ESSAY

LETTERS FROM RUSSIA

Rabindranath Tagore



Contents

DEDICATION 2
LETTERS FROM RUSSIA — 1 3
LETTERS FROM RUSSIA — 2 7
LETTERS FROM RUSSIA — 3 10
LETTERS FROM RUSSIA — 4 16
LETTERS FROM RUSSIA — 5 23
LETTERS FROM RUSSIA — 6 31
LETTERS FROM RUSSIA — 7 40
LETTERS FROM RUSSIA — 8 46
LETTERS FROM RUSSIA — 9 51
LETTERS FROM RUSSIA — 10 56
LETTERS FROM RUSSIA — 11 61
LETTERS FROM RUSSIA — 12 66
LETTERS FROM RUSSIA — 13 67
LETTERS FROM RUSSIA — 14 71
LETTERS FROM RUSSIA — EPILOGUE 73
LETTERS FROM RUSSIA — APPENDIX 94
LETTERS FROM RUSSIA — SERVICE TO THE VILLAGE 100
LETTERS FROM RUSSIA — A KOREAN YOUTH'S POLITICAL VIEWS ... 108

DEDICATION

To the beloved Sri Surendranath Kar
With blessings

Santiniketan

25th Baisakh, 1338

Rabindranath Tagore

LETTERS FROM RUSSIA — 1

To the beloved Sri Surendranath Kar
With blessings

Santiniketan

Rabindranath Tagore

Moscow

I have arrived in Russia at last. What I am seeing strikes me as extraordinary—utterly unlike any other country. The difference goes to the very root. Here, all people without exception are being awakened equally.

Since time immemorial, an obscure multitude has existed within human civilization—their numbers vast, they are the beasts of burden; they have no leisure to become fully human. They are sustained merely on the refuse of the nation's wealth. Eating the least, wearing the least, learning the least, they minister to all others; their toil exceeds everyone's, and so does their degradation. At every turn they die of disease, they die of starvation, they die beneath the kicks and blows of their masters—excluded from every opportunity and comfort that life offers. They are the wick-stands of civilization, standing upright with the lamp upon their heads—all those above receive the light, while the oil trickles down and scalds their own flesh.

For many years I have pondered the condition of these people, and it has seemed to me there is no remedy. Unless one class remains below, another cannot possibly remain above—and yet there is need for some to remain above. Without those above, nothing beyond the narrow horizon of daily necessity could ever come into view; for man's humanity does not consist merely in the earning of his bread. Civilization begins only when the sheer struggle for livelihood is transcended. All

the finest fruits of civilization have ripened in the field of leisure. Within human society, some measure of leisure must be preserved for one portion of mankind. So I used to think: those who are compelled by circumstance—not merely by the movement of fortune but by the very demands of body and mind—to labor in the lower tier, and who are fitted for such labor, ought, as far as possible, to be given the benefit of education, health, and comfort.

The trouble is this: nothing lasting can be built by charity. When one tries to help from outside, corruption creeps in at every step. Only when equality is achieved does genuine help become possible. Be that as it may, I myself have never been able to think my way clear of this—yet when one considers that civilization can remain afloat only by keeping the majority of mankind submerged, dehumanized, one feels the sting of conscience at accepting this as inevitable.

Consider this: England has grown fat upon the starvation of India. Many an Englishman is of the opinion that India's whole purpose is to nourish England forever. England, having grown great, is doing great work in human society—and therefore, to serve this end, there is no wrong in binding a nation into perpetual servitude. If this nation eats little and wears little, what does it matter—yet, out of charity, its condition ought perhaps to be somewhat improved—so runs the thought in their minds. But a hundred years have passed; we have gained neither education, nor health, nor wealth.

The same holds true within every society. The man who cannot honor another man is incapable of truly helping him. At least, whenever one's own interest comes into play, quarrels and cutting throats invariably follow. In Russia, an attempt is being made to solve this problem by seizing it at the very root.

I do not yet know the final outcome, but what strikes my eye even now fills me with astonishment. The greatest highway to the solution of all our problems is education. Until now, the majority of society has been deprived of the full benefit of education—India, indeed, has been almost entirely deprived. Here, one is startled to see with what extraordinary zeal that same education is spreading through every corner of society. The measure of this education lies not merely in numbers, but in its completeness, its intensity. What abundant provision, what

immense energy, is devoted to ensuring that no human being remains helpless or without a vocation! And this is not confined to White Russia alone—among the semi-civilized peoples of Central Asia too, education is spreading like a flood; no effort is spared to ensure that they receive even the ripest fruits of science. Here, the theatres are thronged for fine operas and great plays, yet those who attend are of the farming and laboring classes. Nowhere is there any humiliation for these people. Whatever institutions of theirs I have seen so far, everywhere I have noticed the same awakening of spirit, the same joy of self-respect. As for the common people of our own country, there is no comparison at all—even set beside England's working class, the difference is like heaven and earth. What we sought to accomplish at Sriniketan, this whole nation is genuinely accomplishing on a vast scale. If our workers could come here and study for some time, it would do them a world of good. Every day I compare India with what I see here, and I think: what has come to pass here, and what might have been there. My American companion, Dr. Harry Timbres, has been studying the health system here—its excellence is startling—and where does luckless India lie, fevered, unfed, wretched, helpless! Only a few years ago the condition of the common people here was exactly like that of India—in this short span they have transformed with astonishing speed—while we remain sunk to our very throats in the mire of inertia.

I do not say there is no fault at all in this; there are grave faults, and one day these people will meet with trouble because of them. In brief, the fault is this: through prescribed education they have cast humanity into a mold—but humanity poured into a mold can never truly endure. If the truths of scripture do not meet the truths of the living mind, then one day either the mold will burst asunder, or the human spirit will wither into rigidity, or else stand transformed into a mechanical puppet.

I observed that among the boys here, responsibilities are divided and duties assigned—one group takes charge of health in their hostel arrangements, another of provisions, and so on for various matters; all authority rests in their own hands, with only a single supervisor. At Santiniketan I have tried throughout my life to introduce such practices—but only rules have ever been drafted; nothing has ever come of it. One reason for this is that the ultimate aim of our education has naturally become the passing of examinations, with everything else reduced to mere pretext—if it happens, well and good; if not, no matter. Our indolent minds

are unwilling to take on burdens beyond what is strictly enforced. Besides, from childhood we are accustomed only to learning by rote from books.

There is no use drafting rules; whatever does not touch the administrators' own hearts is bound to be neglected. Of all I have thought these many years concerning village work and educational method, there is little more here than this—only there is strength, there is energy, and there is administrative wisdom among the functionaries. I think much of it depends on sheer physical vigor—it is exceedingly difficult for bodies wasted and stunted by malaria to work at full pace; here, in this cold country, people's bones are hard, and so the work advances easily. It is not right to count heads and determine the number of workers in our country by that measure—for they are not whole men.

Yours,

LETTERS FROM RUSSIA — 2

Moscow

Scene: a mansion in a suburb of Moscow. Looking through the window, I see forest stretching to the horizon—waves of green rising, deep green, pale green, green mingled with violet, green touched with a hint of yellow. Far beyond the edge of the wood, a row of village cottages. It is nearly ten o'clock; clouds have gathered in layers across the sky, heavy with the threat of rain; in the wind, the slender crowns of the poplar trees sway.

The hotel where I stayed for a few days in Moscow was called the Grand Hotel. The building is immense, but its condition most impoverished—as though a rich man's son had squandered his inheritance and fallen into ruin. Something of the old-time splendor remains, sold off in part, torn away in part; there is not even thread enough left for mending; everything has grown grimy, as though all connection with the laundry had been severed. The whole city is in this same condition—amid utter disrepair one can still glimpse the countenance of a bygone nobility, as though a torn garment yet bore golden buttons, as though a Dhaka muslin dhoti had been patched with coarse darning. Such universal poverty in matters of food and daily use I have not seen anywhere else in Europe. The chief reason is this: in every other place, since rich and poor exist side by side, the accumulated form of wealth strikes the eye all the more forcibly—there, poverty lurks hidden behind a curtain, in the wings; and in those wings all is disordered, filthy, unhealthy, a dense darkness of misery, misfortune, and vice. But when we come from outside and find our lodging, whatever we see through our own windows is all handsome, decent, well-appointed. Had this same wealth been evenly distributed, it would have been apparent at once that the nation's riches were not so great as to provide everyone with adequate food and clothing. Here, since there is no distinction, wealth's very appearance has vanished; nor is there any ugliness in poverty—only a plain simplicity. Such nationwide simplicity I have seen nowhere else, and this is what strikes me most forcibly at the outset. Those whom in other countries we call "the common people"—here, they alone exist.

Many kinds of people move along the streets of Moscow. None is dressed elegantly; one can tell at a glance that the leisured class has vanished altogether. Everyone must labor with their own hands to pass their days; the polish of gentility is nowhere to be found. I had occasion to visit the house of a certain gentleman, Dr. Petrov, a respected man here, holding high office. The building where his office stands was once the mansion of some great nobleman of the old days. But the furniture within is exceedingly modest, with no sign of neatness anywhere; in one corner of the bare, carpetless floor stands some ordinary table—everything wearing an air as though bereft of bedding and seating, like a house of mourning shunned by barber and washerman alike, as though there were no obligation whatsoever toward social propriety in the eyes of outsiders. The arrangements for meals at my own lodging would be utterly unbefitting a guesthouse bearing the grand name of "Grand Hotel." Yet there is no shame in this, for everyone shares the same condition.

I recall the days of our own childhood. Life then, and its provisions, were far more modest than now—yet none of us felt the least embarrassment on that account. The reason was that in those days the standard of household living did not vary so extremely from high to low. Everyone's home maintained a roughly similar manner of living; what differences existed lay in refinement—that is, in music, in education, and such matters. Beyond that, there were differences of lineage and custom—that is, particularities of language, manner, and conduct according to caste. But in those days, whatever food, dress, and other appurtenances we possessed—were one to look at them now—might well provoke the contempt of today's middle class.

The vanity of material inequality came to our country from the Western continent. Once, when new money began flowing into the households of office-clerks and merchants of the recent era, they took up the fashion of English gentility. From that time, the measure of gentility began to be taken by the yardstick of furniture. And so nowadays, in our country too, the distinctiveness of wealth eclipses lineage, character, conduct, wisdom, and learning altogether, and catches the eye above all else. The glory of this distinctiveness is, for mankind, its greatest disgrace. One ought to be especially cautious lest this vulgarity penetrate to the very marrow of the bone.

What has pleased my eye most since coming here is precisely this: the complete disappearance of the vulgarity born of such inequality. For this reason alone, the common people's sense of self-respect has, in a single moment, become unbounded in this country. Peasants and laborers alike have today been able to cast off the burden of dishonor and hold their heads high—seeing this has left me as astonished as I am delighted. How wonderfully simple has human intercourse become! There is much more to say, and I shall try to say it; but for the present, I find I need to rest. So I shall sit back in the long chair by the window, draw a blanket over my legs—and then, if my eyes wish to close, I shall not force myself to keep them open.

LETTERS FROM RUSSIA — 3

Moscow

It has been a long time since I wrote to the two of you together. From your combined silence, I gather that pair of letters achieved eternal bliss. I fear such magnificent squandering happens now and then in the Indian postal service. For this very reason, I no longer feel much inclined to write letters these days. At least, when I get no response from your quarter, I fall silent. The hours of a soundless night seem long; in just such a way, unanswered days grow immeasurably long in the imagination. From time to time it feels as though I have passed into some other realm—as if the almanac itself had changed, as if the clock struck in slow, drawn-out beats. Like Draupadi's disrobing, the more the time of my return home is tugged at, the more inexhaustibly it seems to stretch on. Whatever day I do return, I shall surely return—today, this very moment, feels just as near as that day will feel then; with this thought I try to console myself.

Be that as it may—I have, for the present, arrived in Russia. Had I not come, this pilgrimage of a lifetime would have remained sorely incomplete. Before judging the merits or faults of what these people are doing here, the first thought that strikes one is: what impossible daring! That thing called "the eternal" clings to man's very bone and marrow, embraced a thousandfold in heart and mind; on every side it has its strongholds, at every gate its sentries, and through ages upon ages it has levied its taxes until its treasury has swollen mountain-high. These people have seized it by the very collar and given it a violent wrench—no fear, no hesitation, no doubt remains in them. They have swept away the cushion of the old order and built an entirely new seat for the new. In the Western continent, by the magic of science, difficult undertakings are accomplished, and seeing this I inwardly marvel. But the vast enterprise unfolding here has astonished me far more. Had it been merely some furious campaign of destruction, I should not have been so amazed—for these people possess ample power to wreak havoc. But what I see is this: over an immense field, they have rolled up their sleeves and set about building an entirely new world. There is no time to lose, for the whole world stands opposed to them,

everyone is their adversary—as swiftly as possible they must rise and stand firm, must prove with their own hands that what they seek is neither error nor deception. They have vowed to win, in ten or fifteen years, a battle against a thousand years of tradition. Compared to other nations, their material wealth is exceedingly slight—but the strength of their resolve is formidable indeed.

This revolution that has occurred was long anticipated as something bound to happen in Russia. The preparation had been under way for a long time. Countless people, known and unknown, have for ages given their lives, endured unbearable suffering. The causes of revolution in the world are generally widespread, but they become concentrated in particular places. Even when the blood of the entire body is corrupted, it is in some particular weak spot that a boil erupts and turns red. From the hands of those who held wealth and power, the poor and the powerless bore unbearable anguish in this very Russia. Between the two parties, an utter inequality finally, through cataclysm, gave rise here in Russia to the effort at redress.

Once, the French Revolution occurred, driven by just such inequality. In those days, the oppressed there understood that the shame and suffering of this inequality was universal. And so, in that revolution, the message of equality, fraternity, and liberty resounded, crossing the borders of its native land. But it did not endure. The message of this revolution here, too, is a universal message. Today, at least one nation on earth is considering the interests of all humanity above its own national interest. Whether this message will endure forever, none can say. But that the problem of one's own nation is bound up within the problem of all humanity—this is the truth inherent in the present age. This must be acknowledged.

In this age, the curtain has risen upon the stage of world history. Until now it was as though rehearsals had been proceeding behind the scenes, in fragments, in separate chambers. Around every country there stood a wall. It is not that there was no path at all for coming and going from outside; but the face of human society that I see today, I never saw within those divisions. In those days one saw single trees, one by one; today I see a forest. If there has been any lack of balance within human society, it is showing itself today from one end of the earth to the other. To be able to see things on so vast a scale is no small matter.

When I asked a young Korean in Tokyo, "What is your sorrow?" he replied, "The rule of the moneyed classes rides upon our shoulders; we are the beasts that bear their profit." I asked, "Whatever the cause, when you are weak, by what means will you shake off this burden by your own strength?" He said: today, across the whole world, there exists a fellowship of the helpless, and they shall unite through their suffering—those who are rich, who are powerful, will remain apart, each behind the walls of their own iron safe and their own throne; they can never unite. Korea's strength lies in the strength of its sorrow.

That the sufferer can today see himself as vast upon the stage of all humanity—this is a mighty thing. In earlier days, seeing themselves as isolated, they could in no way perceive their own power—they endured everything, resting their burden upon fate. Today, even the utterly helpless can imagine that heavenly kingdom where the sufferer's suffering ends, where the humiliated one's humiliation is dispelled. For this very reason, the toiling poor throughout the whole world are stirring today.

Those who are powerful are arrogant. The power that today courses through the hearts of the sufferers, making them restless, the mighty are trying to block from outside—they will not let its messengers enter their gates, they choke its very voice. But the one thing they truly ought to fear most is the suffering of the sufferer itself—yet it is precisely this that they have always been accustomed to disregard utterly. For the sake of their own profit, they do not fear to let that suffering grow and grow; they feel no tremor of the heart in wringing two or three hundred percent profit by pinning the wretched peasant in the grip of famine. For they know that very profit to be strength. But in human society, danger lurks within every excess, and that danger can never be checked from outside. Excessive strength can never forever go on expanding itself against excessive weakness. Had the powerful not grown intoxicated with their own might, they would have feared, above all else, this excess of inequality—for all disproportion stands against the order of the universe.

When the invitation came from Moscow, I still had no clear notion regarding the Bolsheviks. I had heard contradictory things about them continuously. There was a certain misgiving in my mind against them, for at the outset their endeavor was

one of sheer coercion. But I noticed one thing—that opposition to them seemed to have grown considerably fainter in Europe. Many people, hearing that I was going to Russia, encouraged me. Indeed, I have even heard praise of them from English lips. Many said they were engaged in an extraordinarily remarkable experiment.

Others, again, tried to frighten me; but the chief cause of fear was the lack of comfort—they said all the food and arrangements were so coarse that I would not be able to bear it. Besides, many also said that most of what these people would show me would be fabricated. It must be admitted that at my age, in my state of health, travel in Russia is a foolhardy venture. But where the world's greatest historical sacrifice is being performed, to receive an invitation and yet not come would be unforgivable on my part.

Besides, the words of that young Korean kept ringing in my ears. I thought to myself: at the very threshold of a Western civilization made invincible by wealth and power, this Russia is today establishing a seat for the power-worship of the powerless, utterly disregarding the scowling, contemptuous glare of the entire Western continent—if I do not go to see this, who will? They wish to overturn the might of the mighty, the wealth of the wealthy—why then should we fear, why should we resent it? What is our strength, after all, or our wealth? We belong, surely, to the ranks of the destitute and helpless of this world.

If someone says they have vowed to awaken the strength of the weak, then with what face could we say, "We must not so much as touch your shadow"? They may err—nor is it certain their opponents do not err as well. But the time has come for us to declare that unless the strength of the powerless awakens now, there is no salvation for mankind, for the might of the mighty has grown excessively fierce—all this while the earth has been scorched, and now they are polluting even the heavens with sin; the helpless today are helpless beyond measure—all opportunity and advantage piled up on one side of human society, while boundless helplessness lies on the other.

Shortly before this, the tale of the atrocities at Dacca had been churning within my mind. What inhuman cruelty—and yet not a word of it in the English newspapers—while if one or two people die here in a motor accident, the news spreads from one

end of this country to the other; yet our wealth, our lives, our honor have become so impossibly cheap. Those who are held so cheap can never receive fair judgment.

Our grievance has no way of reaching the ear of the world—every road is closed. And yet all manner of means to spread slander against us lie in their hands. In this age, for a weak nation, this too is among the most powerful sources of shame. For today's rumor is proclaimed to the whole world; the machinery of propaganda, being in the hands of the powerful nations, can obliterate the weaker peoples behind a veil of ill-fame and disgrace. It is broadcast to the people of the world that we Hindus and Muslims cut each other's throats, and so forth. But once, in Europe too, sect fought against sect in just such slaughter—how did that end? Solely through the spread of education. In our country too, it might have ended the same way. But after a century and more of English rule, education has reached only five in a hundred in this country—and even that education is education's own mockery.

Rather than trying to remove the cause of contempt, to prove to the world that we deserve contempt—this is the greatest tax exacted by our own weakness. The root of the solution to all human problems lies in good education. In our country, that road is barred, because "law and order" has left no room for any other benefit—the treasury stands utterly empty. I had accepted one work, among all the works of the nation, as supreme; believing I would teach the common people to stand upon their own strength, I have devoted my entire capacity to this end all these years. I did not wish to refuse the goodwill of the authorities for this purpose, and I sought it too—but you know how much fruit I have gained. I have come to understand: it is not to be. Great is our sin—we are powerless.

So when I heard that the education of the common people in Russia had grown from almost nothing to an enormous extent, I resolved: even if my broken body breaks further, let it break—I must go there. These people have realized that the one means of giving strength to the powerless is education—food, health, peace, everything depends upon this. An empty "law and order" fills neither the belly nor the mind. And yet, in paying its price, everything else was sold away.

Having been formed in the atmosphere of modern India, I too am human, and so I have long held the firm conviction that to impart education to nearly thirty-three

crore fools is well-nigh impossible—for which no one but our evil fate can be blamed. When I heard that education was advancing by leaps and bounds among the peasants and workers here, I thought that education must mean merely a smattering of reading, writing, and arithmetic—whose glory lay only in the bare headcount. Even that would be no small thing. In our country, were that the case, I should return home blessing the king. But here I found a thoroughly mature education, fit to make men of them—not the sort meant merely for memorizing notes and passing the M.A. examination.

But I shall write more on all this at greater length later; today there is no more time. This very evening I depart for Berlin. From there, on the third of October, I shall cross the Atlantic—I cannot yet say for certain how long the crossing will take.

But body and mind offer no consent to any of this. Still, I dare not let this opportunity pass—if I can gather something worthwhile, I shall be able to rest quietly for whatever days remain. Otherwise, losing capital day by day and finally extinguishing the lamp before taking leave—that too is not a bad plan; leaving a little refuse scattered about would only make the whole thing unseemly. The less one's resources, the more one's inner weakness is exposed—the more laxity, quarreling, and mutual backbiting follow. Generosity depends considerably on a full stomach. But wherever I have seen the true face of accomplishment, it has never been something bought ready-made in the market with money—it is in the soil of poverty itself that the golden harvest ripens. The tireless energy, the courage, the intelligence, the self-sacrifice I have witnessed in the educational system here—had I even a tiny fraction of it, I should count myself blessed. The less the inner strength and genuine enthusiasm, the more one must go searching for money.

LETTERS FROM RUSSIA — 4

While in Moscow I wrote two long letters concerning the Soviet system. When those letters will arrive, and whether they will arrive at all, I do not know.

Here in Berlin I received both your letters together. Letters heavy with the rains—the shadow of clouds over the sal forest in the sky of Santiniketan, and the deepening of monsoon in the reflection of water—when that image awakens in my mind, how eager my heart grows, I need hardly tell you.

But having now traveled through Russia, that picture of beauty has been wiped from my mind. I can think of nothing but the sorrow of the peasants throughout our own land. From the very beginning of my youth I formed a close acquaintance with the villages of Bengal. In those days I had daily dealings with the peasants—all their grievances reached my ears. I know that few creatures are as helpless as they; where they lie sunk in the depths of society, the light of knowledge scarcely reaches, one might say the breath of life scarcely stirs.

