AMAL: How curious! Some say the time has not yet come, and some say the time has gone by! But surely your time will come the moment you strike the gong!

WATCHMAN: That's not possible; I strike up the gong only when it is time.

AMAL: Yes, I love to hear your gong. When it is midday and our meal is over, Uncle goes off to his work and Auntie falls asleep reading her Ramayana, and in the courtyard under the shadow of the wall our doggie sleeps with his nose in his curled-up tail; then your gong strikes out, "Dong, dong, dong!" Tell me, why does your gong sound?

WATCHMAN: My gong sounds to tell the people, Time waits for none, but goes on for ever.

AMAL: Where, to what land?

WATCHMAN: That none knows.

AMAL: Then I suppose no one has ever been there! Oh, I do wish to fly with the time to that land of which no one knows anything.

WATCHMAN: All of us have to get there one day, my child.

AMAL: Have I too?

WATCHMAN: Yes, you too!

AMAL: But the doctor won't let me out.

WATCHMAN: One day the doctor himself may take you there by the hand.

AMAL: He won't; you don't know him. He only keeps me in.

WATCHMAN: One greater than he comes and lets us free.

AMAL: When will this great doctor come for me? I can't stick in here any more.

WATCHMAN: Shouldn't talk like that, my child.

AMAL: No. I am here where they have left me—I never move a bit. But, when your gong goes off, dong, dong, dong, it goes to my heart. Say, Watchman?

WATCHMAN: Yes, my dear.

AMAL: Say, what's going on there in that big house on the other side, where there is a flag flying high up and the people are always going in and out?

WATCHMAN: Oh, there? That's our new Post Office.
AMAL: Post Office? Whose?
WATCHMAN: Whose? Why, the King’s, surely!
AMAL: Do letters come from the King to his office here?
WATCHMAN: Of course. One fine day there may be a letter for you in there.
AMAL: A letter for me? But I am only a little boy.
WATCHMAN: The King sends tiny notes to little boys.
AMAL: Oh, how splendid! When shall I have my letter? How do you know he’ll write to me?
WATCHMAN: Otherwise why should he set his Post Office here right in front of your open window, with the golden flag flying?
AMAL: But who will fetch me my King’s letter when it comes?
WATCHMAN: The King has many postmen. Don’t you see them run about with round gilt badges on their chests?
AMAL: Well, where do they go?
WATCHMAN: Oh, from door to door, all through the country.
AMAL: I’ll be the King’s postman when I grow up.
WATCHMAN: Ha! ha! Postman, indeed! Rain or shine, rich or poor, from house to house delivering letters—that’s very great work!
AMAL: That’s what I’d like best. What makes you smile so? Oh, yes, your work is great too. When it is silent everywhere in the heat of the noonday, your gong sounds, Dong, dong, dong,—and sometimes when I wake up at night all of a sudden and find our lamp blown out, I can hear through the darkness your gong slowly sounding, Dong, dong, dong!
WATCHMAN: There’s the village headman! I must be off. If he catches me gossiping there’ll be a great to-do.
AMAL: The headman? Whereabouts is he?
WATCHMAN: Right down the road there; see that huge palm-leaf umbrella hopping along? That’s him!
AMAL: I suppose the King’s made him our headman here?
WATCHMAN: Made him? Oh, no! A fussy busybody! He knows so many ways of making himself unpleasant that everybody is afraid of him. It’s just a game for the likes of him; making trouble for everybody. I must be off now! Mustn’t keep work waiting, you know! I’ll drop in again tomorrow morning and tell you all the news of the town.    [Exit
AMAL: It would be splendid to have a letter from the King every
day. I'll read them at the window. But, oh! I can't read writing. Who'll read them out to me, I wonder! Auntie reads her *Ramayana*; she may know the King's writing. If no one will, then I must keep them carefully and read them when I'm grown up. But if the postman can't find me? Headman, Mr. Headman, may I have a word with you?

**HEADMAN:** Who is yelling after me on the highway? Oh, it's you, is it, you wretched monkey?

**AMAL:** You're the headman. Everybody minds you.

**HEADMAN (looking pleased):** Yes, oh yes, they do! They must!

**AMAL:** Do the King's postmen listen to you?

**HEADMAN:** They've got to. By Jove, I'd like to see—

**AMAL:** Will you tell the postman it's Amal who sits by the window here?

**HEADMAN:** What's the good of that?

**AMAL:** In case there's a letter for me.

**HEADMAN:** A letter for you! Whichever's going to write you?

**AMAL:** If the King does.

**HEADMAN:** Ha! ha! what an uncommon little fellow you are! Ha! ha! the King, indeed; aren't you his bosom friend, eh! You haven't met for a long while and the King is pining for you, I am sure. Wait till tomorrow and you'll have your letter.

