankind has been honoured. This principle of cooperation is an idea, not a mere formula; and for this very reason, many streams of action may spring from it. At every step, its true test lies within the mind itself. What in the English language is called a blind alley—livelihood is not that kind of path. I came to understand that through this path, it is not some particular form of food that will come, but Annapurna herself shall come—she in whom every form of nourishment has merged into a single truth.

Certain relatives of mine were, at that time, making arrangements to put the doctrine of cooperation into practice. My mind was stirred by discussions with them, when, at that very time, the book The National Being, written by the Irish poet and man of action, A.E., fell into my hands. I saw, laid clearly before my eyes, a vast and living picture of cooperative livelihood. How manifold its success could be, how it could fulfil the entirety of man's existence—all this became luminous to

me. That the bread of life, too, is Brahman itself; that when man realises this through the path of truth, he attains a great fulfilment—that is, he comes to understand, through his very labour, that in separation from others lies his bondage, and in cooperation lies his liberation—this very truth stood fully articulated in the book of that Irish poet-seeker.

Certainly many will tell me that all this is mere words. To put the idea of cooperation into practice on a grand scale requires passing through many attempts, many trials, many failures, before it can, after long years, perhaps become possible. The objection is fair enough. No great thing can be had cheaply. The path of ease toward a rare treasure is rightly called the path of illusion. Many say that swaraj can be won through the spinning wheel, and many even believe it; but I have yet to meet anyone who has understood this with any clarity. Hence no real argument proceeds; in the country, argument does not proceed either—only anger proceeds. Those who descend into debate calculate and demonstrate how much thread can be spun on how many spinning wheels, and how much khaddar can be made from how much thread. That is to say, by their reckoning, if the country adopts this practice, some small measure of the scarcity of cloth would be alleviated. Then the matter comes down to removing scarcity.

But scarcity is a complex, composite thing. And the causes of its origin lie in our lack of knowledge, in defects of judgment, in faulty customs, and in weaknesses of character. Only by grasping the whole of human life as one can its remedy—inward and outward alike—be achieved. Naturally, if the question is difficult, its answer cannot be simple. If white soldiers attack with cannon and guns, then native soldiers cannot repel them with bows and arrows. Some may ask, why not? If the whole country united in spitting upon the whites, that too, they say, could be called the easy path to a difficult pilgrimage. I grant that there is no more precise, and yet simple, means of expressing contempt for the scientifically vaunted methods of modern warfare. And let us even grant, for argument's sake, that it is not impossible for the government's official spray of contempt to wash the whites away entirely; and yet those who know the character of mankind also know this—that thirty-three crore people will never spit all at once...

When Sir Horace Plunkett first set himself to the task of promoting cooperative livelihood in Ireland, through how many obstacles, how many failures did he pass, how many new experiments did he have to undertake; and at last, after immense effort, how success gradually began—this one may understand by reading The National Being. Fire is slow to catch, but once it has caught, it spreads without delay. Not only that, but the very nature of true truth is this: that wherever, in whatever corner of whatever country, it is discovered and established, it resolves the problem of every country alike. When Sir Horace Plunkett achieved success in Ireland, he simultaneously summoned that very success for India as well. In just this way, should any devoted worker succeed in setting in motion, even in a single village of India, the fundamental means of dispelling poverty, he shall have bequeathed an eternal treasure to all thirty-three crore people of India. Those who judge the worth of truth merely by measuring its extent view truth only in its outward, aggregated form; they do not know that even within the smallest seed lies a spark of life that carries within it the mandate to claim the whole world as its own.

Bhadra, 1332 (Bengali Era)