Among those who gathered in those days to discuss the politics of the country, there was not one who felt the village folk to be truly people of this land. I remember, at the time of the Pabna Conference, telling a very great political leader of that era that if we wished to make the political progress of our country genuine, we must first of all make human beings of those in this lowest tier. He dismissed the notion so contemptuously that I understood clearly: our patriots had picked up an abstraction called "the nation" from some foreign schoolroom, and did not truly feel the people of the land within their hearts. The convenience of such an attitude is this: it is easy to protest, to grow indignant, to write poetry, to run newspapers, over the fact that our country lies in foreign hands—but the moment one says the people of this land are our own people, one must accept responsibility for them from that very instant, and the work must begin at that very moment.

Many years passed after that day. I have often heard the echo of what I said at that Pabna Conference regarding the villages—not merely the words, but funds too have been raised for village welfare—yet at the very surface level of society where the words are repeated, that same money circulates and is lost, and it never reaches down to the depths where the village lies submerged.

Once I moored my boat on a sandbank of the Padma and devoted myself to literature. I held the conviction that mining the depths of thought with my pen was my sole task, that I was fit for no other work. But when I found I could not, by any persuasion, make anyone understand that the field of our self-governance lay in the agricultural village, that its cultivation must begin from that very day—then, for a moment, I had to tuck my pen behind my ear and say to myself: very well, I myself shall take up this work. In this resolve I found, on that day, only a single companion to help me—Kalimohan. His body was wasted with disease, fever visited him twice daily, and on top of that, his name had been entered in the police register.

From that time onward, that history proceeded along a difficult and rugged path, with the scantiest provisions. My intention was that the peasant must be made firm in his own strength. Two thoughts have constantly stirred within me on this matter—first, that by right, the title to the land belongs not to the landlord but to the peasant; second, that according to the principle of cooperation, agriculture can never improve unless the fields under cultivation are consolidated. To grow crops with the plough and yoke of the days of yore on small fragmented plots is the same as trying to fetch water in a cracked pitcher.

But both these courses are exceedingly difficult. In the first place, if the peasant were given title to the land, that very title would fall into the hands of the moneylender the very next moment, and his burden of misery would only increase, never decrease. The matter of consolidating agricultural land I once discussed myself, calling the peasants together. From the veranda of the house where I used to stay at Shilaidaha, one could see field after field stretching unbroken to the horizon. From dawn, peasants would come one by one with plough and yoke and oxen, each turning over his own small plot again and again before moving on. I have seen with my own eyes how much such divided labor is wasted every day. When I called the peasants together and explained to them the advantage of consolidating

all the land and ploughing it with a single engine, they agreed to everything at once. But, they said, we are helpless—how could we possibly manage so vast an undertaking? Had I been able to say, "I myself shall take this burden upon me," the matter might have been resolved then and there. But what capacity had I! To take up the responsibility of managing such an enterprise was beyond me; I had neither the training nor the strength for it.

But this thought remained ever awake within me. When the management of the co-operative at Bolpur came into the hands of Visva-Bharati, I once again hoped that perhaps now an opportunity might arise. Those in whose hands the charge of the office lay were young in years, possessed of far greater practical intelligence and education than mine. But our young men were school-bred boys, with minds trained only to memorize books. The education prevalent in our country does not leave in its students the courage to think for themselves, nor the competence to act—their salvation depends solely upon repeating parrot-like the lore of textbooks.

Besides this superficiality of intellect, another misfortune befalls us. Between those who have memorized their school lessons and those who, remaining outside school, have never memorized any lessons, a division of class has arisen—the educated and the uneducated. The sense of kinship possessed by the school-bred mind cannot reach beyond the neighborhood of the book-learned. Those whom we call "the peasantry," whose existence lies veiled behind the pages of textbooks, our gaze cannot reach—they remain indistinct to us. For this very reason they are naturally excluded from all our endeavors. And so, while through the medium of co-operatives a work of creation is proceeding at the lowest tier of society in other countries, in our country nothing much advances beyond the timid lending of small sums of money. For lending money, calculating its interest, and collecting the debt owed—these are tasks easy even for the most timid of minds, indeed easy precisely because the mind is timid; so long as no error creeps into the arithmetic, there is no danger in it at all.

It is this twofold lack—courage of intellect and sympathy for the common people—that has made the redress of the people's suffering so exceedingly difficult in our country; yet no one can be blamed for this deficiency. For it was solely to establish

a factory for the manufacture of clerks that schools were first planted in our country under the mercantile empire. For the desk-worker, achieving likeness to his master was our highest ambition. And so, whenever failure came in that pursuit of employment, our whole education proved fruitless. For this very reason, the nation's business chiefly revolved, whirlpool-like, within the pavilion of the Congress and the workshop of the newspaper press—confined to the mere public utterance of the educated class's grievances. Our pen-bound hands could never advance to the task of actually building the nation.

Being myself formed in the very air of that country, I too could never summon the courage to firmly believe that the mountain of ignorance and incapacity weighing upon the breast of so many millions of common people could ever be dislodged. Whether even a little could be accomplished—this alone has been my constant thought all these years. I had believed there existed within society a permanently shadowed tier where the light of the sun could never fully penetrate, and that therefore one ought at least to rise and busy oneself lighting an oil lamp there. But ordinarily, even that measure of duty does not press very forcefully upon people's minds; for it does not come clearly to mind that anything at all can be done for those whom we cannot even see in the darkness.

It was with a mind of such modest courage that I came to Russia; I had heard that here the spread of education among the peasants and workers had grown enormously. I thought this must mean that the village schools had increased, in number greater than ours, the teaching of children only up to the first, or at most the second, standard. I imagined I would find, upon turning over their numerical tables, that so many peasants could sign their names, and so many had progressed with their multiplication tables up to the number ten.

Remember, the revolution here through which the Tsar's rule fell took place in the year 1917. That is, only thirteen years have passed. In the meantime, these people have had to struggle against fierce opposition both within and without. They stood alone, bearing the burden of an utterly shattered state. The path was rendered impassable by the vast rubbish heaped up by former misgovernment. In the fierce storm of self-revolution through which they steered toward the shore of the new age, their covert and overt supporters were England and America. Their financial

resources are meager; they have no credit in the moneylending markets of foreign nations. Since factories within the country are not sufficient in number, they are powerless in the production of wealth. For this reason, they have somehow been managing to sell the very rice from their own mouths to carry forward their era of endeavor. And yet, of all branches of state administration, the least productive—the military branch—must be kept fully armed at whatever cost, an expenditure unavoidable for them. For every state power of this modern age of capital stands against them as an enemy, and each has filled its own arsenal to the very brim.

I recall that it was these very people who, by sending a proposal for disarmament to the League of Nations, startled the hypocritical peace-lovers out of their complacency. For the aggrandizement or preservation of their own dominion is not the Soviets' aim—their striving is to build up, on a true and comprehensive scale, the means and instruments of education, health, and food for the common people; and it is precisely they who need undisturbed peace more than anyone else. But you know well that all the champions of the League of Nations are utterly unwilling to check the vastly expanding enterprise of brigandage, even while all cry out together, "We want peace!" For this very reason, in every imperial nation, the cultivation of the barbed-wire hedge of armaments has continued to outstrip the cultivation of the grain of sustenance. In the midst of all this, a terrible famine occurred in Russia for some time; how many died, there is no reckoning. Having weathered that blow, it is only in the past eight years that these people have been able to set about building the new age, despite the lack of external resources.

The task is no small one—their state stretches vast across Europe and Asia. Among the peoples within their union there exists a greater diversity of races than even in India. The differences between their physical natures are far greater than between one human nature and another. In truth, their problem, being multiply diverse in race, multiply complicated in circumstance, is itself a condensed form of the problem of the whole world.

I have told you already that when my eyes first fell upon the city of Moscow from outside, I found it, compared with every other prosperous city of Europe, exceedingly shabby. Not a single person walking the streets is elegantly dressed; the whole city wears the coarse, everyday cloth of common wear. In everyday cloth

there is no distinction of class; class distinction lies in fine attire. Here, in dress and appearance, everyone is alike. The whole city, taken together, is a laborers' quarter; wherever the eye falls, there they are. Here, to see how the condition of the workers and peasants has changed, one need not go to a library to open a book, nor go into a village or a slum to take notes. Those whom we call "the gentry"—where indeed are they? That is the very question one must ask.

The common people here are not overshadowed in the slightest by any gentry class; those who, age after age, remained behind the scenes are today wholly and completely in the open. That these people have but lately learned their letters, groping through the alphabet in their primers—this error one is not slow to correct. In these very few years they have become fully human.

I was reminded of the peasants and laborers of my own country. It seemed like the work of some sorcerer out of the Arabian tales. A mere decade ago, these people were exactly as illiterate, as helpless, as destitute as our own peasants and laborers—possessed of the same blind superstition and the same benighted piety. In sorrow and calamity they beat their heads at the doors of gods; in fear of the next world their wits lay bound in the hands of priests and pandas, and in fear of this world, in the hands of officials, moneylenders, and landlords; those who beat them with their shoes—it was their task to polish those very shoes. For a thousand years their manner and method had known no change; their vehicles, their spinning wheels, their oil-presses, all belonged to the age of their remotest ancestors—suggest that they lay hand to the tools of the present age, and they would balk like a stubborn animal. Just as the ghost of ages past has settled upon the backs of our thirty crores, pressing down and closing their two eyes—so, exactly, was it with these people too. How, within a mere handful of years, this mountain of blindness and incapacity impervious to the sky was made to move—this question must astonish luckless India as it can astonish none other, I dare say. And yet, during the very period when this transformation was taking place, this country did not possess our much-vaunted "law and order."

I have told you already that to see the true face of the education of the common people here, I did not need to travel far, nor did I need, like a school inspector, to examine their spelling to see whether they placed the cerebral "ṇ" correctly in

words like "kāna" and "sonā." One evening I visited a house in the city of Moscow—it was a lodging house for peasants, where, coming to the city from their villages on some errand, they could stay for a few days at low cost. I had conversation with them there. When such conversation becomes possible with the peasants of our own country, that will be the day I can answer the Simon Commission.

Nothing more than this—I have seen this clearly: everything might have been possible, but was not—if nothing else, at least we have gained "law and order." A particular notoriety attaches to us for our communal riots—here too, the strife between the Jewish community and the Christian community, once as ugly and barbarous as our own modern affliction, has been rooted out entirely, in education and in governance. Many a time I have thought that before sending the Simon Commission to our country, it ought first to have made a tour of Russia.

Why I should write a letter such as this, rather than an ordinary polite letter, to a lady such as yourself—you will understand the reason readily enough if you consider how the condition of our country has been churning within my mind. After the disturbance at Jallianwala Bagh, just such unrest once awakened in my heart. Now, after the disturbance at Dacca, I feel that same sorrow once more. A government whitewash has been applied to that incident, but everyone versed in statecraft knows the true worth of such official whitewashing. Had such an incident occurred in Soviet Russia, no whitewash could ever have concealed its shame. Sudhindra, who never had the least respect for the political movement in our country, has this time written me such a letter that one can see how far, in our country today, revulsion against government policy has spread. Be that as it may, your letter remains unfinished—paper and time have run out; in my next letter I shall complete what remains incomplete in this one.

LETTERS FROM RUSSIA — 5

Berlin

From Moscow I wrote you my thoughts on Russia in one long letter. If it reaches you, you will learn something of that country.

I have given some account here of how much work is being done for the all-round advancement of the peasantry. That class of people in our own country who are dumb and benighted, whose minds lie buried beneath the weight of deprivation both outward and inward, cut off from every advantage that life offers—when I came to know that same class of people here, I understood how vast a treasure of human spirit is allowed to perish through society's neglect—how boundless the waste, how merciless the injustice.

I went to see an agricultural centre in Moscow; it is something like their club. Such establishments are scattered throughout every town and village, large and small, in Russia. In these places, provision is made for instruction in agricultural science, sociology, and the like; means have been devised to teach reading and writing to the illiterate; here, in special classes, the peasants are taught scientific methods of cultivation. In every such house there is a museum covering every subject worth learning—natural, social—besides which, arrangements have been made to offer the peasants counsel suited to their every need.

When peasants come to the town from their villages on some errand, they may lodge in such a house for at least three weeks, at very little expense. Through this widespread institution, the Soviet government has laid the broadest possible foundation for a new, society-wide awakening by rousing the hearts of a once-illiterate peasantry.

Entering the house, I saw some people seated and eating in the dining room, while in the reading room a group sat absorbed in newspapers. I went up and sat in a large room upstairs; everyone gathered there. They were people from various

places, some having come from quite distant provinces. Their manner was quite unaffected, without the least constraint.

After the customary welcome and introduction, the visitor-guide said a few words, and I too said something. After that, they began to question me.

The very first question one of them put to me was: why do quarrels occur between Hindus and Muslims in India?

I answered: "When I was young, I never witnessed such barbarity. In those days there was no lack of harmony between the two communities in either village or town. Their affairs were bound up with one another, and in the joys and sorrows of daily life they were as one. These ugly incidents have been seen only since the political movement began in our country. But whatever the immediate cause of such inhuman conduct between neighbours, the root cause is the illiteracy prevailing among our common people. The measure of education by which such folly can be dispelled has not, to this day, been widely introduced in our country. What I have seen in your country has left me astonished."

Question: You are a writer, are you not—have you written anything about your peasants? What will be their fate in future?

Answer: Why only write—I have taken up work on their behalf. With whatever little lies within my single power, I carry on their education, and help them in the improvement of their villages. But compared with the vast educational enterprise that has been built up here in so astonishingly short a time, my own effort is exceedingly slight.

Question: What is your opinion of the attempt now under way in our country to consolidate the fields for cultivation?

Answer: I have no experience that would entitle me to an opinion—I wish rather to hear it from you. What I want to know is whether this is being forced upon your will or not.

Question: Does everyone in India know of this collectivization, and, in general, of all the other undertakings here?

Answer: Very few indeed have the education to know of it. Besides, news of you is suppressed for various reasons. And not everything one hears is trustworthy either.

Question: Did you not know, before now, even of the existence of this housing arrangement made for peasants in our country?

Answer: What is being done for your welfare, I first saw and learned upon coming to Moscow. But now, it is your turn to answer my question. What is your opinion, what is your wish, regarding the outcome of this collectivization for the peasant tenant?

A young peasant who had come from the Ukraine said, "Two years ago a collective farm was established, and I work on it. Within this farm there are orchards of fruits and vegetables, from which we supply produce to all the factories. There, the vegetables are packed in tin containers. Besides this, there are vast fields sown entirely with wheat. We labour eight hours a day, and we have a holiday every fifth day. Compared to our neighbouring peasants who till their own separate plots, we produce here at least twice the yield.

"Almost from the very outset, the lands of some one hundred and fifty peasants were merged for this collective cultivation of ours. In 1929, half the peasants took their land back. The chief reason was that our officials did not properly follow the guidance given by Stalin, the chief minister of the Soviet Communist Party. In his view, the fundamental principle of collectivization is voluntary association bound together by the community. But in many places the bureaucrats, forgetting this principle, drove many peasants at the outset to abandon collective farming altogether. Since then, gradually, a quarter of them have returned. Now we have gained more strength than before. New housing is being built for the people of our group, along with a new dining hall, and another school has begun to be built."

Then a peasant woman from Siberia said, "I have been engaged in collective farm work for nearly ten years. Bear one thing in mind: there is a close connection

between the collective farm and the effort toward women's advancement. Within these ten years, a great change has come over the peasant women here. They have gained far greater confidence in themselves. It is these very women—those who lag behind, who are the chief obstacles to collective farming—whose minds these advanced women are helping to shape. We have formed a corps of women organizers; they travel about to various provinces, work among the women, and explain to them how great an opportunity collectivization offers for the advancement of both mind and livelihood. To ease the daily life of the peasant women in the collective groups, a nursery, an infant school, and a communal kitchen have been established in every collective farm."

In the Sukhoj province there is a well-known state farm called Giant. A peasant there told me about the extent to which collectivization has spread in Russia: "The area of our farmland measures one hundred thousand hectares. Last year three thousand peasants worked there. This year the number has somewhat decreased, but the yield is expected to increase over before. For arrangements have been made to give the land scientific fertilizer and to use mechanical ploughs. We now have more than three hundred such ploughs. Every day our working hours are limited to eight; those who work beyond that receive extra wages. In winter the amount of field work diminishes; at that time the peasants go into town for various tasks—house-building, road repair, and the like. Even during this absence they receive one-third of their wages, and their family members are allowed to live in their designated quarters."

I said, "Tell me plainly whether you have any objection or consent regarding the merging of your own separate property into the collective farm."

The guide proposed that opinions be shown by a show of hands. It appeared there were quite a few who did not consent. I asked them to state the reason for their dissent; they could not explain it clearly. One said, "I simply cannot understand it properly." It became quite clear that the cause of dissent lay within human nature itself. Attachment to one's own property is no matter for argument—it is a matter of ingrained habit within us. We wish to express ourselves, and property is one means of that expression.

Those who have a greater means at their disposal are great souls, for they hold property of no account; they have no hesitation in giving everything away. But for the ordinary man, his property is the language of his own personal being—should he lose it, he becomes, as it were, struck dumb. If property served merely one's livelihood, and not one's self-expression, it would be easy to persuade by reasoning that livelihood can actually be improved through renunciation. The higher means of self-expression—such as intelligence, such as merit—no one can seize by force from another; property, however, can be seized, can be filched away. For this reason, there arises around the division and enjoyment of property such cruelty, such deception, such endless conflict in society.

I do not believe there exists any middle path to resolve this—that is to say, private property must remain, but its enjoyment must have the absolute sovereignty of its use bounded and limited. Whatever surplus lies beyond that boundary ought to be made to overflow for the benefit of the public at large. Only then does attachment to property not descend into greed, deceit, or cruelty.

The Soviets, in attempting to solve this problem, have sought to deny it altogether. For this reason, there is no limit to their use of coercion. One cannot say that man's individuality will cease to exist; but one can say that selfishness ought not to exist. That is to say, one must have some measure of what is one's own, but everything beyond that must belong to others. Only by acknowledging both self and other can a true solution become possible. The moment one seeks to exclude either, a struggle arises against the very truth of human character. The peoples of the Western continent place excessive faith in the thing called force. Where force has its rightful function, it works very well indeed; but elsewhere it brings about calamity. However forcefully we try to reconcile the force of truth with the force of the fist, just so forcefully does their contradiction assert itself.

A peasant from the Bashkir Republic in Central Asia said, "I still possess my own separate plot, but I shall soon join the nearby collective farm. For I see that far better crops, and in greater quantity, can be produced under the collective system than under the individual system. Since proper cultivation requires machinery, and a small landholder cannot afford to buy machinery. Besides, the use of machinery on our fragmented plots of land is impossible."

I said, "Yesterday I had a conversation with a senior government official. He said that such comprehensive provision as has been made by the Soviet Government for the welfare of women and children exists nowhere else. I said to him, are you not seeking, by transforming family responsibility into state responsibility, perhaps to abolish the boundaries of the family altogether? He said, that is not our immediate intention—but if, by extending our responsibility toward children, the limits of the family should naturally and inevitably disappear, this would only prove that the age of the family, bound by its own narrowness and incompleteness, had of itself vanished within the expanse of the new age. Be that as it may, I should like to know your opinion on this matter. Do you think that a family can remain intact while your principle of collectivization is maintained?"

That young man from the Ukraine said, "Let me give you an illustration, from my own experience, of what effect our new social order has had on family life. When my father was alive, he would work in the city for the six months of winter, while for the six summer months I would go, along with my brothers and sisters, into the service of a wealthy man to tend cattle. We rarely saw our father in those days. Now, no such separation occurs. My son comes home every day from the infant school; I see him every single day."

A peasant woman said, "Since independent arrangements have been made for the care and instruction of children, quarrels between husband and wife have greatly diminished. Besides, parents are now able to learn far better just how much responsibility they bear toward their children."

A young Georgian woman said to the interpreter, "Tell the poet that we, the people of the Georgian Republic, feel in a special way that since the October Revolution we have gained true freedom and happiness. We are engaged in creating a new age; we fully understand its arduous responsibility, and we are prepared to accept the utmost sacrifice for it. Let the poet know that the diverse peoples of the Soviet Union wish, through him, to convey their heartfelt affection to the people of India. I can say that, were it possible, I would leave everyone—my children, my home and hearth—to go and help the people of your country."

Among the group was one with a Mongolian cast of face. Upon asking about him, I learned he was the son of a peasant of the Kirghiz people, who had come to Moscow to learn the art of weaving cloth in the mills. In three years he would return to his republic as an engineer—since the Revolution a great factory had been established there, where he would work.

Bear one thing in mind: the reason these people of so many diverse races have gained such unhampered enthusiasm and opportunity to master the secrets of machinery and industry is solely this—that machines are not used here for the purpose of serving private, individual gain. Whoever among the people gains an education, it becomes a benefit to all people, not merely to the wealthy. We blame the machine for our own greed, and punish the palm tree for our own drunkenness. Like a schoolmaster who, for his own incompetence, makes the pupil stand on the bench above the others.

That day, visiting the agricultural centre in Moscow, I saw clearly with my own eyes that within ten years the peasants of Russia have advanced far, far beyond the peasants of India. Not only have they learned to read books—their minds have been transformed, they have become men. To speak only of education would not tell the whole story; the immense energy expended throughout the entire country for the improvement of agriculture is equally extraordinary. Like India itself, this is an agricultural country, and for this very reason, unless agricultural science is advanced as far as possible, the people of the country cannot be saved. These people have not forgotten this truth. They have set about accomplishing what is exceedingly difficult.

They are not running their offices with civil-service bureaucrats on fat salaries—all who are competent, all who are men of science, have thrown themselves into the work. The improvement that has occurred within these ten years in their agricultural research division has spread its fame throughout the scientific world of the whole earth. Before the war, this country made no attempt whatsoever at seed selection. Today nearly three million maunds of selected seed have accumulated in their hands. Moreover, the introduction of new crops is being spread with great speed throughout the entire country, not merely within the precincts of their agricultural colleges. Great scientific research stations concerning agriculture have

been established even in the remote provinces of Russia—Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Georgia, Ukraine, and others.

Such a vast, universal, extraordinary, and tireless endeavour to render every province and every people of Russia—every race and tribe—capable and educated lies far beyond the imagination of a British subject such as myself. That it is possible to develop things to such an extent, I could never have believed before coming here. For, having been raised in the atmosphere of "law and order" from childhood, I have never seen an example of anyone reaching anywhere near this.