**AMAL:** Say, Headman, why do you speak to me in that tone of voice? Are you cross?

**HEADMAN:** Upon my word! Cross, indeed! You write to the King! Madhav is a devilish swell nowadays. He's made a little pile; and so kings and padishahs are everyday talk with his people. Let me find him once and I'll make him dance. Oh, you—you snipper-snapper! I'll get the King's letter sent to your house—indeed I will!

**AMAL:** No, no, please don't trouble yourself about it.

**HEADMAN:** And why not, pray! I'll tell the King about you and he won't be long. One of his footmen will come presently for news of you. Madhav's impudence staggeres me. If the King hears of this, that'll take some of his nonsense out of him. [Exit

**AMAL:** Who are you walking there? How your anklets tinkle! Do stop a while, won't you?
(A girl enters)

GIRL: I haven't a moment to spare; it is already late!

AMAL: I see, you don't wish to stop; I don't care to stay on here either.

GIRL: You make me think of some late star of the morning! Whatever's the matter with you?

AMAL: I don't know; the doctor won't let me out.

GIRL: Ah me! Don't go, then! Should listen to the doctor. People will be cross with you if you're naughty. I know, always looking out and watching must make you feel tired. Let me close the window a bit for you.

AMAL: No, don't, only this one's open! All the others are shut. But will you tell me who you are? I don't seem to know you.

GIRL: I am Sudha.

AMAL: What Sudha?

SUDHA: Don't you know? Daughter of the flower-seller here.

AMAL: What do you do?

SUDHA: I gather flowers in my basket.

AMAL: Oh, flower-gathering! That is why your feet seem so glad and your anklets jingle so merrily as you walk. Wish I could be out too. Then I would pick some flowers for you from the very topmost branches right out of sight.

SUDHA: Would you really? Do you know as much about flowers as I?

AMAL: Yes, I do, quite as much. I know all about Champa of the fairy tale and his six brothers. If only they let me, I'll go right into the dense forest where you can't find your way. And where the honey-sipping humming-bird rocks himself on the end of the thinnest branch, I will blossom into a champa. Would you be my sister parul?

SUDHA: You are silly! How can I be sister parul when I am Sudha and my mother is Sasi, the flower-seller? I have to weave so many garlands a day. It would be jolly if I could lounge here like you!

AMAL: What would you do then, all the day long?

SUDHA: I could have great times with my doll Benay the bride, and Meni the pussy-cat, and—but I say, it is getting late and I mustn't stop, or I won't find a single flower.

AMAL: Oh, wait a little longer; I do like it so!

SUDHA: Ah, well—now don't be naughty. Be good and sit still,
and on my way back home with the flowers I'll come and talk with you.

AMAL: And you'll let me have a flower, then?
SUDHA: No, how can I? It has to be paid for.
AMAL: I'll pay when I grow up—before I leave to look for work on the other side of that stream.
SUDHA: Very well, then.
AMAL: And you'll come back when you have your flowers?
SUDHA: I will.
AMAL: You will, really?
SUDHA: Yes, I will.
AMAL: You won't forget me? I am Amal, remember that.
SUDHA: I won't forget you, you'll see. [Exit]

(A troop of boys enter)

AMAL: Say, brothers, where are you all off to? Stop here a little.
A BOY: We're off to play.
AMAL: What will you play at, brothers?
A BOY: We'll play at being plowmen.
ANOTHER BOY (showing a stick): This is our plowshare.
ANOTHER BOY: We two are the pair of oxen.
AMAL: And you're going to play the whole day?
A BOY: Yes, all day long.
AMAL: And you will come home in the evening by the road along the river bank?
A BOY: Yes.
AMAL: Do you pass our house on your way home?
A BOY: Come out and play with us; yes, do.
AMAL: The doctor won't let me out.
A BOY: The doctor! Do you mean to say you mind what the doctor says? Let's be off; it is getting late.
AMAL: Don't go. Play on the road near this window. I could watch you, then.
A BOY: What can we play at here?
AMAL: With all these toys of mine that are lying about. Here you are; have them. I can't play alone. They are getting dirty and are of no use to me.
BOYS: How jolly! What fine toys! Look, here's a ship. There's old
mother Jatai. Isn’t this a gorgeous sepoy? And you’ll let us have them all? You don’t really mind?

AMAL: No, not a bit; have them by all means.

A BOY: You don’t want them back?

AMAL: Oh, no, I shan’t want them.

A BOY: Say, won’t you get a scolding for this?