While staying in England this time, I first heard from an Englishman what extraordinary provisions these people have made for the welfare of the common people. I saw it with my own eyes—and I saw this too: there is not the least trace of racial discrimination in their state. The excellent system they have devised for the spread of education among the almost barbarous subject peoples under Soviet rule is beyond the reach of India's common people. And yet the inevitable consequence of this same illiteracy—the weakness in our intelligence, the folly in our conduct—is being trumpeted abroad to the world. There is a saying current even in English: give the dog a bad name before you hang it. If one arranges matters so that the bad name is never removed, then a life sentence and hanging may as well be combined into one.

LETTERS FROM RUSSIA — 6

Berlin

Having toured Russia, I am now heading toward America; it was at just such a moment that I received your letter. I had gone to Russia to see their educational system. I have been thoroughly astonished by what I saw. Through the power of education, within eight years, the people of the entire country have transformed the very face of their minds. Those who were mute have found speech; those who were dull have had the veil lifted from their inner being; those who were incapable have had their self-power awakened; those who lay sunk beneath the weight of humiliation have emerged from society's dark corner and now claim their rightful place as equals among all. That so vast a multitude could undergo so swift a transformation of spirit is difficult even to imagine. To see the flood of education flowing into what was once a dead river gladdens the heart. From one end of the country to the other, all is alert, all is conscious. Before these people lies opened a new avenue of hope, stretching beyond the horizon; everywhere, life's momentum runs at its fullest measure.

They are intensely occupied with three things: education, agriculture, and machinery. Through these three paths, the entire nation together is striving to bring completeness to thought, to food, and to the power of labour. Like the people of our own country, the people here are agriculturalists. But the farmer of our country is, on one hand, ignorant, and on the other, powerless; deprived of both education and strength. His only feeble refuge is custom—he serves, like a servant of his grandfather's era, doing less work while wielding greater authority over him. To obey custom leaves him no way to advance. And yet for hundreds and hundreds of years, he has limped forward regardless.

In our country, at some point in time, Krishna, the lifter of Govardhan, was perhaps the god of agriculture, dwelling in the cowherd's home; his elder brother Balaram bore the plough. That plough-weapon is the symbol of man's power through tools. It is the machine that has given strength to agriculture. In our own time, Balaram is

nowhere to be seen at the edges of our fields—he has, in shame, departed for that shore across the sea where his weapon still holds power. In Russia, agriculture has summoned Balaram back; before one's very eyes, the fallow fields there sprang to life, and at the touch of his new plough, life stirred in the barren earth of Ahalya.

We ought to remember one thing: Balaram is none other than Rama himself in the form bearing the plough-weapon.

Before the revolution that occurred here in 1917, ninety-nine peasants out of every hundred in this country had never even set eyes upon a modern plough. In those days they were, exactly like our own peasants, utterly powerless—destitute, helpless, voiceless. Today, before one's very eyes, thousands upon thousands of ploughs have descended upon their fields. Once they were what, in our language, we would call "creatures of Krishna"; today they have become Balaram's own company.

But the machine alone accomplishes nothing unless the one who wields it becomes truly human. Here, the cultivation of the fields advances hand in hand with the cultivation of the mind. The work of education here follows a living method. I have always maintained that education ought to be conducted in union with the course of daily life. Severed from that, it becomes mere warehouse merchandise, unfit as food for the digestive organs.

Coming here, I saw that they have made education a living thing. The reason is that they have not kept the boundary of the school separate from the boundary of life at large. They do not teach in order to pass examinations or to make scholars—they teach in order to make human beings in every sense. In our country we have schools, but we lack the capacity to steer the mind under the burden of pedantic phraseology—we place greater weight on wit than on wisdom, on strength of character than on mere information. Time and again I have tried to converse with our students, but I find there is not even a single question stirring in their minds. The connection between wanting to know and coming to know has become severed for them. They have never learned to wish to know—from the very beginning they are simply handed knowledge according to fixed rules, and afterward they merely repeat that imparted learning to gather examination marks.

I remember when the students who had returned with Mahatmaji from South Africa were staying at Santiniketan; one day I asked one of them whether he would like to go for a walk in the parul grove with our boys. He said, "I don't know." He wanted to ask his group leader about this. I said, ask about it later, but tell me whether you yourself wish to go for a walk. He said, "I don't know." That is to say, this student had never even practised wishing anything for himself in any matter; he was simply led, and he followed, with no need to think anything on his own.

Although such utter passivity of mind in so trivial a matter is not generally seen among our own students, yet if one poses a slightly more demanding matter for thought, one will find their minds not even the least bit prepared for that either. They merely wait to hear what we, from above, might tell them. There can be no mind more helplessly compliant than this in all the world.

Various experiments concerning methods of education are underway here; I shall try to give a detailed account of these later. Much can be learned about their educational system from reports and books, but the most valuable thing of all is to see directly, with one's own eyes, the actual face of education among the people themselves. That is what I went to see that day. I went to visit one of the settlements established in this country under the name "Pioneers' Commune." Their Pioneer group is, to some extent, similar to the boy and girl novitiates we have at Santiniketan.

The moment I entered the house, I saw a group of boys and girls lined up along both sides of the staircase to welcome me. As soon as I entered the room, they crowded close around me on every side, as though I belonged to their very own group. Bear one thing in mind: all these children are without father or mother. The class from which they came was once a class of people who could claim no attention from anyone; abandoned by fortune, they eked out their days through utterly base occupations. Looking into their faces, I saw not the slightest trace of the mist of neglect and dishonour. There was no hesitation, no torpor. Moreover, there seemed to be in every one of their minds some resolve, as though, believing a field of action lay before them, all were alert and ready—as if no negligence in any matter could possibly be tolerated.

In reply to their welcome, I said a few words, and in connection with this, one boy remarked, "The bourgeoisie seek their own personal profit; we want the wealth of the nation to belong equally to all people. In this school we live according to that very principle."

A girl said, "We govern ourselves. We all work together by mutual counsel; whatever is beneficial for everyone is what we resolve to do."

Another boy said, "We may make mistakes, but if we wish, we take counsel from those older than us, and when necessary the younger children take the opinion of the older ones, and they may go to their teachers. This is the rule of governance in our country. Here, we practise that very rule."

From this you will understand that the education given here is not merely bookish learning. They are shaping their own conduct and character to be in harmony with a great communal way of life. On this matter they hold a certain resolve, and in upholding that resolve lies their sense of honour.

I have told my children and teachers many times that the sense of responsibility toward public welfare and self-governance which we demand from the entire country, we wish to give complete expression to, in a small way, within the narrow bounds of Santiniketan. The arrangements here ought to become an arrangement of joint self-governance between students and teachers—when all the work here has become fully harmonized under such arrangement, then within this small compass the problem of our entire country may find its fulfilment. The practice of bringing individual will into harmony with the common good cannot be accomplished by standing on a political platform alone; a field must be prepared for it—and that field is our ashram.

Let me give you one small illustration. Regarding taste and habit in food, nowhere else is there such bad practice as in Bengal. We have burdened the kitchen and its apparatus with utterly unnecessary weight. Reforming this is exceedingly difficult. If our students and teachers, keeping in view the eternal welfare of our people, could take a vow to regulate their own tastes in food appropriately, then the

education I speak of would find its true fulfilment. That three times nine makes twenty-seven—this we regard as education, memorizing it by rote; and I know it to be a grave offence for a boy to err in this at all, or to pay it no heed. But regarding that very thing which we take into our own stomachs, to grant education a lower value than this is sheer folly. We bear responsibility to the whole country concerning what we eat every single day, and that responsibility is exceedingly grave—to hold this in mind with full realization is far greater than any mark obtained in an examination.

I asked them, "If someone commits some offence here, what is the procedure for it?"

A girl said, "We have no system of governance, for we punish ourselves."

I said, "Explain a little further. If someone commits an offence, do you call a special assembly to try them? Do you elect a judge from among yourselves? And what manner of punishment do you give?"

A girl said, "It is not what one would call a court of justice—we simply talk it over among ourselves. To be declared guilty is itself the punishment; there is no greater punishment than that."

A boy said, "The offender feels sorrow, and we too feel sorrow—and there the matter ends."

I said, "Suppose some boy feels that blame is being wrongly laid upon him—does that boy have any appeal to someone above even you?"

The boy said, "Then we take a vote—if the majority determines that he has indeed committed the offence, then there is no more to be said about it."

I said, "The matter may go no further, but if the boy still feels that the majority is being unjust toward him, is there any remedy for that?"

A girl rose and said, "In that case perhaps we would go and take the teachers' advice—but such a situation has never yet arisen."

I said, "It is the very devotion to a single common purpose, in which all of you are united, that of itself protects you from wrongdoing."

When I asked what their duties were, they said, "People in other countries want wealth and honour for their own work; we want none of that—we want the welfare of the community. We go to the villages to teach the village people—how to keep clean, how to do every task with intelligence—all this we explain to them. Often we go and live among them, perform plays, and speak to them of the condition of the country."

After this they wished to show me what they call the "Living Newspaper." A girl said, "We must keep ourselves informed of much news about the country, and it is our duty to make known to everyone else what we know. For only by properly learning the facts and thinking about them can our work be made genuine."

A boy said, "First we learn from books, from our teachers; then we discuss these among ourselves; and afterward the order is given to go and make these known to the public."

The Living Newspaper performed for me as a kind of theatre. The subject was their Five-Year Plan. The matter is this: they have taken a hard vow that within five years they will make the entire country proficient in machinery, that they will harness electrical power and steam power from one end of the country to the other. By their country they do not mean only European Russia. Its extent reaches far into Asia as well. They will carry the vehicle of their power there too. Not to make the rich richer, but to endow the mass of the people with power—and within that mass of people are also the dark-skinned peoples of Central Asia. There is no fear, no anxiety, that they too shall become masters of that power.

For this task they need vast sums of money—they cannot obtain credit in the markets of Europe; there is no way except to buy with cash payment. And so, giving up the very food from their own stomachs, they are purchasing goods; the produce

of their harvests, meat, eggs, butter—all of it is being shipped off to foreign markets. The whole country's people have come to stand at the very brink of starvation. Eighteen months yet remain. The moneylenders of other nations are not pleased. Foreign engineers have also done considerable damage to their factories. The undertaking is vast and complex, and time is exceedingly short. They dare not extend the time, for, standing as they do in the face of the hostility of the entire wealthy world, it is absolutely necessary for them to produce wealth by their own power as swiftly as possible. Three years have passed with great hardship; two years yet remain.

The "Living Newspaper" is like a theatrical performance; through dance, they raise their banner and wish to announce how, by turning the nation's economic power into an army of machines, they have gradually achieved success in such measure. The need to make this understood is very great indeed. Those who have been deprived of the most essential necessities of life, and who have spent their days in great hardship, must be made to understand that before long this suffering will come to an end, and that they should remember what they will gain in its place, so that they may embrace this hardship with joy and with pride.

There is comfort in this: it is not merely some single group of people, but all the people of the country together who are engaged in this austerity. This "Living Newspaper" broadcasts news of other countries in this same manner. I was reminded of a jatra performance I once heard, on the theme of the philosophy of the body and the philosophy of liberation—the method is the same, but the aim differs. I am thinking that when I return to my country, I shall try to start a "Living Newspaper" of my own at Santiniketan.

Their daily schedule is as follows: at seven in the morning they rise from bed. Then fifteen minutes of exercise, morning ablutions, breakfast. At eight o'clock, class begins. At one o'clock, a short interval for food and rest. Classes continue until three in the afternoon. Subjects studied are: history, geography, mathematics, elementary natural science, elementary chemistry, elementary biology, mechanics, political science, sociology, literature, handicrafts, carpentry, bookbinding, the use of modern agricultural machinery, and so on. There is no Sunday. Every fifth day is a holiday. After three o'clock, according to the schedule for the particular day, the

Pioneers (the vanguard group) go to see factories, hospitals, villages, and the like. Arrangements are made for excursions into the countryside. Sometimes they perform plays themselves; sometimes they go to see theatre, or the cinema. In the evening: reading stories, storytelling, debating societies, literary and scientific gatherings. On holidays the Pioneers do a certain amount of washing their own clothes, cleaning their rooms, cleaning the house and its surroundings, doing extra reading beyond the class syllabus, and going out for walks. The age of admission is seven or eight; the age of leaving school is sixteen. Their period of study is not broken up by long holidays as in our country, and therefore they can accomplish far more study in fewer days.

One splendid quality of the schools here is that whatever they read, they draw a picture of it at the same time. Thus the subject of study becomes pictured in the mind, the hand of drawing grows skilled—and the joy of creating form becomes united with the joy of reading. One might suddenly imagine that these people have, perhaps, like boors, turned their attention solely toward practical work, scorning the fine arts altogether. This is not the case at all. In the grand theatres built in the days of the Tsars, tickets for the performance of high-class drama and opera can be obtained only after long delay. Connoisseurs of the dramatic arts as skilled as these are few in the world—in former times it was only the nobility and the great who enjoyed such things; while those who in those days had no shoes on their feet, wore filthy tattered clothes, ate barely half their fill, who went about all day and night fearing everyone, god and man alike, who bribed priests and officials for their deliverance, and who abased themselves, rolling their heads in the dust before their masters—it was among their very crowds that no place could be found in the theatre.

The day I went to see a performance, it happened to be Tolstoy's "Resurrection." It cannot easily be considered enjoyable material for the general public. Yet the listeners were following it with deep attention, in utter silence. It is unimaginable that people of the Anglo-Saxon peasant-labourer class could enjoy such a thing until one o'clock at night in so hushed, so composed a manner—let alone the people of our own country.

Let me give you one more example. There was an exhibition of my paintings in the city of Moscow. Needless to say, these paintings are quite unconventional. Not only are they foreign—one might well say they belong to no country at all. Yet the crowd of onlookers was tremendous. In just a few days, five thousand people came to see the paintings. Whatever anyone else may say, I at least cannot help but praise the taste of these people.

Leave aside the matter of taste—let us suppose this is merely idle curiosity. But the very existence of curiosity is itself evidence of an awakened spirit. I remember once we brought a wind-powered wheel-engine from America for our well, which drew up water from the deep bottom of the well. But when I saw that the boys could not draw up even a little curiosity from the deep depths of their own minds, I felt great shame in my heart. Consider—we have there a factory of electric light; how many boys have even a little curiosity about it? And yet these are boys of the gentry class. Wherever the intellect lies dull, there curiosity too grows feeble.

Here we obtained a good many drawings made by schoolchildren—one must be astonished on seeing them; they are proper pictures, imitations of no one, entirely their own invention. Here I have become reassured, seeing attention paid to both construction and creation alike. Ever since coming here, I have had much occasion to reflect upon the state of education in our own country. With my helpless, meagre powers, I shall try to gather something from this and put it into practice. But time is short—my own Five-Year Plan may perhaps not even be fulfilled. For nearly thirty years I have pushed forward alone, like a boatman poling against the current of adversity; for four or five years more, I must go on pushing in just the same way—I know it will not advance particularly far, and yet I shall not complain. There is no more time today. I must leave tonight by train for the ship's dock; tomorrow I shall cross the sea.

LETTERS FROM RUSSIA — 7

S.S. Bremen
The Atlantic

Having returned from Russia, I am today sailing toward America's shore. But the impressions of Russia still occupy the whole of my mind. The chief reason is this—the other countries through which I have travelled do not stir the mind as a whole; their various endeavours proceed each within its own separate sphere. Somewhere there is politics, somewhere there is a hospital, somewhere a university, somewhere a museum—specialists carry on their work with each of these separately. But here, the entire country, holding a single purpose in mind, has bound all its divisions of labour together in one nervous network, taking the form of one vast body, one immense personality. Everything has merged into a single, undivided striving.

In those countries where the pursuit of wealth and power is fragmented by private interest, such an unbroken unity of spirit is impossible. During the four years of the European war, when necessity compelled the greater part of a nation's thought and action to unite in a single purpose and come under the dominion of a single mind, this occurred only temporarily. But the work proceeding in Soviet Russia is of a different nature altogether—these people have set about creating an extraordinary being called the work of the common people, the mind of the common people, the property of the common people.

I have come to understand very clearly, having come here, a certain saying of the Upanishads—"Mā gṛdhaḥ"—covet not. Why should one not covet? Because all things are pervaded by a single truth; and it is individual greed alone that obstructs the realization of that oneness. "Tena tyaktena bhuñjīthāḥ"—enjoy through renunciation whatever comes to you from that One. These people are declaring that very truth, though from an economic standpoint. Among the whole of humankind, they regard as supreme this one indivisible human truth—whatever is produced through the working of that One, they say, let all enjoy it together—"Mā

gṛdhaḥ kasyasviddhanam"—covet not the wealth of another. But so long as private ownership of wealth persists, greed for wealth arises of itself. Removing this altogether, they wish to say: "Tena tyaktena bhuñjīthāḥ."

In Europe, every other country's striving centres on individual gain, individual enjoyment. Its churning is exceedingly violent, and, just as in the ancient mythological churning of the ocean, both poison and nectar rise from it together. But only one group receives the share of nectar, while the majority receive none at all—and hence there is no limit to the resulting unrest and misery. Everyone had accepted this as inevitable; they said greed exists within human nature itself, and the very function of greed is to distribute enjoyment unequally. Therefore competition must continue, and everyone must remain forever prepared for conflict. But what the Soviets wish to say must be understood thus: that unity alone is truth among human beings, and division is illusion; through right thought and right effort, the moment one ceases to regard that division as human, it will vanish like a dream.

That very endeavour of un-acknowledging division which Russia pursues is proclaiming itself throughout the entire country. Everything has come under this single endeavour. For this reason, coming to Russia, one is touched by a sense of vast, unified consciousness. Nowhere else have I seen the grand epic of education unfold in this manner—the reason being that in other countries, whoever pursues education reaps its fruit alone—"he who milked the cow drinks the milk." Here, in each one's education lies the education of all. Whatever lack of education exists in one person becomes a deficiency felt by all. For it is through united education that these people wish to make the united mind serviceable to the work of all humanity. They are the "Universal Craftsman"; therefore their minds must be universal. Therefore, for them alone does a true university exist.

They are diffusing education among all people through many different methods. One of these is the museum. Through a web of museums of every kind, they have bound together every village and town. Such a museum is not passive, like our library at Santiniketan, but active.

The Russian institution of kraevedenie—that is, the local investigation of facts—is pervasive everywhere. There are nearly two thousand such centres of education, with membership exceeding seventy thousand. At these centres, investigation is carried out into the past history of each particular place, and into its economic condition, past and present. Besides this, inquiry is made into what class of productive power exists in such places, or whether any mineral substance lies hidden there. A grave duty of spreading education among the general public rests upon the museums connected with these centres. This widespread practice of local fact-finding, together with its associated museums, is one of the principal means by which the new age of intellectual advancement for the common people has arrived in the Soviet state.

At Santiniketan, Kalimohan has done some measure of such investigation into nearby localities; but since our students and teachers have not been engaged in this work, it has done them no benefit. Gaining the fruits of investigation is a small matter compared to cultivating the very disposition to investigate. I have heard that Prabhat has laid the foundation of such a practice among the Economics students of the college division; but this work needs to be undertaken far more broadly—the boys of the school as well ought to be initiated into this task, and along with this, it is essential to establish a museum of all regional materials.

You would surely be pleased to hear how the work of the art museum proceeds here. In Moscow city there is a renowned picture gallery called the Tretyakov Gallery. There, within a single year, from 1928 to 1929, nearly three hundred thousand people came to view the pictures. It has become difficult to accommodate all the visitors who wish to come. For this reason, on holidays, it has become necessary to have visitors register their names in advance.

Before the establishment of Soviet rule in 1917, the visitors who attended such a gallery belonged to the wealthy, the eminent, the learned class, and those whom these people call the bourgeoisie—that is to say, the exploiters of labour. Now come countless throngs of the labouring classes—masons, blacksmiths, cobblers, tailors, and the like. And there come Soviet soldiers, military commanders, students, and the peasant community.

The sense of art must gradually be awakened in the minds of these people. For novices such as these, it is impossible to properly grasp the mystery of painting at first sight. Wandering from wall to wall, gazing at picture after picture, they roam about, and their understanding loses its way. For this reason, nearly every museum has appointed suitable guides. These guides are selected from among the scientific workers employed in the museum's educational division, or in similar state workshops elsewhere. Those who come to view the exhibits have no transactional dealings whatsoever with these guides. The guide must ensure that visitors do not mistake a picture for what it merely depicts on the surface, but rather see the true subject the picture is meant to express.

The composition of the picture, its colour scheme, its draughtsmanship, its space, its illumination, and the particular technique by which its distinctive school may be identified—of all these matters, even today, very few people have any knowledge. For this reason, the guide must possess quite thorough training; only then can he keep alive the curiosity and attention of the visitors. There is another point they must understand: a museum does not contain merely a single picture, and so it should not be the visitor's aim merely to become familiar with one painting; one must understand the collective character of the particular schools of painting preserved in the museum. It is the guide's duty to select a few pictures from particular schools and explain their essential nature. The number of pictures discussed should not be too great, nor should the time exceed twenty minutes. What must be explained is that a picture has its own distinctive language, its own particular rhythm; one must explain the relationship between a picture's form and its subject and sentiment. Often it proves useful to illustrate their distinctiveness through mutual contrast between pictures. But the moment the visitors' minds show the least sign of fatigue, they must at once be given leave to go.

I am sending you, gathered from a report, the very words quoted above concerning how these people teach uneducated visitors to view paintings. From this, what our own countrymen ought to reflect upon is this—

In the letter I wrote previously, I said that these people have set about, with utter dedication, making the entire nation exceedingly powerful through the strength of agriculture and machinery. This is an intensely calculating notion at its very core.

This vast endeavour of theirs is undertaken in order to survive by their own strength, keeping pace with all the other wealthy nations. Whenever, in our own country, such nationwide programmes of state endeavour are raised, we immediately begin to say that this single red torch must be kindled at the cost of extinguishing every other light in every other department of the nation, lest the people's minds become distracted. Fine art especially is opposed to every kind of rigid resolve. To defeat one's own people in a wrestling match, one need merely spend one's time practising the tricks of the trade; but to fashion a club from Saraswati's own vina—if that is possible, well and good; otherwise, "neither this nor that." How much such statements amount to false bravado becomes quite clear once one arrives here. Here, these people take extraordinary pains precisely so that the very workers whom they wish to make skilled in running factories throughout the country may possess minds educated enough to appreciate the essence of art. They know that those who lack aesthetic sensibility are barbarians; and that barbarians, however rough on the outside, are feeble within. Russia has seen extraordinary progress in modern theatrical art. Amid the very worst days of the terrible famine following the 1917 revolution, these people danced, sang, and performed plays—and this bore no contradiction whatsoever to their grand, historic drama unfolding upon the world stage.