AMAL: No one will scold me. But will you play with them in front of our door for a while every morning? I’ll get you new ones when these are old.

A BOY: Oh, yes, we will. I say, put these sepoy into a line. We’ll play at war; where can we get a musket? Oh, look here, this bit of reed will do nicely. Say, but you’re off to sleep already.

AMAL: I’m afraid I’m sleepy. I don’t know, I feel like it at times. I have been sitting a long while and I’m tired; my back aches.

A BOY: It’s hardly midday now. How is it you’re sleepy? Listen! The gong’s sounding the first watch.

AMAL: Yes, Dong, dong, dong; it tells me to sleep.

A BOY: We had better go, then. We’ll come in again tomorrow morning.

AMAL: I want to ask you something before you go. You are always out—do you know of the King’s postmen?

BOYS: Yes, quite well.

AMAL: Who are they? Tell me their names.

A BOY: One’s Badal.

ANOTHER BOY: Another’s Sarat.

ANOTHER BOY: There’s so many of them.

AMAL: Do you think they will know me if there’s a letter for me?

A BOY: Surely, if your name’s on the letter they will find you out.

AMAL: When you call in tomorrow morning, will you bring one of them along so that he’ll know me?

A BOY: Yes, if you like.

CURTAIN
ACT II

(Amal in bed)

Amal: Can’t I go near the window today, Uncle? Would the doctor mind that too?
Madhav: Yes, darling; you see you’ve made yourself worse squatting there day after day.
Amal: Oh, no, I don’t know if it’s made me more ill, but I always feel well when I’m there.
Madhav: No, you don’t; you squat there and make friends with the whole lot of people round here, old and young, as if they are holding a fair right under my eaves—flesh and blood won’t stand that strain. Just see—your face is quite pale.
Amal: Uncle, I fear my fakir will pass and not see me by the window.
Madhav: Your fakir; whoever’s that?
Amal: He comes and chats to me of the many lands where he’s been. I love to hear him.
Madhav: How’s that? I don’t know of any fakirs.
Amal: This is about the time he comes in. I beg of you, by your dear feet, ask him in for a moment to talk to me here.

(Gaffer enters in a fakir’s guise)

Amal: There you are. Come here, Fakir, by my bedside.
Madhav: Upon my word, but this is—
Gaffer (winking hard): I am the Fakir.
Madhav: It beats my reckoning what you’re not.
Amal: Where have you been this time, Fakir?
Gaffer: To the Isle of Parrots. I am just back.
Madhav: The Parrots’ Isle!
Gaffer: Is it so very astonishing? I am not like you. A journey doesn’t cost a thing. I tramp just where I like.
Amal (clapping): How jolly for you! Remember your promise to take me with you as your follower when I’m well.
Gaffer: Of course, and I’ll teach you so many travelers’ secrets that nothing in sea or forest or mountain can bar your way.
Madhav: What’s all this rigmarole?
Gaffer: Amal, my dear, I bow to nothing in sea or mountain; but
if the doctor joins in with this uncle of yours, then I with all
my magic must own myself beaten.

AMAL: No. Uncle won’t tell the doctor. And I promise to lie quiet;
but the day I am well, off I go with the Fakir, and nothing in
sea or mountain or torrent shall stand in my way.

MADHAV: Fie, dear child, don’t keep on harping upon going! It makes
me so sad to hear you talk so.

AMAL: Tell me, Fakir, what the Parrots’ Isle is like.

GAFFER: It’s a land of wonders; it’s a haunt of birds. No men are
there; and they neither speak nor walk, they simply sing and they
fly.

AMAL: How glorious! And it’s by some sea?

GAFFER: Of course. It’s on the sea.

AMAL: And green hills are there?

GAFFER: Indeed, they live among the green hills; and in the time of
the sunset when there is a red glow on the hillside, all the birds
with their green wings go flocking to their nests.

AMAL: And there are waterfalls!

GAFFER: Dear me, of course; you don’t have a hill without its water-
falls. Oh, it’s like molten diamonds; and, my dear, what dances
they have! Don’t they make the pebbles sing as they rush over
them to the sea! No devil of a doctor can stop them for a mo-
ment. The birds looked upon me as nothing but a man, merely a
trifling creature without wings—and they would have nothing
to do with me. Were it not so I would build a small cabin for
myself among their crowd of nests and pass my days counting
the sea-waves.

AMAL: How I wish I were a bird! Then—

GAFFER: But that would have been a bit of a job; I hear you’ve fixed
up with the dairyman to be a hawker of curds when you grow
up; I’m afraid such business won’t flourish among birds; you
might land yourself into serious loss.

MADHAV: Really this is too much. Between you two I shall turn crazy.
Now, I’m off.

AMAL: Has the dairyman been, Uncle?

MADHAV: And why shouldn’t he? He won’t bother his head running
errands for your pet fakir, in and out among the nests in his
Parrots’ Isle. But he has left a jar of curds for you saying that he is busy with his niece’s wedding in the village, and has to order a band at Kamlipara.

AMAL: But he is going to marry me to his little niece.

GAFFER: Dear me, we are in a fix now.

AMAL: He said she would be my lovely little bride with a pair of pearl drops in her ears and dressed in a lovely red sari and in the morning she would milk with her own hands the black cow and feed me with warm milk with foam on it from a brand-new earthen cruse; and in the evenings she would carry the lamp round the cow-house, and then come and sit by me to tell me tales of Champa and his six brothers.

GAFFER: How charming! It would even tempt me, a hermit! But never mind, dear, about this wedding. Let it be. I tell you that when you marry there’ll be no lack of nieces in his household.

MADHAV: Shut up! This is more than I can stand. [Exit

AMAL: Fakir, now that Uncle’s off, just tell me, has the King sent me a letter to the Post Office?

GAFFER: I gather that his letter has already started; it is on the way here.

AMAL: On the way? Where is it? Is it on that road winding through the trees which you can follow to the end of the forest when the sky is quite clear after rain?

GAFFER: That is where it is. You know all about it already.

AMAL: I do, everything.

GAFFER: So I see, but how?

AMAL: I can’t say; but it’s quite clear to me. I fancy I’ve seen it often in days long gone by. How long ago I can’t tell. Do you know when? I can see it all: there, the King’s postman coming down the hillside alone, a lantern in his left hand and on his back a bag of letters; climbing down for ever so long, for days and nights, and where at the foot of the mountain the waterfall becomes a stream he takes to the footpath on the bank and walks on through the rye; then comes the sugar-cane field and he disappears into the narrow lane cutting through the tall stems of sugar-canies; then he reaches the open meadow where the cricket chirps and where there is not a single man to be seen, only the

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snipe wagging their tails and poking at the mud with their bills. I can feel him coming nearer and nearer and my heart becomes glad.

GAFFER: My eyes are not young; but you make me see all the same.
AMAL: Say, Fakir, do you know the King who has this Post Office?
GAFFER: I do; I go to him for my alms every day.
AMAL: Good! When I get well I must have my alms too from him, mayn't I?
GAFFER: You won't need to ask, my dear; he'll give it to you of his own accord.
AMAL: No, I will go to his gate and cry, "Victory to thee, O King!" and dancing to the tabor's sound, ask for alms. Won't it be nice?
GAFFER: It will be splendid, and if you're with me I shall have my full share. But what will you ask?
AMAL: I shall say, "Make me your postman, that I may go about, lantern in hand, delivering your letters from door to door. Don't let me stay at home all day!"
GAFFER: What is there to be sad for, my child, even were you to stay at home?
AMAL: It isn't sad. When they shut me in here first I felt the day was so long. Since the King's Post Office was put there I like more and more being indoors, and as I think I shall get a letter one day, I feel quite happy and then I don't mind being quiet and alone. I wonder if I shall make out what'll be in the King's letter?
GAFFER: Even if you didn't, wouldn't it be enough if it just bore your name?

(Madhav enters)

MADHAV: Have you any idea of the trouble you've got me into, between you two?
GAFFER: What's the matter?
MADHAV: I hear you've let it get rumored about that the King has planted his office here to send messages to both of you.
GAFFER: Well, what about it?
MADHAV: Our headman Panchanan has had it told to the King anonymously.
GAFFER: Aren't we aware that everything reaches the King's ears?
MADHAV: Then why don't you look out? Why take the King's name in vain? You'll bring me to ruin if you do.

AMAL: Say, Fakir, will the King be cross?

GAFFER: Cross, nonsense! And with a child like you and a fakir such as I am? Let's see if the King be angry, and then won't I give him a piece of my mind!

AMAL: Say, Fakir, I've been feeling a sort of darkness coming over my eyes since the morning. Everything seems like a dream. I long to be quiet. I don't feel like talking at all. Won't the King's letter come? Suppose this room melts away all on a sudden, suppose—

GAFFER (fanning Amal): The letter's sure to come today, my boy.

(Doctor enters)

DOCTOR: And how do you feel today?

AMAL: Feel awfully well today, Doctor. All pain seems to have left me.

DOCTOR (aside to Madhav): Don't quite like the look of that smile. Bad sign, his feeling well! Chakradhan has observed—

MADHAV: For goodness' sake, Doctor, leave Chakradhan alone. Tell me what's going to happen?