There is no power in the desert. Power's true form is seen only where the stream bubbles forth, cascading, from the breast of the rock, where in the loveliness of spring the majesty of the snow-mountain becomes tender and beautiful. Vikramaditya drove out the Shaka enemies from India, but he did not forbid Kalidasa from writing the Meghadūta. It cannot be said that the Japanese cannot wield the sword—but with equal skill, they also wield the brush. Had I come to Russia and found these people merely playing at being labourers, supplying the tools of factories and driving ploughs, then I would have understood that they were bound to wither and die. Whatever tree, boasting arrogantly through the crackling of its leaves and branches, declares "I have no need of sap"—that tree is surely some carpenter's imitation of a tree, made of wood; it may be very strong, but it is also entirely fruitless. Therefore I declare to all brave men, and I caution the ascetics as well, that when I return to my country, even beneath the monsoon downpour of the policeman's sixfold lathi-blows, my singing and dancing shall not cease.

The cultivation of art that has developed on Russia's theatrical stage is extraordinary. Within it, the courage of new creation continues to appear again and again, and has not ceased even now. It is this very courage of new creation that is at work, with matchless daring, in that country's social revolution. Nowhere—in society, in the state, in art—have these people feared the new.

The old religious order and the old political order, which for many centuries had overwhelmed these people's intellect and drained their vital energy nearly to exhaustion, have been utterly uprooted by these Soviet revolutionaries; the heart rejoices to see so vast a bondage-shattered people given so great a liberation in so short a time. For no king, however greatly he may fetter the freedom of his subjects from without, can ever be as great an enemy to us as that religion which, carrying ignorance as its vehicle, destroys the freedom of the human spirit. It has been seen, up to now, that whatever king has wished to keep his subjects enslaved has found his foremost ally in that very religion which keeps mankind blind. Such religion is like the poison-maiden of legend; it embraces and enchants, and having enchanted, it kills. Its killing penetrates deeper into the very marrow than a blow of raw force, for its killing is the killing of comfort.

The Soviets have rescued this country from the humiliation inflicted by the Tsar-Emperor and from the humiliation inflicted by themselves upon themselves—let the pious of other countries condemn them as much as they will, I cannot bring myself to condemn them. Atheism is far better than the delusion of religion. Upon the breast of Russia, religion and the tyrant king together had lain like a crushing stone; what immense relief has come from the removal of that stone from off the nation's chest—one could see this with one's own eyes, coming here.

LETTERS FROM RUSSIA — 8

The Atlantic Ocean

Having returned from Russia, I am now bound for America. My sole purpose in journeying to Russia was this—to observe, in the brief time available, how the work of spreading education among the common people is proceeding there, and what fruit these people are gaining from it.

My conviction is this: that of all the sorrows piled sky-high upon the breast of India today, illiteracy alone is the single foundation. Caste division, religious antagonism, indolence in work, economic weakness—all of these cling fast to this want of education. The Simon Commission, having exhausted its entire catalogue of India's offences, has confessed to but one single fault on the part of British rule. That is the inadequacy of educational provision. But nothing further needed saying. Imagine if one were to say—the householder has never learned caution; going from one room to another, he stubs his toe on the threshold and falls headlong; he loses things constantly, and afterward cannot find them; seeing a shadow, he takes fright, thinking it a bogey; seeing his own brother, he raises his staff to strike, thinking a thief has come; he lies clinging to his bed endlessly; he has not even the courage to rise and walk about; he feels hunger, but cannot find where the food is kept; every path save blind dependence upon fate lies closed to him—and therefore the charge of managing his own household cannot be entrusted to him—and then, at the very end, in the most subdued of voices, one were to add, "I have kept his lamp lit"—what, pray, would that amount to?

These same people once burned an innocent woman alive, calling her a witch; killed a man of science, calling him a sinner; persecuted with utmost cruelty the independence of religious opinion; and have kept curtailed, even to this day, the civil rights of dissenting sects within their own faith. Beyond this, what blindness, what folly, what depravity might be heaped up in a towering catalogue drawn from the history of their medieval age! How did all this come to be removed? The task of remedying their incapacity was not entrusted to the hands of any outside Court

of Wards; a single power alone has carried them forward, and that is their education.

Japan, through the medium of this very education, has within a short span united the political strength of the nation with the will and endeavour of the common people, and has multiplied many times over the nation's productive power. Turkey today, advancing this same education with tremendous force, is proceeding along the path of freeing the nation from the crushing weight of religious bigotry. "India merely sleeps on." For no light has been permitted to enter the house; the light of that very education by which today's world has awakened lies outside India's barred door.

When I set out for Russia, I did not hope for very much. For I myself had already gained, from British India, an ample measure of understanding of what is possible and what is not. Christian missionaries of our own imperial race have themselves informed the whole world, with most piteous voice, of just how insurmountable the difficulty of India's advancement truly is. I too have had to admit that difficulty does indeed exist—otherwise why should our own condition be as it is? One thing I knew: the improvement of the common people's condition in Russia was no less difficult, and perhaps more so, than in India. To begin with, those who belonged here to the peasant class were, in their inward and outward condition, exactly like that same class in our own country. Just as illiterate, just as helpless, their intelligence utterly smothered under ritual worship, priests and pandas, calculations of auspicious dates; their self-respect soiled by the very dust of their masters' feet; they had gained nothing whatsoever from the advantages of the modern scientific age; their fate was that of men possessed by their great-grandfathers' ghosts—a ghost that had bound them fast to the immovable stake of a thousand years past—and at times a murderous frenzy would seize them against their Jewish neighbours, at which point their savage cruelty knew no bound. Just as sturdily as they could endure the lash from their overlords above, so were they equally ready to inflict wrongful violence upon their own kind.

This, then, was their condition—and those in whose hands their fortune now rests are not, like the English, possessed of great wealth; only since the year 1917 has their authority in their own country even begun; they have had neither the time

nor the resources to make their state machinery run smoothly; opposition confronts them both within and without; the English, and even the Americans, have worked both secretly and openly to encourage rebellion among them. The "difficulty" of the task they have undertaken—to raise the common people to capability and education—is many times greater than the "difficulty" faced by the rulers of India.

It would therefore have been unreasonable to expect to see very much upon going to Russia. What did I know, after all, and what did I see, that might strengthen our hope? I had gone to Russia bearing the exceedingly feeble hope nurtured in our own sorrowing land. What I saw there left me overwhelmed with astonishment. I had no sufficient time to investigate to what degree "law and order" is or is not maintained there—it is said there exists considerable coercion; that summary punishment without trial is also practised; that in all other matters freedom exists, but not in opposition to the dictates of authority. This, then, is the dark side of the moon—but my chief purpose in observing was directed toward its luminous side. And the radiance visible from that direction is most extraordinary—those who were utterly immobile have become mobile.

It is said that at certain sacred shrines in Europe, by divine grace, the lame have in an instant cast aside their crutches forever. Here, something similar has occurred; before one's very eyes, using the very crutch by which they once limped, these people have fashioned a chariot in which to race forward—those who were the meanest of foot-soldiers have, within a mere decade, become charioteers. They have raised their heads and stood erect within human society; their intellects are their own, their tools and implements are their own.

Christian missionaries of our imperial lineage have spent long years in India, and have seen for themselves just how intractable "difficulties" can be. They ought once to visit Moscow. But should they come, it would produce no particular result. For it is their professional habit to seek out blemishes especially; light does not catch their eye, particularly regarding those toward whom they harbour aversion. They forget that no great spectacles are needed to find blemishes even within their own ruling order.

I have now reached nearly seventy years of age; throughout all this time my patience has never once given way. Looking upon the crushing burden of ignorance in my own country, I have blamed my own fate more than anything else. With the most meagre of powers I have made even the most modest attempts at remedy, but the chariot of my worn-out hope has, for every mile it has travelled, snapped more ropes and broken more wheels than that. Looking upon the sorrow of my country's wretched, I have set aside every grievance of my own. I have sought help from the authorities; they have offered their applause; but whatever alms they have granted have neither satisfied honour nor filled the belly. The saddest and most shameful thing of all is that it is our very own countrymen, nurtured and pampered by their favour, who have offered the greatest obstruction. In a country ruled by the dominion of others, the gravest malady of all is this—that in such places, no poison is as deadly as the envy, the pettiness, the corruption of disloyalty to one's own country, bred within the minds of the people.

Above all outward labour there exists one thing that is the soul's own striving. When the mind grows turbid amid the confusions of state and economic affairs, I see clearly that to say so only weakens its force further. Because of a certain peril within myself, I wish all the more to hold fast to what is essential. Some mock me, some grow angry with me, each wishing to drag me onto their own particular path. But from I know not where, I know that I have come as a pilgrim to this world, and my path lies toward the shrine of my own tutelary deity. My guiding spirit within has given me this very mantra—that I shall go on acknowledging and bowing before the divinity in man. When I fall at the unadorned feet of that deity, people of every nation call me forward and grant me a seat, and listen to my words with an open heart. When I stand wearing the mask of "Indian," obstacles abound. When these people see me as a human being, only then do they honour me as an Indian; when I wish to appear merely as an Indian, they cannot honour me as a human being. In the very act of practising my own true faith, my path forward becomes strewn with the thorns of misunderstanding. My term upon this earth has grown short; therefore I must strive to be true, not to be beloved.

News of me here reaches home in various forms, true and false. I cannot remain wholly indifferent to this without feeling self-reproach. Again and again it occurs to

me that at the age of a forest-hermit, to conduct oneself as though one still belonged to the world of the householder is to court peril.

Be that as it may, I had read of this country's "enormous difficulties" in books, and heard of them by word of mouth—but I have now seen with my own eyes the very picture of those difficulties being overcome.

LETTERS FROM RUSSIA — 9

S.S. Bremen

In our country, those who regard politics as mere wrestling hold all manner of fine art to be the enemy of manliness. I have written of this before. The Tsar of Russia was once an emperor as mighty as any dashanan; his empire had swallowed a vast portion of the earth as a python swallows its prey, crushing to pulp the very bones of whatever it had coiled its tail around.

For nearly thirteen years there had raged a fierce struggle between this very might and the revolutionaries. When the Tsar, along with all his kin, at last departed, his followers still continued to swagger about, their weapons and their courage supplied by other imperial powers. You may well imagine the affair was no simple one. Those who had once been the Tsar's satellites, the wealthy classes who had held absolute dominion over the peasantry, now found their ruin sealed. Plunder and slaughter raged; the subjects grew frantic in their desperation to destroy the costly luxuries these masters had once enjoyed.

Amid such immense and lawless turmoil, a stern order came from the revolutionary leaders—that art objects must by no means be allowed to perish. From the abandoned palaces of the wealthy, students and professors, half-starved and shivering in the cold, banded together to rescue whatever was worth preserving, and gathered it into the university museums.

I recall what we saw when we went to China. How the imperial powers of Europe had reduced Peking's Summer Palace to dust, how they had looted, torn apart, shattered, and burnt beyond repair the priceless artistic treasures of many ages. Such things can never again be created in this world.

The Soviets have deprived the wealthy individually of their possessions, but they have not allowed, like barbarians, that treasure to perish which is the eternal birthright of all mankind. To those who had for so long tilled the land for the enjoyment of others, they have given not merely title to the land; they have sought

to give them everything of value in human life—knowledge, joy, all that is precious. Bread enough to fill the belly suffices for a beast, not for a man—this they understood; and they have acknowledged that, for the sake of true humanity, the cultivation of art far surpasses mere wrestling.

It is true that during their revolution many things from the upper strata sank down and were lost, but much also survived and has since flourished—museums, theatres, libraries, conservatories of music.

As in our own country, the excellence of these people's craftsmen once found expression chiefly in temples of worship. The mohunts, following their own crude taste, worked their will upon them as they pleased. Just as our modern educated devout gentlemen have not hesitated to whitewash the temple at Puri, so too have the custodians of temples here, according to their own notions of restoration, freely defaced ancient monuments—never once considering that their historical value belonged to all people for all time; indeed, they have even had ancient ritual vessels newly recast. In our own country too there exist in monasteries and temples many things of historical value. But no one has the means to make use of them—the mohunts too, sunk in unfathomable superstition, possess neither the intelligence nor the learning to make use of them; one hears from Kshitibabu that many ancient manuscripts lie locked away in monastery after monastery, like a princess imprisoned in a demon's castle, with no way to rescue them.

The revolutionaries broke down the fences of ownership around temple property and made all of it public property. What remained fit for worship was left as it was; everything else has been gathered into museums. Even as the self-revolution was in full swing, even as typhoid raged fiercely on every side, even as railway lines lay torn up everywhere, teams of scientific investigators went out, scouring every remote corner, to rescue the artistic treasures of ancient times. Countless manuscripts, paintings, and carvings were thus collected—beyond all reckoning.

This much concerns what was recovered from the mansions of the wealthy or from temples of worship. But attention has also been paid to assessing the value of the craftwork produced by ordinary peasants and workers throughout the country—

work that in former times was held in contempt. Not only pictures, but folk literature, folk music, and the like are being pursued with equal vigour.

This, then, is the matter of collection; and following upon this collection comes the system of popular education. I have already written of this in detail. My reason for telling you all this at such length is this: I wish to make known to you the people of this country—that the common people of Russia, as recently as merely ten years ago, were entirely equal to our own present-day common people; and how lofty is the ideal, under Soviet governance, of raising precisely such people to full humanity through education. Within this endeavour lie science, literature, music, and the fine arts, all together—that is to say, it is many times more complete than the educational provision made in our own country even for those who bear the title of gentlefolk.

I read in the newspaper that a decree has recently been passed regarding the introduction of primary education in our country, whereby a tax is to be collected from the tenants' very ears of grain, and the burden of collection has fallen upon the landlord. That is to say, those who are already half-dead are to have their suffering multiplied under the pretext of education.

A tax for education is needed, of course—otherwise how would the expense be met? But why should not everyone in the country together bear this tax, levied as it is for the country's welfare? There exists a Civil Service, there exists a Military Service—Governors, Viceroys, and their staff—why is it that no hand may be laid upon their well-filled pockets? Do they not, in the end, draw their salaries and pensions from the very grain-share of these same peasants, and then, having taken everything, retire to enjoy it back in their own homeland? Do those great foreign merchant-lords of the jute mills, who set sail for home having wrung fat profits from the very blood of the jute-growing peasant, bear no responsibility whatsoever toward the education of those same peasants, half-dead as they are? And must not those ministers who, with full stomachs, express enthusiasm upon passing education acts, also contribute even a pittance of that enthusiasm's worth from their own treasury?

Is this what one calls compassion for education? I myself am a landlord, and I too contribute something toward my tenants' primary education—I would even be willing to give twice or three times as much, if required. But it would be necessary to make them understand, day after day, that I am their own kinsman, that in their education lies my own welfare, and that it is I who give to them—whereas not a single one, from the highest to the lowest rank of these rulers of the realm, gives even a single penny.

The pressure toward improving the condition of the common people in Soviet Russia is exceedingly great, and for this reason the people suffer no small hardship in food and daily comfort—but this share of hardship has been borne by all, from the highest down to the lowest. Such hardship I would not even call hardship—it is austerity, penance. The Government of India, having for so long conducted mere token education under the name of primary education, now wishes, after two hundred years, to wipe away its stain—and yet the price for this is to be paid precisely by those least able to pay it; while those pampered, favoured creatures of the Government's affection bear no such burden—they exist only to enjoy the glory.

Had I not seen it with my own eyes, I could never in any way have believed that from the very lowest depths of illiteracy and degradation, within a mere ten years, these people have not merely taught millions upon millions of human beings their alphabet—they have honoured their very humanity. Not only for their own race, but for other races too, their effort has been equal. And yet people of sectarian religion condemn them as impious. Is religion nothing but the incantations of scripture? Is the divine confined only to the temple precincts? Does the divine dwell anywhere at all among those who do nothing but deceive their fellow men?

There is much more to say. Writing by gathering facts in this manner is not my accustomed practice, but I have taken up my pen because to leave it unwritten would be a wrong on my part. I intend to write, by degrees, concerning Russia's educational system. How often it has occurred to me that nowhere else, but precisely here in Russia, ought you all to come once and see everything for yourselves. Many spies go there from India, and revolutionaries too come and go;

but I think that, for no other purpose whatsoever, merely to go and learn about their system of education is an absolute necessity for us.

Well then, I find little enthusiasm for giving news of myself. I fear this pride of being an "artist" may grow too strong within me. But thus far I have gained only outward fame; it has not penetrated within. I can only feel that whatever I have received has come by divine favour, not by my own merit.

I am now afloat in mid-ocean. What awaits me upon reaching shore, I do not know. My body is weary, my mind unwilling. There is nothing in this world so heavy as an empty begging-bowl—when shall I be free of it, having made my final offering to Jagannath?

LETTERS FROM RUSSIA — 10

S.S. Bremen

In the teaching of science, reading from books must go hand in hand with seeing with one's own eyes—otherwise nine-tenths of that education becomes mere pretense. This holds true not only for science but for most branches of education. In Russia, this kind of learning has been aided through museums devoted to various subjects. These museums are found not merely in the great cities, but in every province, accessible even to the people of the most modest villages.

Another method of learning through direct observation is travel. You already know that I have long cherished in my mind the resolve to establish a travelling school. India is so vast a country, and possesses such variety in every respect, that to comprehend it fully cannot be achieved even through Hunter's Gazetteer. At one time, pilgrimage on foot was a common practice in our country—our places of pilgrimage, too, are scattered throughout every part of India. This was the means by which India could, as far as possible, be directly perceived as a whole. If, over the course of five years, students were taken on a tour throughout the whole of India with education as the sole aim, their education would then attain its full maturity.

When the mind remains active, it can more readily absorb and digest the subject matter of education. Just as the milch-cow requires fodder given while she chews the cud, along with her fixed rations—so too, alongside a fixed curriculum of study, a mobile education is indispensable for the health of the mind. Confined within an immobile school, sustained solely on the fixed diet of a stationary curriculum, the mind's health cannot be maintained. The necessity of books cannot be entirely denied—the matters of human knowledge are so vast that there is no possibility of gathering them all in the field itself; the greater portion must be drawn from the storehouse. But if the school of books is carried along, and students are led out through the school of nature as well, then no deficiency remains. I have long held many thoughts on this matter, and had hoped that, should the means ever be

found, I might at some time conduct such an itinerant school of education. But I now have neither the time nor shall I ever find the means.

In Soviet Russia I have observed that arrangements for travel throughout the country are being made ample and abundant for the common people. Theirs is a vast country, its inhabitants a most diverse people. In the days of Tsarist rule, there existed scarcely any opportunity for these peoples to know or become acquainted with one another. Needless to say, travel then was a luxury, possible only for the wealthy. Under Soviet rule, the endeavour is directed toward the common people. From the very beginning, the Soviets have made efforts to establish health resorts in various near and distant places, in order to relieve the fatigue and cure the illness of exhausted and sickly workers. They have put to this use the great palaces of former times. Going to such places, rest and recovery form one purpose, and the gaining of knowledge another.

Those who have a genuine devotion to public welfare find, through the occasion of such travel, the opportunity to render assistance to various people in various places. To encourage the common people toward travel, and to provide them with convenience for it, institutions suited to the distribution of specific instruction have been established at intervals along the routes, where travellers may find provision for food and rest, and where they may also receive counsel on every manner of necessary subject. The Caucasian region is well suited to the study of geology; there, such wayside schools offer special instruction concerning geology. In those regions especially suited to the study of ethnology, ethnological instructors have been trained specifically for the benefit of travellers.

During the summer season, thousands upon thousands of eager travellers register their names at the office. Beginning from the month of May, parties set out daily upon various routes, group by group—each group consisting of twenty-five to thirty travellers. In the year 1928, the membership of this travelling association numbered nearly three thousand; by 1929 it had risen to over twelve thousand.

It would not be fitting to compare this with anywhere else in Europe or with America; it must always be remembered that ten years ago the condition of workers in Russia was exactly like our own—that they might study, rest, or recover

their health was a matter no one gave a moment's thought to. The very facilities these people now enjoy so readily lie beyond the imagination of the middle-class gentlefolk of our own country, and are not easily attainable even by the wealthy. Moreover, it is difficult for those of us accustomed to the Civil Service administration of our own country even to conceive by how many channels the stream of education now flows throughout this entire land at once.

As with education, so too with public health. The scientific study of hygiene now underway in Soviet Russia has drawn abundant praise from scholars of Europe and America. It is not merely a matter of producing scholarship through highly paid specialists; rather, complete attention is given to ensuring that the application of medical science reaches every single person—so much so that even those who live far from the country's main thoroughfares should not die from neglect or lack of treatment amid unhygienic conditions.

Tuberculosis is spreading from household to household in Bengal—ever since seeing Russia, I have been unable to banish this question from my mind: how many sanatoria exist for these poor, dying wretches of Bengal? This question has stirred all the more within me recently, because a Christian missionary has been lamenting before the American people about the extraordinary "difficulties" of Indian administration.

Difficulties there are indeed. But on one side, the root of that very difficulty lies in the illiteracy of Indians, and on the other, in the extravagant expenditure of Indian administration. Then whom shall we blame? Even in Russia, prosperity in food and clothing has not yet been achieved; Russia too is a vast country, home to many diverse peoples, and there too ignorance and neglect of public health once stood mountain-high; yet neither education nor health is being hindered there. That is precisely why one cannot help but ask—where, exactly, does the "difficulty" truly lie?

Working people may stay free of charge at Soviet health resorts, and alongside these health resorts there also exist sanatoria, where not merely treatment but proper arrangements for diet and nursing care are provided. All these arrangements exist for the common people at large. And among that common

people are races who are not European, and who, by European standards, are termed uncivilized.

If one looks at how much money was allocated in the 1928 budget for the education of such backward peoples—those living at the margins or beyond the borders of European Russia—one will understand what generous effort is being devoted to education. Forty crore thirty lakh rubles for the Ukrainian Republic, thirteen crore forty lakh for the Trans-Caucasian Republic, nine crore seventy lakh for Uzbekistan, two crore nine lakh rubles for Turkmenistan.