DOCTOR: Can't hold him in much longer, I fear! I warned you before—this looks like a fresh exposure.

MADHAV: No, I've used the utmost care, never let him out of doors; and the windows have been shut almost all the time.

DOCTOR: There's a peculiar quality in the air today. As I came in I found a fearful draught through your front door. That's most hurtful. Better lock it at once. Would it matter if this kept your visitors off for two or three days? If some one happens to call unexpectedly—there's the back door. You had better shut this window as well, it's letting in the sunset rays only to keep the patient awake.

MADHAV: Amal has shut his eyes. I expect he is sleeping. His face tells me—Oh, Doctor, I bring in a child who is a stranger and love him as my own, and now I suppose I must lose him!

DOCTOR: What's that? There's your headman sailing in!—What a bother! I must be going, brother. You had better stir about and see to the doors being properly fastened. I will send on a strong
dose directly I get home. Try it on him—it may save him at last, if he can be saved at all. [Exeunt Madhav and Doctor

(The Headman enters)

HEADMAN: Hello, urchin!—
GAFFER (rising hastily): 'Sh, be quiet.
AMAL: No, Fakir, did you think I was asleep? I wasn't. I can hear everything; yes, and voices far away. I feel that mother and father are sitting by my pillow and speaking to me.

(Madhav enters)

HEADMAN: I say, Madhav, I hear you hobnob with bigwigs nowadays.
MADHAV: Spare me your jokes, Headman; we are but common people.
HEADMAN: But your child here is expecting a letter from the King.
MADHAV: Don't you take any notice of him, a mere foolish boy!
HEADMAN: Indeed, why not! It'll beat the King hard to find a better family! Don't you see why the King plants his new Post Office right before your window? Why, there's a letter for you from the King, urchin.
AMAL (starting up): Indeed, really!
HEADMAN: How can it be false? You're the King's chum. Here's your letter (showing a blank slip of paper). Ha, ha, ha! This is the letter.
AMAL: Please don't mock me. Say, Fakir, is it so?
GAFFER: Yes, my dear. I as Fakir tell you it is his letter.
AMAL: How is it I can't see? It all looks so blank to me. What is there in the letter, Mr. Headman?
HEADMAN: The King says, "I am calling on you shortly; you had better have puffed rice for me.—Palace fare is quite tasteless to me now." Ha! ha! ha!
MADHAV (with folded palms): I beseech you, Headman, don't you joke about these things—
GAFFER: Joking indeed! He would not dare.
MADHAV: Are you out of your mind too, Gaffer?
GAFFER: Out of my mind; well then, I am; I can read plainly that the King writes he will come himself to see Amal, with the State Physician.
AMAL: Fakir, Fakir, shh, his trumpet! Can't you hear?

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HEADMAN: Ha! ha! ha! I fear he won't until he's a bit more off his head.

AMAL: Mr. Headman, I thought you were cross with me and didn't love me. I never could have believed you would fetch me the King's letter. Let me wipe the dust off your feet.

HEADMAN: This little child does have an instinct of reverence. Though a little silly, he has a good heart.

AMAL: It's hard on the fourth watch now, I suppose. Hark, the gong, "Dong, dong, ding—Dong, dong, ding." Is the evening star up? How is it I can't see—

GAFFER: Oh, the windows are all shut; I'll open them.

(A knocking outside)

MADHAV: What's that?—Who is it?—What a bother!

VOICE (from outside): Open the door.

MADHAV: Headman—I hope they're not robbers.

HEADMAN: Who's there?—It is Panchanan, the headman, who calls.—Aren't you afraid to make that noise? Fancy! The noise has ceased! Panchanan's voice carries far.—Yes, show me the biggest robbers!—

MADHAV (peering out of the window): No wonder the noise has ceased. They've smashed the outer door.

(The King's Herald enters)

HERALD: Our Sovereign King comes tonight!

HEADMAN: My God!

AMAL: At what hour of the night, Herald?

HERALD: On the second watch.

AMAL: When my friend the watchman will strike his gong from the city gates, "Ding dong ding, ding dong ding"—then?

HERALD: Yes, then. The King sends his greatest physician to attend on his young friend.

(State Physician enters)

STATE PHYSICIAN: What's this? How close it is here! Open wide all the doors and windows. (Feeling Amal's body) How do you feel, my child?

AMAL: I feel very well, Doctor, very well. All pain is gone. How fresh
and open! I can see all the stars now twinkling from the other side of the dark.

PHYSICIAN: Will you feel well enough to leave your bed when the King comes in the middle watches of the night?