In many countries, the prevalence of Arabic script had obstructed the spread of education; there, the introduction of the Roman alphabet has eased the work of education considerably.

Let me quote two passages from the bulletin from which I have gathered this information:

"Another of the most important tasks in the sphere of culture is undoubtedly the stabilization of local administrative institutions and the transfer of all local government and administrative work in the federative and autonomous republics to a language which is familiar to the toiling masses. This is by no means simple, and great efforts are still needed in this regard, owing to the low cultural level of the mass of the workers and peasants, and lack of sufficient skilled labour."

Some little explanation is required here. Within the Soviet union there exist a number of republics and autonomous territories. Most of these are non-European, and their customs and manners do not accord with the modern age. From the quoted passage it becomes clear that, in the Soviet view, the administration of a country is itself one of the chief means and instruments of educating its people. Had the language of our country's administration been the people's own tongue, then education in matters of governance would have been readily accessible to them. Because the language is English, any clear understanding of administrative policy has remained wholly beyond the people's reach. Business proceeds through intermediaries, but no direct connection has ever been established. Just as the common people are deprived of training and practice in the wielding of arms for

self-defence, so too are they equally deprived of any knowledge of statecraft. The very language of governance being a foreign tongue has only tightened further the coils of the serpent of subjection. However successful the discussions conducted in English within the legislative councils may be—a matter on which I, being no expert, cannot judge—the education that the subject people might have derived from it has amounted to nothing at all.

Another passage:

"Whenever questions of cultural-economic construction in the national republics and districts come before the organs of the Soviet government, they are settled not on the lines of guardianship, but on the lines of the maximum development of independence among the broad masses of workers and peasants and of initiative of the local Soviet organs."

Those spoken of here are the backward peoples. Every single aspect of their condition presents "difficulty"—yet the Soviets did not, in order to remove this difficulty, arrange to sit idle for two hundred years. In the meantime, they have accomplished ten years of work. Watching all this, one is led to wonder—are we perhaps a more backward people even than the Uzbeks, even than the Turkmens? Is the measure of our own "difficulties" perhaps twenty times greater than theirs?

One thing comes to mind. Here they have a museum of toys. The resolve to gather such a collection of toys has long circled within my own mind. This task has at last begun at your Kala Bhavana, in the Art Treasury. I have obtained some toys from Russia. Many of them are quite similar to our own.

There is still more to tell you regarding these backward peoples. I shall write tomorrow. Day after tomorrow, in the morning, I shall arrive in New York—after that, whether I shall find sufficient leisure to write, who can say.

LETTERS FROM RUSSIA — 11

I have already written to you about the kind of efforts being made in Soviet Russia for the education of backward peoples. Today let me set down one or two illustrations.

South of the Ural mountains dwell the Bashkirs. Under the rule of the Tsar, the condition of the common people there was exactly like that of our own country. They lived by perpetually mortgaging themselves against endless fasting. Wages were pitifully small; there was no education sufficient to perform any considerable work in a factory; by and large their lot was nothing better than that of common labourers. After the Revolution, an effort was begun to grant the subjects of this land the right of self-governance.

At first the burden fell upon those who had been the wealthy landholders, priests, and the "educated" of the old order, as we call them in our tongue. This brought the common people no relief. Then Kolchak's soldiers began their depredations. He was a partisan of the old Tsarist order, and behind him stood the encouragement and support of powerful foreign enemies. Even as the Soviets drove them out, a terrible famine descended. The whole system of cultivation and settlement in the country fell to ruin.

Since 1922, the work of the Soviet era has been able to proceed in earnest. From that time, the machinery of education and of wealth-production began to grow with tremendous force. Before this, illiteracy in Bashkiria had been almost universal. Within these few years, eight normal schools, five agricultural colleges, one school of medicine, two schools for teaching economics, seventeen schools for training hands in factory work, 2,495 primary schools, and 87 middle-primary schools have been opened. At present Bashkiria has two state theatres, two museums, fourteen municipal libraries, 112 village reading-rooms, thirty cinemas in towns and forty-six in villages, and, when farmers come into town on some occasion, spacious lodging-houses for them—891 recreation corners—and besides all this, radio receivers in the homes of thousands of workers and farmers. The people of Birbhum district are, without doubt, by nature a more advanced order of

being than the Bashkirs. Set the educational and recreational arrangements of Bashkiria beside those of Birbhum, and it would be only proper to compare, too, the "difficulties" of both sides.

Among the republics formed within the Soviet Union, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are among the youngest. They were founded in October 1924—that is, they are barely six or seven years old. The entire population of Turkmenistan numbers barely ten and a half lakhs. Of these, nine lakhs work at cultivation; but for various reasons the state of the fields is poor, and the opportunities for animal husbandry are equally so.

The way to save such a country is to open up factory work—what is called industrialisation. This talk of factories is not for filling the pockets of rich merchants, foreign or native; the yield of the factories here belongs to the people at large. Already a large cotton-mill and a silk-mill have been opened. In the city of Ashkhabad an electric power-station has been set up, and efforts are under way in other cities as well. Machine-skilled labour is needed, and so large numbers of Turkmen youths are sent to study in the great factories of Central Russia. Everyone knows how difficult it is for our own young men to gain an education in factories run by foreigners.

The bulletin writes that arranging for education in Turkmenistan is so difficult that its equal is probably not to be found anywhere. Its sparse settlements lie far apart, the country lacks roads, lacks water; great deserts stretch between the habitations of men; and the economic distress of the people is extreme.

At present the cost of education comes to five roubles a head. A quarter of this country's population are nomads. For them, alongside the ordinary primary school, boarding schools have been opened near wells, in places where many families gather together; and newspapers, too, are published for the pupils.

In the city of Moscow, on the riverbank, in a beautiful old garden-girt palace, a Turcomen People's Home of Education has been established to train teachers for the Turkmen. There, at present, about a hundred Turkmen pupils, twelve or thirteen years of age, are receiving instruction. This institution is run on the

principle of self-government. Within this system there are several departments—a health department, a household commission, and class-committees. The health department sees to it that all the compartments, the classrooms, the dormitories, the courtyard, are kept clean. If any boy falls ill, however slightly, the arrangement for calling a doctor lies with this department. Under the household commission there are several sub-departments, whose duty it is to see that the boys are neat and tidy. Watching over the boys' conduct in class is the business of the class-committee. Representatives elected from each department together form a governing council, whose members have the right to vote in the school council. If a quarrel breaks out among the boys themselves, or with anyone else, the governing council investigates it, and every pupil is bound to accept its verdict.

Attached to this institution is a club, where the boys often perform plays of their own devising in their own tongue, and where there is music and song. The club has a cinema, from which the boys can see pictures of life in Central Asia; and besides this, a wall-newspaper is published there.

For the improvement of agriculture in Turkmenistan, a great number of agricultural experts have been sent out. More than two hundred model farms have been opened. Besides this, through the arrangements made concerning the use of water and land, twenty thousand of the poorest peasant families have received fields, water, and the means of cultivation.

In this sparsely peopled country, 130 hospitals have been opened, with a total of six hundred doctors. The writer of the bulletin says, in a tone of shame:

However there is no occasion to rejoice in the fact since there are 2,640 inhabitants to each hospital bed and, as regards doctors, Turcmenistan must be relegated to the last place in the Union. We can boast of some attainments in the field of modernization and the struggle against crass ignorance, though again we must warn the reader that Turcmenistan being on a very low level of civilization has preserved a good many customs of the distant past. However, the recent laws, passed in order to combat the selling of women into marriage and child marriages had produced the desired effect.

That a desert country like Turkmenistan should feel ashamed of having built 130 hospitals in six years—such shame is not a thing we are accustomed to seeing, and it struck me as very strange indeed. Through our own ill fortune we have seen a great many "difficulties," but not one of them showed the least sign of stirring; yet why is it we never see any particular shame expressed?

Let me speak frankly. Before this, my own heart had lost the courage to hope for my country in adequate measure. Like a Christian missionary, I too grew numb reading off the tally of "difficulties"—saying to myself again and again, so various a people, so various a folly, such mutually hostile creeds—who knows how long it will take to shift the burden of our misery, to sweep away the rubbish-heap of our defilement.

The atmosphere in which the fruit of the Simon Commission has ripened as regards my own country—it is that same atmosphere that has bred the timidity of my hopes. Coming to Soviet Russia, I saw that the clock of progress here, at least in the households of the common people, had been as stopped as our own—yet a clock that had stood still for many hundred years, once wound for eight or ten years, has begun to keep good time. Only now have I come to understand that our clock too could run—only it was never wound. I shall not be able, from this day forward, to believe in the incantation of "difficulties."

Let me end this letter by quoting one or two passages from the bulletin:

The imperialist policy of the Czarist generals, after the conquest of Azerbaijan, consisted in converting the districts, inhabited by Mahommedans, into colonies destined to supply raw material to the central Russian markets.

I remember, long ago, the late Akshay Kumar Maitra was once enthusiastic about the cultivation of silk-cocoons. On his advice I too engaged myself in trying to introduce the practice. He had told me that in his cultivation of silk-cocoons he had received ample encouragement from the magistrate; but every time he wished to spread among the peasantry the spinning of thread from these cocoons, and the weaving of cloth from that thread, the magistrate had placed obstacles in his way.

The agents of the Czar's Government were ruthlessly carrying out the principle of 'Divide and Rule' and did all in their power to sow hatred and discord between the various races. National animosities were fostered by Government and Mahommedans and Armenians were systematically incited against each other. The ever-recurring conflicts between these two nations at times assumed the form of massacres.

On the scarcity of hospitals the writer of the bulletin has, indeed, confessed his shame; but there is one matter on which he could not refrain from expressing his pride:

It is an undoubted fact, which even the worst enemies of the Soviets cannot deny: for the last eight years the peace between the races of Azerbaijan has never been disturbed.

In the governance of India there is no custom of confessing shame—nor is there any path by which one might see pride expressed.

On the occasion of this confession of shame, one point ought to be made clear. The bulletin states that throughout Turkmenistan, five roubles per head are spent on education. The value of the rouble, by our reckoning, is two and a half rupees. Five roubles thus comes to twelve and a half rupees. There is doubtless some arrangement for collecting this as a tax; but in the collection of that tax, no fear has certainly been created of setting the subjects at odds among themselves. Sealed.

LETTERS FROM RUSSIA — 12

The Bremen

I have already spoken of the Turcomen, dwellers in the desert, ten lakh souls. This letter is an appendix to that one. Let me set down a list of what the Soviet Government has resolved to establish there in the way of educational institutions.

Beginning with October 1st, 1930, the new budget year, a number of new scientific institutions and Institutes will be opened in Turcomenia, namely:

1. Turcomen Geological Committee
2. Turcomen Institute of Applied Botany
3. Institute for study and research of stock breeding
4. Institute of Hydrology and Geophysics
5. Institute for Economic Research
6. Chemico-Bacteriological Institute and Institute of Social Hygiene.

The activity of all the scientific institutions of Turcomenia will be regulated by a special scientific management attached to the Council of People's Commissars of Turcomenia.

In connection with the removal of the Turcomen Government from Ashkhabad to Chardjni the construction of buildings for the following museums has been started: Historical, Agricultural, Industrial and Trade Museum, Art Museum, Museum of the Revolution. In addition, the construction of an Observatory, State Library, House of Published Books and House of Science and Culture is planned.

The Department of Language and Literature of the Institute of the Turcomen Culture has completed the revision and translation into Russian of Turcomenian poetry, including folk-lore material and old poetry texts.

Sealed.

LETTERS FROM RUSSIA — 13

You will already have gathered some hint, from earlier letters, of the many varied means adopted in Soviet Russia for educating the common people. Today I send you a brief account of one such undertaking among them.

Not long ago, in the city of Moscow, a park was opened for public recreation. The bulletin has named it the Moscow Park of Education and Recreation, its principal pavilion being given over to exhibition. There, should one wish, one may learn how many dispensaries have been opened for the hundreds of thousands of factory workers throughout the country; how greatly the number of schools has increased in the Moscow region; how many new dwelling-houses, how many new gardens, the municipal department has shown to have been built—in how many ways the city has made progress, and to what degree. There are all manner of models: old-style neighbourhoods and modern neighbourhoods, model plots for growing flowers and vegetables, samples of the machines now being made in Soviet factories under the Soviet regime, samples too of the bread now baked under the new co-operative system, and of what it was like even at the time of their revolution. Besides all this, sundry amusements, all manner of playgrounds—it is nothing less than a perpetual fair!

Within the park is a section set apart entirely for small children, where grown persons may not enter; at its gate is written, "No Grown-up Mischief Here." Here are all manner of toys and games the children could wish for; there is even a theatre for children where the children themselves are both the managers and the players.

Some distance from this children's section stands the crèche—in Bengali one might call it the "infant-sanctuary." When father and mother wish to wander freely about the park, they may leave their small children here in the charge of nurses. There is a two-storeyed pavilion for the club, with a library on its upper floor. In one place there is a room for chess, in another, maps and wall-newspapers. Besides this, there is quite a good co-operative shop for refreshment, where the sale of liquor is forbidden. The Moscow zoological department has opened a shop here where all

manner of birds, fish, and saplings may be bought. There is a proposal to open parks of this kind in the provincial towns as well.

What is worth pondering here is this: these people have no wish to fashion the common people out of the leavings of the gentlefolk. Education, comfort, opportunity in the conduct of life—all these belong to them in full, sixteen annas to the rupee. The chief reason is that here, apart from the common people, there is nothing else at all. They are not an appendix chapter to the book of society; they are present in every chapter of it.

Let me give you one more instance. Some distance from the city of Moscow stands an old palace of former days. It had been the residence of the ancient aristocratic house of Count Apraksin. From the hilltop, the view on every side is exceedingly beautiful—fields of grain, a river, mountain forests. There are two lakes and several springs; great pillared halls, lofty verandahs, drawing-rooms adorned with furniture, paintings, and marble statues of an older time; besides these, a music-room, a games-room, a library, a little theatre; and several charming outbuildings that curve about the great house in a crescent.

In this vast palace, now named Olgivo, a co-operative health resort has been established, for all those who were once, in this very palace, reckoned among the class of serfs. The Soviet Union has a co-operative society whose principal task is the building of dwellings for workers; that society is named The Home of Rest. This Olgivo is under its care.

There are, besides, four more sanatoria in its keeping. When the season of harvest labour ends, at least thirty thousand workers, worn out with toil, may come to rest in these five houses of recuperation. Each person may stay a fortnight. The food is plentiful, the comfort ample, and there is provision for doctors too. This scheme of establishing rest-houses on a co-operative footing is steadily winning the approval of the general public.

Nothing else compares with it; nowhere else has anyone given such thought to the necessity of rest for the labourer—even people of comfortable circumstance in our own country rarely enjoy so rare an opportunity.

You have now heard how their arrangements are for workers; let me speak of their provisions for children. Whether a child be born of wedlock or out of it makes, in their reckoning, no difference at all. The law runs thus: until a child completes eighteen years and comes of age, its care is the charge of its father and mother. Yet the State is by no means indifferent as to how the child is reared or educated at home. Before the age of sixteen, a child may not be set to work anywhere as a labourer; up to eighteen, the length of the working day is limited to six hours. Whether the parents have done their proper duty by the children is watched over by the department of guardianship. Officers of this department come from time to time to see how the children's health stands, and how their schooling proceeds. If it is found that a child is being neglected, the child is taken from its parents' charge; yet even so, the burden of the child's maintenance remains with the parents. In this manner the task of bringing up such children falls upon the State's own department of guardianship.

The idea behind all this is that children belong not merely to their father and mother, but chiefly to the whole of society. Their well-being or ill-being is the well-being or ill-being of the whole of society. That they should grow into proper human beings is a responsibility of society, for the fruit of it is society's own. Thought over carefully, the responsibility of society toward them is no less than that of the family—if anything, greater. Their attitude toward the common people in general is of the very same kind. In their view, the existence of the common people is not chiefly there for the convenience of a privileged few. They are limbs of the whole social body, not the private appendage of any one part of it. The responsibility for them therefore belongs to the entire State. No one may, for private enjoyment or advantage, set the whole of society aside.

Be that as it may, I do not think these people have grasped with any exactness where the boundary lies between the individual and the collective in man. In this reckoning they resemble the Fascists. For this reason they are unwilling to accept any restraint upon the oppression of the individual for the sake of the collective. They forget that the collective is not made strong by weakening the individual; if the individual is kept in chains, the collective cannot become free. What prevails here is the tyranny of the strong-armed few. Such rule of the many by the hand of

one may, by chance, yield good results for a while, but it can never endure for ever. A fit succession of rulers can never be secured by such means.

Moreover, the lust for unchecked power impairs a man's power of judgment. There is, however, one point of comfort: although these people have not shrunk from oppressing individual liberty most ruthlessly with regard to Soviet doctrine, yet, through education generally, through practice, they have gone on increasing the self-derived power of the individual—unlike the Fascists, they have not crushed it once for all. They have made education the wholly obedient servant of a particular creed, and have moulded it into a single form partly by main force, partly by a kind of enchantment; and yet they have not thereby stifled the cultivation of the general intelligence. Though in propagating Soviet doctrine they have set brute force above the force of reasoning, they have not abandoned reason altogether, and have made a determined effort to keep the popular mind free from religious bigotry and the blindness of social custom.

To make the mind free on the one hand while subjecting it to tyranny on the other is no easy matter. The influence of fear may act for a time, but one day, spurning that very timidity, the educated mind will demand, with all the force at its command, the right to think for itself. These people have oppressed man in body, not in mind. They who truly wish to play the tyrant kill the mind first; these people, on the contrary, have been strengthening the mind's own life-force. Herein lies the road to deliverance.

In a few hours I shall reach New York. Then a new chapter begins once more. To go on tasting the waters of so many different landing-places no longer pleases me. This time, many an argument arose in my mind against coming to this quarter of the world, but greed proved the stronger in the end. Sealed.

LETTERS FROM RUSSIA — 14

Lansdowne

Once or twice already I have brushed close against the southern door—not the door of the pleasant south wind, but the door through which the breath of life seeks its way out. The doctor said that the momentary discord which had arisen between the pulse and the heartbeat had, after all, passed off so lightly that in unscientific language it might be called a miracle. Be that as it may, the summons of the god of death has been heard, and the doctor says one must be careful henceforward. That is to say, if I rise and walk about, the arrow will come and strike me in the chest; but if I lie down, it will miss its mark. So I pass my days like a healthy man, half-reclining. The doctor says one may go on this way in safety for some ten years, but after that no one can answer for the final act. I am leaning against the bolster now, and even my line of writing has begun to imitate the posture of my body. Wait—let me sit up a little.

I saw you had sent some unhappy news. In this state of body it is frightening to read it, lest the shock of the wave crack the dam. I had already had some inkling of what the matter was—to bear the full weight of a detailed account is more than I can manage. So I have not read it myself; I have had Amiya read it to me.

The cord that binds a country must be torn loose by pulling, again and again. With every pull the eyes roll back in their sockets—but there is no other way to freedom. The British Empire is tearing its own bonds with its own hands; in that there is grief enough for us, but the loss on its own side is no less.

The greatest loss of all is this: that the British Empire has forfeited its own honour. We fear the wickedness of the fierce; even in that fear there is a kind of respect. But the wickedness of the coward we despise. The British Empire stands today condemned by our contempt. It is this contempt that will give us strength; by the force of this very contempt we shall prevail.

I have lately come from Russia, and I saw there, more clearly than before, how arduous is the path to a nation's glory. Beside the suffering endured by the seekers there, the blows of the police here are as a shower of blossoms. Tell the young men of our country: much remains yet to come, and none of it will be wasted. Let them not begin, even now, to cry out that the blows fall too hard—for to say so is to pay tribute to the goonda's lathi.

India has won honour today, at home and abroad, only by refusing to acknowledge the blow—let us on no account abandon that discipline of overlooking pain. Brute force strives only to rouse the beast in us; should it succeed, we shall have lost. Let us not grieve merely because we suffer. Here is our chance to prove that we are human—should we ever stoop to imitate the beast, this rare opportunity will be squandered. In the end we must say: we do not fear. That patience sometimes fails here and there in Bengal is our one weakness. When we bare our claws and fangs, by that very act we do homage to those who live by claw and fang. Disdain it—do not imitate it. Let there be no weeping, none at all.

My deepest grief is this: I have no store of youth left. I lie here, unmoving, in the wayside inn—those who walk the road have gone on ahead, and my time to walk beside them has passed. Sealed.

LETTERS FROM RUSSIA — EPILOGUE

I have already said that my first acquaintance with Soviet rule captured my mind in a particular way. There are certain specific reasons for this, worthy of discussion.

Behind the picture that took shape in my mind there sways the dark backdrop of India's misfortune. From the history that lies at the root of that misfortune, one principle may be drawn; and if that principle is considered carefully, it will become easier to understand my state of mind in this matter.

The inward spirit of the spread of Muslim rule in India was the winning of royal glory. In that age, whatever contention there was over the seizing of kingdoms had at its root this one desire. Alexander of Greece, taking his armies of conquest and roaming, comet-like, blazing across the skies of foreign lands, did so only that he might extend his own dominion. The Romans too were driven by this same impulse. The Phoenicians traded along the shores of many seas, wandering to and fro, but they did not scramble to seize kingdoms.

Once, when the merchant fleets of Europe began to anchor, port after port, along the coasts of the eastern continent, a new chapter in the history of mankind gradually made itself manifest: the age of the warrior passed away, and the age of the merchant dawned. In this new age, bands of traders, arriving in foreign lands, began to extend their rule from within the back-rooms of their own trading posts. Their chief aim was to swell their margin of profit; the honour of the hero was no part of their design. In pursuit of this they did not scruple to adopt every manner of crooked device—for what they sought was not glory, but gain.

At this time India was renowned throughout the world for the immensity of her wealth—the foreign historians of that age proclaimed it again and again. Even Clive himself declared that "when I think of the wealth of India, I stand amazed at my own moderation in the art of plunder." Such abundance of wealth is never lightly won—India herself had produced it. Those who came from abroad in those days and seated themselves upon her thrones enjoyed that wealth, but they did not destroy it. That is to say, they were consumers, but not merchants.