AMAL: Of course, I’m dying to be about for ever so long. I’ll ask the King to find me the polar star.—I must have seen it often, but I don’t know exactly which it is.

PHYSICIAN: He will tell you everything. (To Madhav) Arrange flowers through the room for the King’s visit. (Indicating the Headman) We can’t have that person in here.

AMAL: No, let him be, Doctor. He is a friend. It was he who brought me the King’s letter.

PHYSICIAN: Very well, my child. He may remain if he is a friend of yours.

MADHAV (whispering into Amal’s ear): My child, the King loves you. He is coming himself. Beg for a gift from him. You know our humble circumstances.

AMAL: Don’t you worry, Uncle.—I’ve made up my mind about it.

MADHAV: What is it, my child?

AMAL: I shall ask him to make me one of his postmen that I may wander far and wide, delivering his message from door to door.

MADHAV (slapping his forehead): Alas, is that all?

AMAL: What’ll be our offerings to the King, Uncle, when he comes?

HERALD: He has commanded puffed rice.

AMAL: Puffed rice. Say, Headman, you’re right. You said so. You knew all we didn’t.

HEADMAN: If you would send word to my house I could manage for the King’s advent really nice—

PHYSICIAN: No need at all. Now be quiet, all of you. Sleep is coming over him. I’ll sit by his pillow; he’s dropping asleep. Blow out the oil-lamp. Only let the starlight stream in. Hush, he sleeps.

MADHAV (addressing Gaffer): What are you standing there for like a statue, folding your palms?—I am nervous.—Say, are there good omens? Why are they darkening the room? How will starlight help?

GAFFER: Silence, unbeliever!
(Sudha enters)

Sudha: Amal!

Physician: He's asleep.

Sudha: I have some flowers for him. Mayn't I give them into his own hand?

Physician: Yes, you may.

Sudha: When will he be awake?

Physician: Directly the King comes and calls him.

Sudha: Will you whisper a word for me in his ear?

Physician: What shall I say?

Sudha: Tell him Sudha has not forgotten him.

CURTAIN

Chandalika:

ACT I

(The setting can be in front of a village house, in a courtyard, or on a path. When the play opens the mother is on stage.)

Mother: Prakriti! Prakriti! (There is no answer) Where could she have gone? She is never to be found at home!

Prakriti (from a distance): Here I am, Mother, I'm here.

Mother: Where?

Prakriti: Here, at the well.

Mother (calling): Come here. I must talk with you. (To herself) At the well at this time of the day when the earth is burning like a furnace, and water for the day already brought from the well! (Prakriti enters) All the other girls of the village have gotten on with their work, and you sit and melt in the sun for no reason-unless you wish to repeat Uma's  penance. Is that why you sit there?

Prakriti: Yes, Mother.
MOTHER: Good Heavens! And for whom?
PRAKRITI: He who has called me. 4
MOTHER: Who has called you?
PRAKRITI: His words are ringing in my mind: “Give me water.”
MOTHER: “Give me water!” God grant it was not some one outside our caste!
PRAKRITI: He said he was one of us.
MOTHER: Did you tell him you are a chandalini?
PRAKRITI: Yes, but he said, “Do not deceive yourself with names. If you call the black cloud a chandal, does it cease to be what it is? Does the water it carries lose its value for our earth? Do not degrade yourself, for self-degradation is a greater sin than suicide.” I can remember every word he spoke to me. He spoke so beautifully to me.
MOTHER: What nonsense are you saying? Or are you remembering a story from some former birth?
PRAKRITI: I am telling you the story of my new birth.
MOTHER: Your new birth? You are no more my daughter, Prakriti? Tell me. When did this happen?
PRAKRITI: That noontime while I was washing the motherless calf at the well a yellow-robed monk 5 came and stood before me and said, “Give me water.” I sprang up and did obeisance. When I found my voice I said, “I am a daughter of the chandalas and the water of this well is polluted by my family’s use.” He said, “You and I are of the same family. All water that quenches thirst and relieves need is pure.” I never heard such words before, and with these chandal hands, which never before would have dared touch the dust of his feet, I poured water for him.
MOTHER: You silly girl, how could you dare such an act? Do you forget who you are and the destiny of your birth?
PRAKRITI: No, but the cup of water he took from my hands seemed to become an infinite ocean in which all the seven seas flowed together. They drowned my family, my caste, and my birth.
MOTHER: How strange! How strange you are! Even your language is changed. It’s not your own. You are under some one’s spell. What are you saying? Do you understand your own words?
PRAKRITI: Was there no water to be had anywhere else in this whole village? 6 Why did he come to this particular well? Why did he
come, Mother, if not to bless me with a new life? Surely, he was seeking an occasion for such a deed. In a holy place he could not have found water that would give him the opportunity to further the mission of his life. He said, "So Secta bathed in water such as this, which was fetched by a chandal, Guhak, at the beginning of her exile in the forest."

MOTHER: Child, listen to me. I do not like this. These monks have a way of changing other people's minds by words. Today I can hardly understand you. Tomorrow your very face may seem foreign to me. I am frightened.

PRAKRITI: You have never really known me, Mother. But he knows me. Every day I watch for him at the well, long after the other girls have gone home with their water.

MOTHER: Watch for whom?

PRAKRITI: For the monk.

MOTHER: What monk will come to you, you sick girl?

PRAKRITI: That one monk, Mother, the only one. Without saying a word he told me he would come. Why then does he not keep his word? My heart is burning dry and there is no water to quench it. Day after day I have waited, and he has not come. Oh, why has he not come? (Prakriti seems to be talking to herself in near delirium.)

MOTHER: Prakriti, you talk like someone drunk. Come into the house at once.

PRAKRITI: (Prakriti continues as if not hearing) I want him, who came unknown and revealed to me that I, too, am acceptable. He has lifted me up from dust and placed me by his heart.

MOTHER: Don't forget, Prakriti, that pleasant words are not necessarily true. Because of some unknown sin you have been born in a caste whose barrier no one can break. You are untouchable. This is the truth. Accept it. Believe it. The sun has made you ill. Come in I say.

PRAKRITI: (Sings)

Blessed am I says the flower who belongs to the earth,
For I serve you my God in my lowly home.
Make me forget that I am born of dust,
For my spirit is free.
When you bend your eyes down to me my petals tremble;
Let the touch of your feet fill this dust with heavenliness,  
For the earth offers worship through me.

MOTHER: I begin to follow you a little. Worship where you love and find there your kingdom of freedom. Caste does not bind a woman if fortune blinds a man to her caste. Such good fortune did come to you once, Prakriti, when the prince had strayed here, deer-hunting, and offered to take you. Do you remember?

PRAKRITI: Yes, I remember.

MOTHER: Then why did you refuse to go with him? He was blind with love. He would have taken you away.

PRAKRITI: Blind! Yes, he was blind to me! He was hunting an animal and could only see the animal in me.

MOTHER: Even though it was a hunt, he saw the beauty of your form. But this monk, how do you know he has seen you as more than just a woman?

PRAKRITI: Hush, Mother! You won’t understand, Mother, you won’t! I know that it was he who first loved me. And it is he I love and shall always love. I will take to him the worship of my life and offer it at his feet. And his feet shall not be polluted. I yearn to tell him with pride, “If I am not to stay in the dust as everybody’s servant, I must be devoted to you.”

MOTHER: Do not get so excited, Prakriti. We are servants by birth. We cannot wipe out what providence has ordained.

PRAKRITI: No, no, Mother. Do not wrong yourself by self-degradation. A princess may be a slave, a Brahmin a chandal. I am Prakriti—neither slave nor chandal.

MOTHER: I am no match for you today. Your tongue is new. I myself will go to him and beg him that even if he goes to other houses for food, he will come to ours for a cup of water.

PRAKRITI: [Not hearing her mother and deeply disturbed] (Sings)  
No, I will not call him with my voice,  
I will call him with my heart and bring him near.  
My heart aches to give to him  
But I know not where he goes, he who will receive me.  
How can this union come about?

Can my pain touch his pain, and mingle  
As the Ganges mingles with the dark Jamuna?
The music comes and goes
But leaves its word of hope behind.

Mother, when the earth is parched with drought, what good is one cup of water? Won't the clouds be drawn by this thirst, and won't the rain then fall to the dry earth?

Mother: This talk is futile. If the clouds do not come of their own accord and the fields burn up, what else can we do but gaze helplessly at the sky?

Prakriti: No! Mother, please listen to me and help me. You know the art of magic. You can cast a spell and bring him here.

Mother: Hush, Prakriti! My magic is not for play, and this is playing with fire. These monks are not ordinary men. One does not risk spells on them. You frighten me with your madness.

Prakriti: Who dared to think of casting a spell on the king's son?

Mother: I do not fear the king. The worst he can do is put me on the gallows.

Prakriti: I fear nothing, or only one thing: a falling back into the body of the dead Prakriti, losing my new self and again being lost in the darkness. That would be worse than the gallows or any death. Drag him here, Mother, you must! I must have him. Is not this desire of mine a miracle in itself? He worked one miracle and will work a greater one when he comes here to be at my side.