Afterward, on the pretext of smoothing the path of trade, foreign merchants raised the flag of sovereignty above the counting-house of their own commerce. The times favoured them. By then the Mughal empire had begun to crack; the Marathas and the Sikhs had set about loosening its joints; and in the hands of the English it fell utterly to pieces upon the road to ruin.

When the old glory-hungry monarchs ruled this land, one cannot say that tyranny, injustice, and misrule were absent from it. But they were an organic part of this land. Whatever wounds their claws inflicted upon her body were wounds of the skin only; much blood was shed, but the peculiar structures of production were left unshaken then—the whole business of making, from emperor down to petty nawab, went on unimpeded, whatever prospered found patronage. Had this not been so, there would have been no reason for so great a crowd of foreign traders to gather here—why else would a swarm of locusts settle upon the desert?

Later, at the unholy union of trade and empire in India, the manner in which the merchant-king came to sever, one by one, the roots of the country's wish-fulfilling tree of wealth—that history has been told a hundred times over, and it is a bitter tale to the ear. But we must not let it be smothered beneath the veil of forgetfulness merely because it is old. There lies the origin of this country's present unbearable poverty. India possessed the glory of wealth—but if we forget by what vessel that wealth was carried away to another shore, then a certain principle of modern world history will escape us. This principle must be borne in mind: that the driving force of modern statecraft is not pride of valour, but greed for wealth. Between royal glory and its subjects there exists a human bond; but between the greed for wealth and its victims there can be no such bond at all. Wealth is impersonal, utterly ruthless. The greed that fattens on the hen that lays the golden egg does not content itself with merely gathering up the eggs—it slaughters the hen itself.

The greed of the merchant-king crippled the manifold power of India to produce wealth. What remains is agriculture alone—for without it the supply of raw material would fail, and the power to command a price in the foreign market would

perish altogether. India's present-day livelihood hangs upon this one attenuated stem.

Let this much be granted: whatever skill, whatever methods once sustained handwork, by which craftsmen earned their bread, have become naturally powerless in competition with machinery. It was therefore absolutely necessary, if the people were to survive, that every effort be made to render them skilled in machine work. In the world today, under the compulsion of self-preservation, this endeavour is vigorous in every land. Japan, within a short span, took the machinery of wealth into her own hands; had this not been possible, the machine-wielding nations of Europe would, through their own conspiracy, have brought her to ruin in wealth and in life alike. This opportunity was denied to us, for greed is a creature of envy. Beneath the shadow of this vast greed our wealth and our very life shrank and withered, and in their place the King consoles us, saying: "Whatever remnant of wealth and life yet remains, the enforcement of law and the office of the constable I have kept in my own hands, to guard it." Meanwhile, our food, our clothing, our learning, our wisdom, all kept in bondage, we go on, with our very lives held hostage, to pay for the upkeep of the constabulary. At the root of this monstrous indifference lies nothing but greed.

Wherever, in any field of knowledge or of labour, the true source and seat of power lies, we have for so long stood far, far beneath it, gaping upward—and from that lofty realm we have heard this reassurance echoing down to us: "Should your own strength decay, what matter? We have strength; we shall protect you."

He with whom a man's bond is one of greed—from him a man extracts what he needs, but never honours him. Whoever is not honoured finds his claims diminished as far as possible by those around him; until at length he becomes so cheap that even his most extraordinary want seems an extravagance to satisfy. How very little is set aside for the protection of our lives and for the safeguarding of our human dignity is hidden from no one. There is no food, no learning, no medicine; drinking water is to be had only after the scum has been skimmed away—but there is no want of constables, and there are officials on fat salaries, whose pay flows off entire, like the Gulf Stream, toward the cooling comfort of the British Isles, and whose pensions we supply out of the very cost of our own funeral

rites. The sole reason for all this is that greed is blind, greed is merciless—India is merely the raw material of the greed of the lords of India.

And yet, even amid this bitter suffering, I have never denied, and will not deny, that there is a certain generosity in the English character; that in the governance of colonial peoples, the conduct of other European nations toward their subjects has been harsher and crueller than that of the English. The opposition which we express, in word and in deed, toward the English nation and toward its policy of governance would not be possible in the case of the rulers of any other people; and had it been possible, the reprisal would have been far more severe—of this there is no lack of proof, even in Europe itself, even in America. Whenever, having openly declared rebellion, we are made to suffer at the hands of officials, and cry out in astonishment at the injustice—that very astonishment proves that our own deep-rooted reverence for the English character refuses to die even under repeated blows. Toward our own native princes or landlords our expectations are, by comparison, far smaller still.

While I was in England I observed this: that shameful incidents arising from misgovernment in India found almost no way at all into the English newspapers. The reason is not merely a fear that word of it might spread to Europe or America. In truth, a stern English administrator fears nothing so much as the good conscience of his own countrymen. "Well done, bravely done—force was necessary"—this is not a thing an Englishman can easily proclaim, chest thrown out; for there is, after all, a great deal of shame buried in the English heart. The English know very little of the real facts about India; they keep hidden within themselves ample cause to reproach their own kind. Yet it is also true that those who have long fed upon the salt of India have had their English liver and heart corrupted thereby—and it is precisely these men who, by our misfortune, become the final authority.

Regarding the recent disturbances in India, the authorities have declared that the force used in quelling them was of the minimum degree. We are loath to accept this claim; and yet, measured against the standard policies of governance, past and present, the statement cannot be called an exaggeration. We have been beaten; we have received a full measure of unjust beatings; and, most shameful of all, secret beatings too have not been wanting. This much, too, I will say: in many

instances the greatness belongs to those who were beaten, and dishonour to those who beat them. But judged by the ordinary standards of statecraft, our measure of suffering has, at the very least, been minimal. Above all, they feel no bond of kinship with us; and it was not, from the standpoint of sheer force, beyond their power to turn the whole of India into a Jallianwala Bagh. Were the entire Negro population of America, in a spirit of defiance and ambition, to strive to sever its bond with the Union, one need not stretch the imagination far to guess what horrors of bloodshed would follow, even under the present peaceable dispensation. And it would be superfluous, besides, to speak of what has occurred in countries such as Italy.

Yet none of this brings comfort. The man who is beaten with a stick grows weary of it after a day or two, and in time even his shame at having endured it may fade. But the blow struck deep within, deep within—that blow does not content itself with breaking a certain number of heads and then retiring behind the painted screen of the playhouse. It hollows an entire nation from within, silently, continuously. Century follows century, and it knows no pause. The blow of wrath has its end; the blow of greed has none.

In the literary supplement of the Times, a writer named Mackay was quoted as saying that the root cause of poverty in India is over-population resulting from indiscriminate marriage. The idea behind this remark is that the exploitation from without would not be so unbearable if the small store of grain were shared among a small number of mouths, licked clean from the pot. I hear that in England, between 1871 and 1921, the rate of population growth was sixty-six per cent; in India, over the past fifty years, the rate has been thirty-three per cent. Why, then, should the outcome of a single journey differ so? It appears, then, that the root cause is not population growth, but the failure to provide sustenance. And where, pray, is the root of that?

If the fortunes of those who rule a country and of the subjects who are ruled stood upon equal footing, then at least there would be no cause for complaint on the score of food—that is, the shares of feast and famine would fall roughly equally to both. But where, between the dark half of the moon and the bright, lies the gulf of a vast greed and a vast ocean, there the new moon refuses to relinquish its

stinginess toward education, health, honour, and prosperity, even as the lanterns of the midnight watchman multiply without end. To reckon this needs no fine statistical calculation: for a hundred and sixty years now, India's poverty on the one side and Britain's prosperity on the other have remained locked together, back to back, in every particular. Were one to draw a complete picture of it, one would need to set side by side the life of the Bengal peasant who grows the jute, and the life of those, at some far-off counting-house, who reap its profit. Between the two there is the bond of greed, and the separation of enjoyment—and this division has, over a century and a half, only widened, never narrowed.

From the time it became possible, through mechanical means, to multiply the gains of wealth manifold, the martial creed of the middle ages was baptised into the mercantile creed of Shylock. This grim age of commerce had its first dawning together with the discovery of the globe by sea. The earliest role of the mercantile age was banditry. The earth wept aloud that day at the horror of the seizure of slaves and the plunder of wealth. This cruel trade was carried on with especial ferocity in distant lands. That day, Spain, in Mexico, wiped out with blood not merely the store of gold that lay there, but the whole of that ancient civilisation. The storm of that blood-cloud, moving westward, broke in various bursts even upon India. It is needless to trace its history further here. The current of wealth turned, from that day, from east to west.

Thereafter the throne of Kubera, the god of riches, was set fast upon the earth. Science proclaimed that the law of the machine is the law of the world, and that beyond external, tangible success there exists no eternal truth. The fierceness of competition became universal; banditry donned the garb of respectability. Through the open and the secret paths of greed—into the factory-yard, into the vast settlements of the mining camp—falsehood, cruelty, and slavery under false names grew ever more savage; and of this, hair-raising accounts are abundant in European literature. In the West, those who make money and those who supply it have long been locked in mutual strife. Man's greatest religion is the religion of society; and greed, that worst of vices, is its greatest slayer. In this age, that very vice has shaken human society to its foundations, loosening and severing the bonds of kinship.

Within one nation, one people, whatever divisions this merciless pursuit of wealth may create—however much suffering it may bring—there, at least, the field of opportunity remains open; there may be inequality of power, but no barrier of right. In the mill of wealth, he who today stands among the crushed may tomorrow rise among the crushers. Not only that—whatever wealth the rich accumulate finds its way back, in one form or another, in some portion, to be shared throughout the land. Private fortune cannot escape bearing, to a considerable extent, the burden of the nation's welfare. Public education, public health, public entertainment, the countless charitable works undertaken for the common good—all these demand vast expenditure. All these varied claims of the land, willingly or unwillingly, visibly or invisibly, the wealthy meet.

But of the wealth by which foreign traders or officials became rich in India, only the barest leavings fall to India's own share. For the education, for the health of the jute-grower, deep and grievous wants have gaped open like a dry canal-bed awaiting rain that never comes, while from the foreign-bound profit not a farthing turns back toward them. Whatever went, went utterly. To make the profit from jute possible, the village ponds were fouled—and to relieve this unbearable want of water, not a single coin has stirred from the well-filled purses of the foreign money-lenders. If water is to be provided at all, the whole burden of its tax falls upon the blood of these penniless, destitute people. There is no money in the treasury to educate the common people—and why not? Because the greater part of the wealth abandons India altogether—this is the wealth of greed, by which even one's own money becomes wholly another's. That is to say, water rises in vapour from the reservoir on this shore, and, turning to cloud, falls as rain upon the land on the far shore. That country's hospitals and schools have long been fed, unseen, by this hapless, uneducated, sickly, half-dying India.

For years I have watched with my own eyes the utmost misery, bodily and mental, of the people of this land. Poverty not only kills a man; it renders him fit only for contempt. That is why Sir John Simon said:

In our view the most formidable of the evils from which India is suffering have their roots in social and economic customs of long-standing which can only be remedied by the action of the Indian people themselves.

This is the language of contempt. The standard by which he judges India's needs is not the standard by which he judges his own country's. The unrestricted education, the opportunity, the freedom that are theirs for the making of abundant wealth, the manifold enrichment their own standard of living has thereby gained, in knowledge, in work, in enjoyment—that standard they do not even admit into their imagination for India, worn thin with rags, shivering through winter, ravaged by disease, denied education. We are to somehow scrape through our days by curbing population growth and cutting expenses, while they, sustaining the swollen standard of their own way of living, are to keep it forever possible in the same abundance—by shrinking our own subsistence still further. Beyond this, they have nothing more to consider. The whole responsibility for "remedy," therefore, is laid entirely at our door; while those who have made that remedy impossible have, it seems, nothing particular left to do.

Having laid aside, then, all these complaints against man and against Providence, I have for some years applied my own most meagre powers, from within, to breathing life back into our lifeless villages. In this endeavour I have never scorned—indeed, I have actively sought—the government's favour. But I gained no fruit from it; and the reason is that there is no fellow-feeling. Nor could there be: our own incapacity, our every manner of misery, has itself weakened our claim. I have at last come to the settled conclusion that any genuine, fitting co-operation between our own workers and the government, in any real work for this country, is impossible. And so, having paid the upkeep of the constabulary, whatever few coins remain shall be spent as best they may—that has been my resolve.

It was at just such a time, when the shape of royal greed and the terrible indifference it breeds had settled like a darkness of despair upon my mind, that I journeyed to Russia. In the other countries of Europe I had seen ostentation of wealth enough; so towering was it that even the envy of a poor country could scarcely reach its summit. In Russia that pomp of enjoyment was almost wholly absent—and it was, I think, for this very reason that it was easier to glimpse something of its inner form.

Here I found a powerful effort to make universal the very provisions from which India stands utterly excluded. Needless to say, I saw the whole of it through the eyes of my own long hunger. How the sight would strike the eye of some other, more fortunate, self-governing citizen of the Western world, I am hardly in a position to judge with exactness. I have no wish to dispute the precise figures of how much wealth India poured, in times past, into the British Isles, or how much, by various channels, continues even now to flow thither year by year. But I see with perfect clarity—and many an English writer, too, admits as much—that in our country the bloodless body lies crushed beneath a stifled mind, that there is no joy in our living, that we are dying, within and without; and that the root cause of this lies bound up with some inherent fault in the Indian people themselves, so that no government whatsoever could possibly remedy it—this calumny we shall never, on any account, accept.

It has always seemed to me that where a foreign ruler's own interest in a country is strong, and where sympathy is entirely absent, that government, for its own advantage, is eager enough to enforce law and order with vigour; but in whatever matters concern us alone—where our country must be saved, in wealth, in mind, in very life, by every possible means—there this government remains indifferent to the exercise of due force. That is, whatever earnestness, whatever depth of feeling the rulers show toward their own land, not the smallest fraction of it is ever extended toward ours. And yet our wealth, our very lives, lie in their hands, while the means and the resources by which we might save ourselves from ruin are withheld from ours.

Even should it be true—as is sometimes said—that we are perishing through our own blindness in matters of social custom, still the very education, the very encouragement, that alone could dispel this blindness lies locked within the treasury and the royal favour of that same foreign government. So vast a peril, spread across the whole country through lack of education, cannot be removed by the mere advice of a commission; the government ought to show the same zeal in this matter as the British Government would certainly show, were this the misfortune of Britain itself. Our question to the Simon Commission is this: if it be true that within India's ignorance and illiteracy there has lain hidden, all this while, so vast an engine of death, spilling blood continuously—why, then, has one

hundred and sixty years of British rule brought not the slightest mitigation of it? Has the Commission shown us, in figures, how much has been spent, over this long span, to educate the country, set against what the British Raj expends to keep the policeman's baton supplied? For a distant, wealthy ruler the policeman's baton may be indispensable; but that same lathi's hereditary target—the very skulls it strikes—may have its provision for education postponed for centuries together, and the business of empire goes on regardless.

The instant I set foot in Russia, the first thing to strike my eye was this: that the peasants and workers there, only eight years before, had been every bit as helpless, destitute, downtrodden, and illiterate as the common people of India—in many respects their share of misery had been no less, if not greater, than ours—and yet among them the spread of education, within these few short years, has achieved a progress that a hundred and fifty years have failed to bring even to the upper classes of our own land. Our "wishful yearning of the destitute" for our country's education—a picture of despair which had not even dared to paint itself upon the canvas of a mirage—I saw here made manifest, real, stretching from horizon to horizon.

I put this question to myself again and again: how has so astonishing a thing become possible? And in my heart I found this answer: that greed is nowhere an obstacle here. The conviction that education will make every man fit and capable meets with no hesitation anywhere in their minds. Even to give full education to the peoples of far Turkmenistan, they feel not the least fear—rather, an intense eagerness. That the entire misery of the people there had its cause in the traditional stupor of Turkmenistan is a fact simply noted in a report, and left there, unattended.

I have heard, concerning the spread of education in French Indo-China, that a certain French savant remarked that the mistake the English made in educating the natives of India should not be repeated by the French. One must admit that there is a certain greatness in the English character, by virtue of which they occasionally err, somewhat, in their policy toward foreign peoples—the tight weave of their governance loosens here and there—for otherwise our own tongues might have been loosed perhaps another half-century later than they were.

It cannot be denied that in the absence of education, incapacity remains entrenched—so that illiteracy is no less powerful an instrument of oppression than the policeman's baton. Lord Curzon, I think, sensed something of this truth. As for education, the standard by which the French savant judges the needs of his own country is not the standard he applies to a subject people's needs. The sole cause of this is greed. To the greedy, the humanity of those who serve as vehicles of his greed remains obscure; and so we naturally belittle their claims. Those with whom India's governance is bound up have, for a hundred and fifty years, held India cheap in their reckoning; and this is precisely why the indifference of those above has never abated toward her deepest needs. What we eat, with what water we quench our thirst, in what profound darkness of ignorance our minds lie shrouded—none of this has, to this day, properly met their eye. For to them, their own need of us is the great matter; that we too have vital needs of our own is not, to them, urgent. Besides, we have become so utterly insignificant that it is scarcely possible even to accord our needs due respect.

The grievous problem of India—by which we have, for so long, been dying in wealth, in mind, and in life—is a problem found nowhere in the West. That problem is this: the whole substance of India has been cleft in two, and at the root of that most calamitous division lies greed. This is why, coming to Russia and seeing that very greed scorned and set at nought, I felt a joy so profound that perhaps it may not, by its very nature, strike others in quite the same measure. And yet I cannot drive from my mind this central thought: that today, not in India alone, but throughout the whole world, wherever some vast web of peril is seen spreading, its inspiration is greed—with that greed comes every fear, every suspicion; and behind that same greed lies every manner of martial preparation, every falsehood, every ruthless statecraft.

Another matter open to debate is that of dictatorship—that is, of one-man rule in matters of state. I myself have no liking, in any sphere, for the cult of the leader. There is no doubt that one-man rule harbours many dangers: the steadiness and permanence of its working remain uncertain; where the will of ruler and ruled is imperfectly joined, revolution is bound, sooner or later, to follow; besides, the habit of being ruled entirely by compulsion saps the strength of mind and character—its

success, when it suddenly gathers in, with two or three good harvests, an armful of visible triumph, does so only by striking dead the roots beneath.

If the fortune of a people is not shaped and sustained by their own united will, it becomes a cage. Food and drink may be found well enough within it, but it cannot be called a nest; and dwelling there, the wings grow stiff with disuse. Let this worship of the leader remain, if it must, within scripture, within the guru, within the statesman—there is no assault upon human dignity quite so grave as this.

This creation of impotence in our society has been going on for many an age, and its fruits we witness every day. When Mahatmaji declared foreign cloth to be unclean, I protested; I said, it might well be economically harmful, but unclean it cannot be. But—came the answer—our scripture-bound, blind minds must first be beguiled, else the work will not go forward. What deeper, more lasting indignity to human dignity could there be than this? A country ruled by a single leader remains, in just this fashion, forever under a spell—when one magician takes his leave, another magician conjures up another charm.

Dictatorship is indeed a grave peril—this I grant; and I believe, too, that much tyranny born of that peril is at work in Russia today. Its negative aspect is the aspect of coercion—that is sin. But I have also seen its positive aspect, and this is the very opposite of coercion—this is education.

Only when the mind of a people is united in the making of the nation's good fortune does that endeavour become vital and enduring; those who are covetous of their own single mastery find their sole means to that end in keeping every mind but their own stunted by ignorance. Under Tsarist rule, lacking education, the people lay stupefied, while over them a universal religious blindness coiled itself, python-like, gripping the popular mind fast in its folds. That very blindness the Emperor could turn, with the greatest ease, to his own purposes. Then, Jew against Christian, Armenian against Muslim, every manner of monstrous atrocity could be perpetrated without difficulty, in the name of religion. Then, its own strength lost through the delusions of knowledge and of faith, the loose-jointed, fragmented body of the people fell easy prey to outside power. For the perpetual dominance of a single ruler, no condition could be more favourable than this.

Just such a condition as prevailed in old Russia has, for a long time, prevailed in our own country too. Today our country has bowed to the guidance of Mahatmaji; tomorrow he will not be there, and then aspirants to that guiding role will spring up as suddenly as new avatars and gurus have, in the past, arisen here and there before the faith-intoxicated people of our land. In China today, ceaseless, devastating conflict rages among a handful of power-hungry tyrants contending for leadership—because among the common people there is no education by which they might, through their own united will, regulate the fortunes of their country; and so the whole land there lies torn and bleeding. I cannot persuade myself that such contention for leadership will not, in our own country too, breed some terrible carnage—when it comes, it will be the trampled, scattered common people who perish, for they are the trampled grass, not the sheltering forest.

In Russia, too, there has recently appeared the powerful rule of a leader. But this rule has not sought to make itself eternal—once, indeed, it attempted such a path: the reign of the Tsar, which, through ignorance and religious delusion, overwhelmed the popular mind, and, under the lash of the Cossack's whip, wore away its manhood. Under the present regime I do not think the machinery of governance in Russia stands unshaken; but the vigour of the spread of education there is extraordinary. Its cause lies in this: there is here no personal or factional lust for power, no greed of gain. There burns, instead, an irresistible desire to initiate the whole people into a particular economic creed and to make of every one, regardless of race, class, or caste, a true human being. Were this not so, one would be forced to accept the Frenchman's dictum: that the giving of education is itself a monstrous error.

Whether the economic doctrine itself is wholly acceptable is a question it is not yet time to answer, for this doctrine has thus far chiefly rolled about within the pages of books, and has never before been set loose, with such daring, upon a field so vast. That very greed which, from the outset, offered this doctrine its most formidable resistance, these people have terribly swept aside. As it passes through the crucible of trial, undergoing change upon change, no one today can say with certainty where this doctrine will finally come to rest. But this much can be said with certainty: that the education which the common people of Russia have, all this

while, been receiving without restraint and in full measure, has permanently raised their humanity in worth and in dignity.

Popular report of the cruelty of the present Russian regime is heard on every side—and it may well not be false. The stream of cruel governance there has flowed on since time out of mind; that it should suddenly vanish would itself be a wonder. And yet there, by picture and by cinema, in the telling of history, the Soviet Government ceaselessly exposes to view the harsh laws and atrocities of the former regime. If this same government is itself pursuing so cruel a path, then to arouse, and to display, so intense a hatred of cruelty must, at the very least, be called a strange contradiction. Had the massacre of the Black Hole, committed by Siraj-ud-Daulah, been held up to public execration everywhere by cinema and the like, it would not, in fairness, have been mere folly to call the affair of Jallianwala Bagh, alongside it, an act of madness too. For in such a case the weapon, once turned about, is bound to strike the very hand that wields it.

In Soviet Russia there is a very evident, powerful effort to force the judgment of the whole people into a single mould with regard to Marxian economics; and, in the very heat of that insistence, the path of free discussion on this subject has been forcibly barred—this charge I believe to be true. During the late European war, just such a stifling of voices, just such an attempt to obliterate, in prison or upon the gallows, all independence of thought hostile to government policy, was to be seen.

Wherever the greed for immediate results burns fiercely, there the leaders of the state are unwilling to grant to men the right of free opinion. They say: all that can wait; for the present, let the work be done. Russia's condition is the condition of a country at war. Enemies lie within and without. On every side, plots of every kind are afoot to wreck her every experiment. And so they wish the fabric of their construction to be made solid as swiftly as possible; and to that end they have no scruple in resorting to force. But however urgent the need, force remains a one-sided thing. It can shatter; it cannot create. In the work of creation two parties are needed: the material must be won over to one's own side—not by beating and driving, but by accepting its own laws.

The task upon which Russia has set out is the paving of a road for a new age; the tearing up of the roots of ancient faith in law and custom from their native soil; the scorning of the comforts of long habit. Whoever is caught in the whirlpool raised by such a fervour for destruction loses all sense of proportion—arrogance swells within him; he forgets that human nature is to be won by patient cultivation, not subdued by force; he imagines that, tearing it from its own shelter, in a kind of abduction of Sita, he may somehow possess it. And afterward, should Lanka catch fire, why, let it burn. Those who put their faith in violence have no patience to wait for the proper season in which to make their peace with nature; and whatever is thrown together overnight by blows and driving cannot, in the end, be relied upon—it cannot bear the test of time.

Where men themselves are not yet ready, though the doctrine is ready, I place no trust in the fierce dictators of such a place. My first reason is this: to place complete faith, beforehand, in one's own doctrine is not wisdom—it is only by putting it to work, again and again, that one comes truly to know it. And yet, on the other hand, those very rulers of the people who, in matters of theology, refuse to bow to the letter of scripture, may be seen, in matters of economic theory, sitting fast and immovable, bound by their own scripture. If they mean, by whatever means—by gripping its throat, by forcing it into place—to reconcile that scripture with mankind, let it be understood that even should some reconciliation be achieved by such compulsion, it proves nothing of the truth of the doctrine; indeed, the greater the force employed, the greater the disproof of truth.

In Europe, when unquestioning faith in the words of Christian scripture prevailed, men sought to prove the truths of religion by breaking human bones, by burning and piercing the flesh, by branding it with hot iron. Today, over the doctrine of Bolshevism, its friends and its foes alike employ this very same wild and violent species of reasoning. Both sides bring the very same charge against each other: that the right of man to freedom of thought is being trampled underfoot. Between the two, human nature in the Western hemisphere today is being buffeted and battered from both directions at once. I am reminded of a song of our Bauls:

Merciless driver of men,
would you burn the human bud in flame?

You would have it bloom, and its fragrance stream forth—
but not through patient waiting.
Look, rather, upon my supreme Master, my Companion:
He unfolds the bud through age upon age—
no haste is in Him.
Your greed is fierce; that is why you trust to force—
is there, then, no other way?
How much time is spent, how much remains—who can say?
That is known only to the heart of the great Master.
The simple stream, self-forgotten, hears only His voice—
O driver!

I have already set down what I had to say on popular education in Soviet Russia. I have discussed too how, since politics there has not been corrupted by men greedy for profit, Russia has honoured, without regard to nationality or race, the many peoples within her borders, through equal rights and through access to the best education. Being myself a subject of British India, these two things gave me a joy that ran very deep indeed.

I suppose I must now give some answer to one final question that is often put to me: what is my opinion of Bolshevik economics? My fear is this—that we, having been governed always by minds ruled by scripture, have a natural, enchanted inclination to accept foreign imported doctrines wholesale, as though they were the very word of the Veda. Freeing ourselves from the spell of this guru-mantra, we should say instead that a doctrine can be judged only through its application; and the trial is not yet complete. Any doctrine that concerns humankind has, as its principal element, human nature itself. To what degree it will prove compatible with that nature takes time to determine. We must wait before wholly embracing the theory. But even so, it may be discussed—not by mere logic, nor by dry calculation alone—but with human nature always before us.

There are two sides to man: on the one hand he stands apart, an individual; on the other, he is bound to all his fellows. Strike out either side, and what remains is a fiction. When, seized by some obsession, a man becomes wholly given over to one side alone, and, losing his balance, begins to work all manner of mischief, the

counsellor comes forward wishing to resolve the crisis quickly; he says, cast away the other side altogether. When individual self-interest, carried to an extreme of selfishness, breeds every sort of disorder in society, the moralist says: cast the self into some corner, out of self-interest itself, and all will then go smoothly. This may indeed lessen the disorder—but it is quite possible that motion itself will cease. It is like trying to fling a runaway carriage into a ditch by shooting the horse dead—without pausing to think that the carriage will not, thereafter, run smoothly of its own accord; in truth, it is the reins that need thinking about.

Because bodies are separate, men do scuffle and quarrel among themselves; but the proposal, offered with such arrogant confidence by some economist-king, to bind all mankind tightly together with a single rope and fashion of the whole earth one vast, single body—such a proposal does not sit well in any mouth. To try to obliterate, root and branch, the Creator's own law requires, in the attempt, rather more folly than courage.

There was a day when Indian society was, at bottom, a society of villages. In such closely-knit village communities, a harmony existed between private property and the property of the community. So great was the sway of public opinion that a rich man would have felt it dishonourable to spend all his own wealth entirely upon himself. Society accepted his beneficence as its due—it did not, in the manner suggested by the English word "charity," feel itself thereby obliged to him. There was nothing of that in it. The rich man's proper place was there, exactly where the poor man's place was too; and if the poor man wished to preserve his own standing and dignity, the rich man had to pay, in a hundred indirect ways, a heavy toll indeed. In the village, pure water, medicine, learning, the temple, the theatre, music, storytelling, the very roads themselves, were all maintained out of the flow of private wealth toward the community—not out of the royal revenue. In this, spontaneous generosity and the community's own will were able to meet and merge. And because this exchange proceeded not through the machinery of the state, but through the free will of men, an element of true religious discipline ran through it—that is to say, it was not merely the outward workings of law that bore fruit here, but an inward, personal excellence was thereby cultivated. And it is precisely this personal excellence that forms the enduring, beneficent, living foundation of human society.

The merchant class, whose chief business it was to trade upon their capital for gain, occupied a low place in that society. Since wealth then carried no especial honour, the great gulf that now divides the wealthy from the poor did not then exist. Wealth won its place in society not by mere vast accumulation, but by the fulfilment of grave responsibility; failing that, it bore shame instead. That is to say, honour belonged to righteousness, not to riches. In yielding up this honour, no man's self-respect suffered the slightest injury. That day is gone now—and it is precisely because it is gone that we see, in various forms, a growing intolerance of wealth that acknowledges no social responsibility. For wealth today no longer does homage to man—it insults him.

European civilisation, from its very beginning, has sought its concentration in the city. In the city, opportunity is great, but connection is slight. The city is monstrous in scale, man within it stands scattered and alone, individual self-interest reigns absolute, the churning of competition runs fierce. There, wealth only widens the gulf between rich and poor, and whatever thin bridge charity may build across it offers neither comfort nor honour. There, between those who possess wealth and those who serve as its instruments, only an economic bond survives; the social bond lies twisted, or broken altogether.

Into such a state of affairs the age of the machine descended, and the arithmetic of profit swelled beyond all measure. As this epidemic of gain began to spread across the earth, those who lived far off, unrelated, poor, were left with no recourse: China had to be fed on opium; India stripped bare of her own substance; Africa, forever oppressed, saw her suffering only deepen. This much concerns the world beyond Europe's shores; but even within the Western hemisphere itself, the gulf between rich and poor has today grown exceedingly harsh, for the standard of living has become so costly, so laden with comfort, that the disparity between the two glares before the eye. In earlier days, at least in our own country, the display of wealth lay chiefly in social bounty and public works; today it lies in private indulgence. This does not astonish, it does not delight; it kindles envy, it kindles no praise. The greatest point of all is this: that then, the disposal of wealth did not rest upon the giver's own will alone—above it stood the powerful influence of society's

collective will. And so the giver had to bow his head, and give in humility; the old maxim, "give with reverence," held true.

The sum of the matter is this: that in the modern age, the private accumulation of wealth confers upon the wealthy man such overwhelming power that it cannot possibly carry with it the respect and goodwill of all. In this, on one side stands boundless greed, on the other, deep envy; and everywhere, in every form, the signs of this intolerance appear—for wealth no longer does man homage, but insults him instead.

Modern civilisation, in this inhuman condition, has given birth to Bolshevism; just as, when one region of the atmosphere grows overheated, a storm gathers and rushes forth, lightning-crowned, in a fury of destruction—even so has this thing come to pass. It is precisely because harmony within human society had broken down that this unnatural upheaval has appeared. Because the neglect of the individual toward the collective had steadily worsened, today, in the name of the collective, the suicidal proposal has arisen to sacrifice the individual outright. Because the shore has bred wildfire, the ocean alone is now proclaimed the only friend. Yet once the true nature of that shoreless ocean comes to be fully known, men will once again scramble, in desperation, to reach dry land. That collective, stripped of the individual, is a fiction mankind will never, in the end, endure. The strongholds of greed within society must indeed be conquered and brought under control—but who, having ferried the individual across the river of death, will be left to save society at all? It may well be that, in this present sick age of the world, Bolshevik policy is itself the medicine; but no medicine can be eternal—indeed, the day the physician's rule ends is the day of the patient's true recovery.

I hope with all my heart that, village by village in our own land, the principle of co-operation may triumph in the production and management of wealth. For in this principle there lies a form of co-operation that does not scorn the will and thought of those who co-operate—it acknowledges, rather, the very nature of man. To set that nature at defiance and try to compel it by force is to labour in vain.

One thing more must be said in this connection. When I wish our country's villages to be restored to life, I by no means wish for the return of mere "village-

mindedness." Village-mindedness consists of just those superstitions, that learning, that intelligence, belief and practice which stand cut off from all connection beyond the village boundary—not merely different from the temper of the present age, but hostile to it. The role of learning and of intellect in the present age is worldwide in its scope, even though the sympathy of its heart has not yet grown to match that breadth. Into the village must be brought that very life whose substance is neither trivial nor narrow, by which human nature is stunted in no direction, kept in darkness in no particular.

Once, in England, I stayed in the house of a farmer in some village or other. I noticed how restless the minds of the women of the household were to go up to London. So slight, beside all the wealth and splendour of the city, was the store of the village, that the mind of the village was, quite naturally, forever drawn toward the town—as though the villages had been exiled from the very heart of the country. In Russia, I saw an effort being made to overcome this disparity between the village and the city. Should this effort succeed, the unnatural over-swelling of the city will be checked, and the vital force, the very intelligence of the nation, will be able to spread throughout the land, and there fulfil its work.

I desire, too, that our own villages, rather than living as scavengers on the leavings and excess of the city, should enjoy the full honour and wealth that belong to human beings. It is my conviction that only through the co-operative system can the village rescue the whole of its own manifold powers from their present state of submersion. It is a matter for regret that, in Bengal, to this day, the co-operative system has remained confined almost entirely to the lending of money, bearing the old village-mindedness merely in a somewhat refined disguise, and has never yet been put to work in the joint production and enjoyment of livelihood.

The chief reason for this is that the machinery of government, sheltering beneath which the bureaucratic apparatus of co-operative policy first came into being in our country, is itself mechanical, blind, deaf, and indifferent. Beyond this, perhaps it must be admitted, with shame, that we lack the very quality of character which makes combination among men easy: those who are weak distrust one another. Distrust of oneself is the very foundation of distrust of others. Those who have long lain in subjection, having lost their self-respect, suffer this same misfortune. They

can bow their heads and accept the rule of a master class readily enough, but the governance of their own kind they cannot endure. To betray one's own class, to treat it cruelly, comes easily to them.

From reading Russian novels, one learns that the peasants there, long tormented and oppressed, suffered from this very same affliction. However hard the task, there is no other way: the occasion for uniting each other's strength and mind in one purpose must be created, and thereby human nature itself refined and won over. Not by lending money through the co-operative system, but by labouring together, side by side, and thus drawing the hearts of villagers into a single accord—only then shall we be able to save our village.

25th Baishakh, 1338 B.S. — Santiniketan

LETTERS FROM RUSSIA — APPENDIX

Spoken to the Villagers Gathered at the Annual Festival of Sriniketan

Friends, I have wandered a year abroad through the various regions of the western hemisphere, and have now come home once more to my own country. There is one thing I must say to you—many of you, perhaps, will not be able to feel how deeply true this is. From the East to the West, so much sorrow has today come to light, welling up from within—a picture I never thought I should see. Those people are not happy. There, in vast abundance, every manner of furnishing and appliance and provision has come into being, of that there is no doubt. But a deep unrest, stretching from one end of that abundance to the other, has taken possession of them everywhere.

Do not think I say this out of any grievance against my own country. In truth, I hold Europe in the deepest reverence. Whatever labour mankind performs in the western hemisphere, the worth of that labour I acknowledge with all my heart. Not to acknowledge it I should count a fault. That labour has given man great wealth, has widened the pathways of wealth immeasurably. All has been accomplished. But sorrow lies in wait. Through what unseen crevice it enters, at first the eye cannot see; only by degrees do we come to see its fruit.

I conversed there with many thoughtful sages. They sit troubled, pondering: so much learning, so much knowledge, so much power, so much wealth—yet why no happiness, why no peace? Every moment all stand in dread lest some monstrous calamity should break loose in ruin. What conclusion they have reached, I cannot say. Even now, I think, no one has been able to determine the cause with certainty; or else, among them, various persons, each according to his own nature, have imagined various causes. I too have given the matter some thought. Whether what I believe is wholly true, I do not know; but as to my own conviction—where the cause lies—that, I feel I have understood, and rightly.

Whatever wealth the western lands have created has come through the agency of machines possessed of an immense and terrible power. The vehicle of wealth has

become the machine—and, in turn, the vehicle of that machine has become man. Thousands upon thousands—many hundreds of thousands. And upon this pedestal of mechanical wealth-creation, they have built great cities. The belly of such a city goes on swelling ceaselessly; its girth has grown monstrously vast. New York, London, and cities like them, have devoured the life-force of countless surrounding villages and hamlets before assuming their present vast, demonic form. But one thing must be borne in mind—in a city, men can never be bound to one another by close, intimate ties. There is no need to look far—Calcutta itself, the city where we live, know, and dwell, is a place where we hold no bond whatsoever with our neighbour's joy or sorrow, danger or distress. We scarcely even know their names.

Man has one natural instinct—the instinct for society. Within society he finds true shelter, through mutual connection with his fellows. I do not speak merely of the strength man gains from mutual help. When man's bond extends among the neighbours on every side, when it spreads through his own household and beyond it, then the very vastness of that bond itself brings him joy. Our deepest satisfaction lies not where the connection is merely practical, not where it is one of convenience or opportunity, not one of business, but where it is a bond of kinship transcending every manner of self-interest. There a man may be deprived of everything else, and yet the fulfilment of the human soul comes to him in abundant measure.

Abroad, many have asked me—what they call "happiness," we call sukh—where does its foundation lie. Man is happy only where the bond between man and man becomes real—this truth scarcely needs stating. But today the need has arisen to say it. For, setting this bond aside, wherever the connection is purely commercial, there man reaps such abundant profit—outward profit—there is such gain in it, such convenience and advantage does man obtain, that he has not the courage to speak against it—as though this were the very crown of civilisation. So much gained! Such power! Through the power that grows overwhelming by the agency of machinery, they have thus subdued the whole earth, have been able to make so many peoples of the world their own bondsmen—such is their pride! And, alongside this, there are indeed many opportunities and advantages truly conducive to man's way of living. These have arisen through the pursuit of wealth. Men easily count these the supreme gain. They can hardly help thinking so. Yet in

this bargain man has sold away the greatest of all his possessions—the bond of humanity itself.

Man longs for a friend—one who in joy and sorrow is his own, in whose company, sitting and talking, he finds happiness; one whose father and mother he knew, whose children stand to him in the place of his own sons and daughters. Within such a circle man comes to realise his own humanity.

This too is true: in the midst of vast, monstrous, demonic wealth, man feels his own power. That too has great worth; I shall not despise it. But if, alongside the expansion of that power, the field favourable to the growth of human bonds keeps narrowing and narrowing, then that power turns cruel, strikes man down, forges weapons to kill him, conspires for man's utter ruin, breeds much falsehood, nurtures much cruelty, sows in society the seed of many a poison tree. This is bound to happen. When sympathy departs, when man grows accustomed to seeing the greater part of mankind as mere provision for his needs, when he looks upon millions of men and thinks, "they will turn my mill-wheel and make my clothing cheap, they will supply my food, they will smooth the path of my enjoyment"—when man becomes accustomed to seeing his fellow men in this fashion, then he sees not men at all, but machines within men.

Here we have rice-mills. The wheels of that demon-engine are Santal boys and girls. Does the rich man think of them as human at all? Does he keep any reckoning of their joys and sorrows? Paying out their daily wage, he squeezes them dry to the last drop and extracts his labour from them. This brings money, brings pleasure too, brings much gain—but the thing sold away is man's noblest possession of all, his humanity. Compassion, natural mutual kindness, sympathy—none of it remains. Who looks to see what has or has not happened in their homes? There was a time when in our own villages the distinction between high and low did not fail to exist—there was master, there was servant; there was the learned man, there was the ignorant; there was the rich, there was the poor—but upon the joys and sorrows of all, all kept a common watch. Together, in mutual union, they had fashioned a single way of life. In worship, in festival, in every joyous occasion, they met daily in a hundred forms. They came to the courtyard shrine and told their tales with the village elder. Even the outcaste sat apart yet shared in the joy of the gathering.

Between high and low, between the learned and the ignorant, the road, the bridge that joined them, stood open.

I speak of the village—but remember, in those days the village was everything; I do not wish to call the town then negligible, but it was secondary, not primary, not paramount. In village after village, how many scholars, how many rich men, how many men of honour, made the village of their birth their own and dwelt there. Their whole lives, perhaps, were spent in the service of some nawab, at some court. Whatever wealth they gathered, they brought back to the village. From that wealth were maintained countless charitable schools, village academies were established, roads were built, guest-houses raised; through processions, worship, and devotion, the heart and mind of the village became one. That our country's very life had its roots in the village was because there, in the village, the social bond between man and man could become real. In the city this is not possible. Therefore the social being finds shelter in the village. And indeed—is not everything for the sake of the social being? All religion, all duty exists for social man alone. The millionaire, the multi-millionaire, may sit fixed to his heap of gold like some incarnate spirit of the treasure-hoard. Apart from his great ledgers he has nothing else, he is bound to no one. He sits ensconced within the accumulation of his own money; where is his bond with the common people?

Comparing that time with the present, we shall find that we lacked much that we now have. Now we drink piped water, and the seeds of disease are fewer in it; we have good doctors, we have hospitals; through the aid of science and knowledge, many opportunities have opened to us. I do not disdain this. But we possessed one very great treasure—that treasure was fellowship, kinship. There is no greater wealth than this. Wherever this kinship is wanting, there peace and happiness cannot dwell.

Throughout the whole of the western hemisphere, kinship between man and man is extremely shallow, extremely superficial. It has no deep root. Everyone says, "I shall enjoy, I shall become great, my name shall spread, my profit shall grow." Whoever has achieved this is held in what enormous esteem! In measuring the extent of his wealth and power, the minds of the people there are moved to a kind of thrilled wonder. Such worship of individual power we have not witnessed in this

fashion in our own country. It is nothing much—merely a man who can throw a punch. The great champion of pugilism walked down the street, and the street filled with a crowd. Word came that a certain cinema actress was passing through the streets of London by motor-car; hoping for one fleeting glimpse of her from within, the crowd packed the road so tight it grew impassable. In our own country, the great man whom we so name—when he comes, we shall all take the dust of his feet. Should Mahatma Gandhi come, the whole country would go mad with joy. He has neither wealth nor bodily strength, but he has heart, he has spiritual power. As far as I know, he does not know how to throw a punch, but he has proclaimed, in the grandest terms, the bond between man and man; he has not kept himself apart—he is of us all, and we are all his. There it ends; beyond this we understand little more. There are many far more learned, far more wise, far richer than he; but our country will look to the wealth of self-giving. Is this a small thing? From this we may understand what it is our country's people truly desire.

Not scholarship, not wealth, nothing else—it is the soul's own treasure that man desires. But day by day a change has come over us. I have spent many days in the village; I have no wish whatsoever to speak in flattering phrases. The image of the village I have seen is a most ugly one. Envy, malice, deceit, betrayal—among neighbours these appear in the strangest of forms. Through false litigation they entangle one another in ruinous nets. How deep corruption has taken root there, I have seen with my own eyes. Certain conveniences exist in the town that do not exist in the village; and even that which was once the village's own possession, that too it has today lost.

With deep anxiety in my heart I have come today, villagers, to you. Once you were bound together in a single society; today, torn and scattered, you do nothing but wound one another. Once more you must unite and awaken your own strength. Do not wait for favourable circumstance from without. Knowing that strength lies within you, it is that very strength's self-forgetfulness we wish to dispel. For upon that strength of yours the claim of the whole country rests. However much the foundation may be crumbling, cracks appear in the storey above—one cannot go on propping it up for long from outside with mere plaster.

Come, then—not as petitioners, but as fellow-workers. Be our co-labourers; only then will this undertaking of ours bear fruit. Let the social life of the village grow sound and strong once more. Let hearts awaken in song and verse, in speech, in festival, in joy, in learning and initiation. Your poverty, your weakness, your self-abasement, weigh upon the breast of India like some monstrous burden. Every other country moves forward, while we lie inert in ignorance and illiteracy. All this shall pass away if we can gather together our own store of strength. Here at our Sriniketan lies our endeavour toward that very gathering of the people's strength.

25th Baishakh, 1338 — Santiniketan

LETTERS FROM RUSSIA — SERVICE TO THE VILLAGE

Spoken at the Sriniketan Festival

The Veda calls the infinite Being Āviḥ—the Manifest, the Self-Revealing. His revelation is entirely complete within Himself. Man's prayer to Him runs thus: āvirāvīrma edhi—O Manifest One, let Thy manifestation come to pass within me. That is to say: I seek, within my own soul, the revelation of the Infinite Form. My aspiration is this—that my expression, in knowledge, in love, in action, should bear witness to the Infinite; therein alone lies my fulfilment. To go on, through the workings of mind, through will, through the striving of deed, gradually lifting away the veil of imperfection and proving, ever more, my own kinship with the Infinite—this is man's religious endeavour.

Other living creatures come into the world in whatever condition, and in that same condition their existence is fulfilled. That is, Nature alone has expressed them, and following the dictates of that Nature they carry out the business of life—nothing more. But man's supreme endeavour is this: that from within himself he must, through his own effort, ceaselessly unveil his own deeper truth. His self-revelation lies in this very self-realisation, not in a life ruled merely by Nature's dictates. Hence his difficult prayer is this: that in every direction he may express the Infinite. Hence he says: bhūmaiva sukham—joy is in the vast, the great alone; nālpe sukham asti—in the small, in the little, there is no joy.

Thus, for man, the greatest of all calamities is when he cannot, in his own life, manifest the boundless truth latent within him—when all the obstacles remain firm and unyielding. This, for him, is a death worse than death. In eating, in pleasure, in enjoyment, in luxury, he may grow full and satisfied; but if in the light of knowledge, in the strength of renunciation, in the outreach of love, in the courage of moral action, he cannot manifest, even in some small measure, his own awakened, liberated self, then that alone is called "the great destruction"—mahatī vinaṣṭiḥ.

That destruction lies not in the death of the creature, but in the non-manifestation of the soul.

Civilisation—one synonym for it is "the manifestation of the Infinite." That "deeper meaning" hidden within man, his profound truth—it is this that civilisation goes on discovering. This is precisely why the discipline of the civilised man is so vast, so arduous. Its boundary is forever advancing; the endeavour of civilised man refuses to accept any limit fixed by nature as final.

Man's ever-renewing aspiration toward completeness has two aspects—yet they are mutually bound together. One is individual fulfilment, the other social; between them there is no true division. Individual excellence pursued in isolation is impossible. Those who have attained the highest rank in the world of man have had their power expressed through the power of all—it is never something apart, complete in itself. Where man stands isolated as an individual, where mutual co-operation is not close-knit, there lies barbarism. The savage hunts alone; he gathers, in fragments, whatever experience is useful for his livelihood; the enjoyment of that livelihood remains confined within a very small boundary. To achieve, through the shared cultivation of many minds, the excellence of one's own mind; to unite one's own strength with the strength of the many; to establish one's own wealth securely by uniting it with the wealth of the many—this is the goal of civilised man.

The Upanishad says: it is only when we find another within ourselves, and ourselves within another, that we find Truth—na tato vijugupsate—then we can no longer remain hidden, then alone comes our true manifestation. In civilisation man is manifest; in barbarism man remains unmanifest. The truer the mutual realisation of one within another becomes, the more fully the true nature of civilisation stands revealed. Wherever, in the name of religion, in the name of duty, in the name of material interest, in the name of patriotism, man has created division within the human family, there the causes of ruin gather strength, seen and unseen. There man himself strikes at his own humanity—and that is the truest path of self-destruction. History, age after age, has furnished its proof.

If we search for the cause of the destruction of civilisations, we find but one cause: the corruption or rupture of the bond between man and man. Where the gulf between the powerful and the powerless widens, social harmony is destroyed there. There, the party of the master, the party of the slave, the party of the enjoyer, the party of the deprived, split society in two and obstruct the flow of life through the social body; from this arises, on the one hand, engorgement in one limb, and on the other, wasting disease in another; and through this very breach, in every civilised country on earth, the messenger of Death now comes and goes. In our own country, his path of entry seems even more wide open than elsewhere. This calamity has come to pass but recently.

There was a day when village society in our country was alive and vital. It was through this society that the bond of the whole nation ran; the entire stream of our education and our religious and moral life flowed, carried onward, from village to village. The vast heart of the nation, spread abroad through village after village, found there its shelter, found there its life. It is true that we were deprived of many of the conveniences of modern science. Then, the compass of our endeavour was narrow, variety was scant, the equipment for the conduct of life was sorely lacking. But the connection of the social life-process was unbroken. Now it is not so. When a current flows in a river, through that current, exchange and communication are maintained between this bank and that, this country and that. When the water dries up, this same riverbed becomes a grave obstruction. Then what was once the path of one age becomes the wrong path of another. This is precisely what has happened in the present day.

Those whom we call by the name of the respectable classes—the education they gain, their aspirations and their strivings, the opportunities and conveniences they enjoy—all this belongs to one bank of a dried-up, dead river's hollow bed; between it and the opposite bank—in knowledge, in belief, in custom and habit, in daily life—there yawns an impassable gulf. The village folk have neither learning, nor health, nor wealth, nor food and clothing. On the other side, those who study in colleges, who practise law, who practise medicine, who deposit their money in banks—they dwell as upon an island; on every side, an unfathomable estrangement.

That network of nerves through which the pain of any limb reaches the very heart of the body, through whose union the whole body's self-awareness becomes complete—should disconnection occur within that network, it is nothing less than a state of death. That is the condition of our society. Even among those who today, in fierce and desperate endeavour, strive to redeem the nation, one finds that where the graver divisions in society lie, where the very symptoms of paralysis show themselves, there their gaze does not even fall. From time to time they cry out, "something must be done!" But the hand does not move as swiftly as the voice. From whatever effort we undertake concerning our country, the country's own people are left out. We have grown so accustomed to this that we have no sense whatsoever of the vast irony it contains. Let me give one illustration of it.

In our country there has arisen a phenomenon called modern education. In its name, schools and colleges have sprung up here and there like frogs' umbrellas after rain. It is fashioned in such a way that its light scarcely reaches beyond the college compound—less, even, than the pale reflection of sunlight scattered by the moon. A foreign tongue forms its wall on every side. Whenever we think of spreading education through the medium of the mother tongue, our courage for that thought is exceedingly small. It is as timid as a young bride confined to the inner apartments. Her rights extend only to the courtyard; beyond it, her veil falls low over her chin, the moment she must cross the threshold. The reign of the mother tongue belongs to primary education alone—that is, it is fit only for teaching children—as though, apart from the mother tongue, there were no opportunity to learn any other tongue at all; and that vast body of the people has been reckoned, in the matter of the right to knowledge, as eternal children. They shall never, by any means, grow into full human beings; and yet, with regard to self-rule, they shall attain the full rights of a full human being—this we imagine, our eyes tightly shut.

In the matter of sharing the fruits of knowledge, so vast a fast imposed upon the greater part of the population is found in no other newly awakened country on earth—not in Japan, not in Persia, not in Turkey, not in Egypt. As though the mother tongue were itself a crime, an "original sin," as Christian theology calls it. For the people of this land, we have cast beyond the bounds of imagination the possibility of the full completeness of knowledge coming through education in the mother

tongue. To say "nowhere but at the English hotelier's shop will the people of this country ever find nourishing food" is exactly the same as saying "without the English language, the full cultivation of knowledge through the mother tongue can never be achieved."

On this occasion it is worth remembering that it was only by making the whole of modern knowledge fully accessible in the Japanese language that the Japanese universities made the nation's system of education both true and complete. The reason is that Japan understood "education" to mean the education of the whole country—not the education, understood as belonging to some narrow class called "the respectable." Whatever we may say aloud, what we mean by "the country" is, in truth, the country of the respectable classes. The common people we call chhotolok—"small folk"; this designation has, for long ages, sunk into our very marrow. For these "small folk," every standard of measurement is small. They themselves have come to accept this. They have no confidence to claim anything of a larger measure. They are but the shadow-followers of the respectable; their manifestation is dim, and yet they form the greater part of the nation—so that nine-tenths, at least, of the country lies unlit. Respectable society cannot even see them clearly, let alone the wider world.

In the intoxicated state of our political discourse, whatever we may say with our mouths, however loudly we may proclaim our patriotic feeling, it is precisely because our country remains unmanifest that we show such indifference, through the channels of practical work, to the service of the country. Those whom we have kept small, we constantly wrong through the very meanness of human nature. We invoke their name to gather resources every now and then; but their portion is the fine words—the substance, in the end, falls always to the share of our own class. The sum of the matter is this: between that extremely tiny fraction of the country possessed of intelligence, learning, wealth, and honour—some five per cent, let us say—and the ninety-five per cent who are not, the gulf is wider than the breadth of the great ocean. We dwell in one country, and yet we are not one country.

In childhood, the lamp that burned in our homes—in one part of it there was a little oil, in the other, a good deal of water. The water lay below, the oil above. The light burned dim and flickering, throwing off much smoke. This, to some degree, was the

condition of our former age. The relation between the respectable classes and the common people was of just this sort. Their dignity was not equal, and yet, together, they kept the same single lamp burning. They had one undivided vessel of light. Today, the oil has gone to one side, the water to another; on the oil's side, the material for light is exceedingly meagre, and on the water's side, there is none at all.

When, in time, kerosene lamps came into our homes from abroad, in these the whole substance was oil—and within the whole of that oil lay the power to kindle. The brightness of the light, too, was greater. With this may be compared European civilised society. There, one and the same kind of learning and strength runs pervasive through every class of the population. There too an upper and a lower stratum exist; near that upper stratum the lamp burns bright, while the lower level remains unlit. But that division is largely accidental; the power of illumination exists within the whole of the oil. In that reckoning there is no caste distinction of light; if the oil from below should rise to the top, there is no variance in brightness. There, for the lower ranks to rise into the upper is by no means impossible; indeed, that very striving goes on unceasingly.

There is yet another class of lamp, called the electric light. Within it, a coiled filament gives light; from end to end it burns with equal brightness. Within it there is no distinction of bright and unlit; this light is nearly equal to the light of day. The effort to kindle this kind of light is not yet under way in every country of European society; but here and there it has begun. To perfect this mechanism, much breaking and remaking may yet be required; some of the great financiers of the enterprise may even be ruined in the process; but that a certain inclination has arisen, in this direction, in the western hemisphere, is a thing that can no longer be kept hidden. This is the endeavour toward manifestation—man's innermost religion; and it seems that some such effort, by which every human being shall gain unhindered access to this religious striving, is gradually spreading further and further.

Only in our own unfortunate country do I see that even the light which once burned in the earthen lamp meets, today, with obstruction. When our country's degree-holders today think of the village, they consider it more than sufficient to do the smallest, most trifling thing for its sake. As long as this attitude of ours persists, the

village folk remain, in relation to us, foreigners. Indeed, they are further from us even than that—for this reason: the little learning we gain in school and college is a European learning. By its aid it becomes easy for us to understand the European, and to make ourselves understood by him. The thought and feeling of England, France, Germany, are easily manifest to us; the poetry, the fiction, the drama that we read of theirs is no riddle to us; indeed, even their desires, their disciplines, our own desires and disciplines have, in large measure, followed the same path. But those who have grown to manhood under the guardianship of Ma-Shashthi and Manasa, Olabibi and Sheetala, Ghetu, Rahu, Shani, ghosts and spirits, brahmadaitya, the secret almanac of the astrologer's clerk, and the temple priest—from them we have not risen so very much higher, but we have moved far away; between them and us, no true response passes any longer. We have not even that curiosity necessary to become properly acquainted with them.

Those in our colleges who study Economics and Ethnology sit waiting to learn, from European scholars, the customs and social arrangements of the people of some village next door. They are "small folk"; whatever tenderness we feel toward mankind does not extend so far as to make them visible to us at all. These same scholars have read the whole history, from beginning to end, of every kind of "movement" in the western hemisphere. Among our own common people, too, many movements have long been in motion—but these lie beyond the notice of our educated class. There is no curiosity to know of them, for in them lies no mark to be earned in an examination. That there exist among the common people such sects as the Auls and Bauls is by no means a matter for contempt; in many respects there is far greater depth in them than in the newfangled religious enterprises of respectable society; the literature of such sects, too, is worthy of reverent preservation—yet, "they are small folk."

In every country, dance is counted among the arts, honoured as a means of expressing feeling. In our country, because it has vanished from respectable society, we have taken it for granted that it does not belong to us at all. And yet the dance-art of the common people survives still, in manifold forms—yet, "they are small folk." Therefore whatever they possess entire is not ours. Indeed, even should it be beautiful, accomplished, it becomes, for us, a matter of shame. Perhaps, in

time, all this too shall vanish; but we shall not count it as part of our nation's memory, for in truth "they" do not belong to our country at all.

The poet has said, "In my own native land I have become an exile!" He meant, by this, that we live under the rule of a foreign power. But it may be said more truly, more profoundly still, that in our own country we are exiles—that is, the country of the greater part of our own people is not our country. That country is, to us, invisible, untouchable. When, straining our throats, we call the motherland "Mother," we say so with our lips, but in our hearts we know that this "mother" is the mother of only a handful of pampered children. Is it by this alone that we shall survive? Is the mere right to cast a vote our ultimate salvation?

It is out of this very sorrow that, in the midst of the country's profound indifference, deprived of the favour and support of all, we have here, among this handful of villages, performed a rite of awakening life. Those who do nothing at all may ask, with contempt, how much this can really accomplish. It must be admitted—we do not have the capacity to bear the burden of thirty-three crores. But we shall not, for that reason, hang our heads in shame. We hold no illusion that we can take pride in the mere breadth of our field of work; but of its truth we may, perhaps, take pride. Let there never enter our endeavour that meanness of spirit which supposes that the smallest, most negligible thing is quite sufficient for the village folk. In arranging even their leavings, let us take care never to show them disrespect. Shraddhayā deyam—"give with reverence." Let there be no lack of reverence in this offering of our own self-dedication laid at the feet of the village.

1337 (B.S.)
25th Baishakh, 1338 — Santiniketan

LETTERS FROM RUSSIA — A KOREAN YOUTH'S POLITICAL VIEWS

The Korean youth was taller by a head than the ordinary Japanese. He spoke English with ease, without the least hesitancy in pronunciation.

I asked him: "You do not care for Japanese rule in Korea?"

"No."

"Why? Has your country's condition, under Japanese rule, not become better than it was before?"

"That is true. But our grief, put briefly, comes to this: Japanese sovereignty is the sovereignty of the wealthy. Korea is their means of profit, their storehouse of provisions. Man keeps the tools of his necessity bright and polished, because they are his own property, and he takes pride in them. But man is not a plate, a pot, a bowl, or a coachman's horse or a cowherd's cow, for whom outward tending is sufficient."

"Do you mean that if Japan had not entered chiefly into an economic relation with Korea, but had instead exercised over you the bond of royal majesty—that is, had become not a merchant-king but a warrior-king—then you would have had no cause for grief?"

"Vast Japan's thousand-mouthed hunger, through economic bondage, devours us; but the bond of royal majesty is personal, limited—its burden is light. If a king's will is merely the will to govern, and not the will to exploit, then, even while acknowledging him, the whole country may, on the whole, retain its own independence and self-respect. But under the rule of the wealthy, our entire country is turned into the mere merchandise of another entire country. We are objects of greed—not of kinship, not of honour."

"These very thoughts you hold and speak, this desire you feel, collectively, for national self-respect—is not the very cause of it this: that in the schools established by Japan, you have been initiated into the political education of the modern age?"

The Korean youth fell silent, hesitant.

I said: "Look at China yonder, before you. There, for want of education in national self-respect, the common people of the country remain unawakened. And so we see there, through the false ambition for individual power, a whirlwind of slaughter and strife among a handful of greedy men. Because of this, through plunder and outrage, at the hands of bandits, at the hands of soldiers, that unfortunate country lies torn and wounded, drenched in blood, helplessly terrified day and night. Where, through lack of education, the sense of one's own rights has not become clear among the common people, how can they, whether under native or foreign predators, escape being torn apart? In such a state they become mere instruments for the satisfaction of the power-hungry. You complained that your country had become the mere instrument of the wealthy—yet that instrumentality under an alien master never falls upon those who are wise, who are not cowardly, who do not merely wait upon fortune's favour, who are capable of self-mastery. I do not know Korea's condition, but if, under the influence of the education of this new age, even the first sprout of the sense of one's own rights has arisen among the common people there—did you not receive that education from Japan's own hand?"

"What does it matter from whose hand I received it? Be it enemy, be it friend—whoever it is that awakens us, by whatever means, the awakening, once it has its own proper nature, will do its work regardless."

"That I grant; that is not the point I dispute. What is truly in question is this: has education spread so far in your country that the greater part of its people can grasp their own right to self-rule and rightly claim it? If this has not come to pass, then, even should the foreigner be driven out, self-governance will not be achieved through the united will of the people at large—there will instead occur the self-destruction wrought by the ambition of a mere handful. The only means of

restraining the self-interest of this small number is the awakening of the collective self-interest of the many."

"How can we possibly expect, entirely from another's hand, the awakening—in such measure and of such a nature—of the whole nation's consciousness on so vast a scale?"

"If you, the educated of your country, feel this very lack of education, then why should you not take upon yourselves, first and foremost, above all other duties, the very effort of spreading that education? To save a country requires not mere sentiment, but knowledge. There is another matter, too, that occurs to me. Because of geographical, historical, or national temperamental causes, Korea has been weak for a very long time. In an age when warfare demands scientific mastery and vast expenditure, could you, cut off from Japan's power, defend yourselves by your own strength alone? Answer honestly."

"I cannot deny that this must be admitted."

"If you cannot deny it, then this too must be granted: that weakness endangers not only itself, but others as well. From the very hollow of weakness, the ambition of the powerful is drawn from afar and set spinning of its own accord. The rider does not sit upon the tiger's back—he binds the reins upon the horse instead. Consider: were Russia to plant her banner in Korea, that would be a danger not to Korea alone, but to Japan as well. In such circumstances, it is precisely in order to keep other powerful nations at bay that Japan must make her own strength in Korea supreme. In such circumstances, it is not conceivable that Japan should one day, without ever suffering defeat, surrender Korea's fate into Korea's own feeble hands. Behind this lies not merely Japan's greed for profit, but her very anxiety for survival."

"Your question, then, is—what, then, is the way for Korea? I know we cannot build up an army fit for modern warfare. Beyond that, to build and to operate battleships, submarines, aircraft—all this, in our present condition, lies beyond our imagining. Even the attempt, for such a purpose, is impossible under foreign rule. Yet, even so, I cannot say that we should let go the helm entirely."

"It is not well to say even that. One should not let go the helm—but if one does not consider which way to steer it, and fails to give a rational answer to that question, then however much bluster one makes with one's mouth, in effect, it amounts to nothing but letting go the helm."

"Let me say what I think. A time will come when, among the various nations of the world—Japanese, Chinese, Russian, Korean, and others—international economic-interest rivalry among states will no longer stand as the foremost historical fact. Why will it not stand so, let me explain. In whatever country is called, in common speech, 'independent,' even there, in matters of wealth and power, there exist two divisions. In one division, a small number of men enjoy wealth; in the other division, countless unfortunate souls bear the burden of that same wealth. In one division, two or four men kindle the flame of power at their own will; in the other division, vast numbers of men, though they wish it not, feed that very flame of power with their own flesh and blood. Throughout the whole earth, age after age, this fundamental division among men, these two strata, persist. Till now, the people of the lower stratum have accepted their own lowliness with bowed heads, never even able to imagine that this was not something to be accepted as inevitable."

I said: "They have begun to imagine it—for in the modern age, education has spread pervasively among the lower stratum in the western hemisphere."

"Let us take that as so. Whatever the cause, the epoch-making conflict that has begun in the world today is not between one great nation and another, but between these two divisions of mankind—the rulers and the ruled, the exploiters and the parched, exploited masses. Here, Korean and Japanese, East and West, sit together at the very same table. Our sorrow, our very poverty, is our great strength. It is in that very sorrow that we shall find our union across the world, and it is through that very sorrow that we shall claim the future. And yet those who are wealthy can never, by any means, unite—divided as they are by the impassable wall of self-interest. Our great source of hope lies in this: that victory belongs only to those who can unite in truth. The great war that took place in Europe was a war of the wealthy. The seeds of that war remain scattered today across the earth in countless measure. Those seeds lie within human nature itself; self-interest is the

very birthplace, the very cradle, of the spirit of hatred. Till now, the sorrowful have been kept apart from one another by indifference, by ignorance; it is precisely by means of whatever power lies within wealth that their hearts have been pierced. Today it is in the very midst of sorrow that we shall be united, and it is by wealth itself that the wealthy shall be divided. Is not this very thing visible in the restless upheaval, the wild dread, that today runs through the great powerful nations of the earth, amid all the discussion of statecraft?"

After this we found no further occasion for conversation. I thought to myself: it is true that unrestrained lust for power produces poison within itself and thereby destroys itself; but is it true that, by shedding blood and annihilating the particular form in which the division between the strong and the weak manifests itself today, the very root of division would vanish from human nature altogether? It is said that all the high ground of the earth, worn down again and again by the lashings of storm and rain, will one day sink beneath the ocean's depths—but will that very day be the day the earth itself comes to die? Are levelling and destruction the same thing? To destroy division is to destroy the very truth of human society. The eternal striving is to establish a bond of mutual welfare within division itself, and to wage an eternal struggle against the injustice that lies within that division. It is in this striving, in this struggle, that man grows great. When Europe today wishes to set aside striving and make struggle alone its all-in-all, then its endeavour becomes this: to destroy the strong in order to grant equality to the weak. Should such a desire succeed, then upon the very seed of violence by which that success was won, the drums of triumph will be beaten, and that seed will be hoisted upon the shoulders of that very success. On and on will go the wheel of bloodshed, turning ceaselessly. Invoking the name of peace, men wage war, and in the very shock of that war they kill peace itself; waging war against today's power, they awaken tomorrow's power—only to begin, from the very next day, preparations for war against that power in its turn. Will the ultimate peace, then, be found only in a universal field of cremation?

The substance of the conversation I had with the Korean youth is contained in this piece of writing. It is not a verbatim transcript.

25th Baishakh, 1338 — Santiniketan