Mother: I am frightened and I may be doing you and him a great wrong. It may be I can draw him here, but can you stand the ordeal? Another of the monk's miracles, and nothing of you may remain.

Prakriti: No, nothing shall remain. That is my one wish—that I have the chance to give, to pour out my being and be fulfilled. That is the consummation I have been waiting for. The world has conspired to make me forget what I can give. Now I know and I shall give—everything that I have! I will wait for him. Please bring him, Mother, at once.

Mother: Do you fear God?

Prakriti: I do not fear what does not fear me. A god that insults, debases, and blinds is no god. Men have conspired to make my god evil. Now I see and am not afraid. Begin your chant and
make the monk sit by me. I will exalt him.

MOTHER: Do you fear no curse?

PRAKRITI: The real curse has clung to me by my birth, the monk shall redeem me. I will listen to no delays, Mother. Begin your chant!

MOTHER: I do this for you. Tell me his name.

PRAKRITI: Ananda! His name is Ananda.

MOTHER: Ananda? The Buddha’s close companion?

PRAKRITI: Yes, that is he.

MOTHER: It is a sin to work a spell on him.

PRAKRITI: Why a sin?

MOTHER: The Buddha and his companions attract with virtue; I force by magic, as a hunter ambushes game. It is like churning mud.

PRAKRITI: Then churn mud. How else can mud be purified?

MOTHER: Only because I love you, Prakriti. Oh, Ananda, you who art great in soul, forgive my sin. Your power to forgive is greater than my strength to wrong. Accept my adoration as I begin my sacrifice.

PRAKRITI: Do not be so afraid, Mother. It is I who work the spell through you. If to drag him by the anguish of my yearning is wrong, then I do that wrong.

MOTHER: You are daring, Prakriti.

PRAKRITI: Daring? Consider him daring when he said so simply what no one had dared to say before, “Give me water.” These simple words illumined my whole life. If you had seen him, you would know your fear is baseless. He had finished begging in the city, and still he walked across the wasteland, past the cremation ground, then he crossed the river, all in the scorching sun, for what? Just to say to me, “Give me water.” Such tenderness and grace to shower on a worthless creature! “Give me water!” Water has welled up within me and I must pour it out. “Give me water!” In an instant I knew of a reservoir within me. Now I must give it. That is why I call him night and day. Chant your spell. He will hear it.

(From a distance come the sounds of a Buddhist chant)

MOTHER: Look, Prakriti! There go some monks.

PRAKRITI: See, Mother, see! He is at the head of the procession! (Both look for what seems like a long time) He did not look back at
the well. He did not look this way once! He might have come and said, "Give me water." How could he pass me up like this? I who am his own creation? (She falls to the ground weeping)

This earth, this earth, this earth alone is mine. For an instant he raised me up in light, miserable creature that I am! Could this be grace? To let me sink back into my mud and be mixed with it forever, and to be trampled upon by everyone.

MOTHER: Quiet, child. Forget him. It's best that your moment's illusion is shattered. Let what cannot endure vanish as soon as it may.

PRAKRITI: Illusion? This longing from day to day, this insult from year to year, this bird's imprisonment beating wings forever against a cage, do you call this all an illusion? Do you call something which strains every nerve in my body only a dream? Those who have no earthly burdens, no joys or sorrows, who float along like autumn clouds—are they the only ones without illusion? No, I know what is real for me.

MOTHER: I can't see you suffer like this. Get up. Dress your hair. I will drag him here with a spell. I will break his vow of "I desire not" and I will make him moan and crave, "I want, I want, I want."

PRAKRITI: Mother, your spell is as ancient as life itself; thin mantras are merely crude and recent words. They cannot match your power.

MOTHER: Where are they going?

PRAKRITI: They are going nowhere. During the rains they fast and do penance for four months, and then they are off again to who knows where. They call this being enlightened.

MOTHER: Then why talk about spells, you crazy girl? If he is going so far away, how can I bring him back? 12

PRAKRITI: Your spells can overcome distance. He showed no pity for me; I'll show none for him. Work your spell, Mother. Wrap him in a coil he can never escape from.

MOTHER: Hold this mirror in your hand and dance; it will reflect what happens to him.

PRAKRITI: (Looks into the mirror and dances) The clouds, Mother, are gathering in the west. They are storm clouds. The spell will work. His dry meditations will be swept away like dry leaves, his

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vow extinguished, his path turned toward me. He will be blown here as a bird which falls into a dark courtyard when its wing is broken. I see the lightning flash and the sea pound.

MOTHER: It is not too late, Prakriti to stop. Consider. Shall I go on? Will you be able to bear it? This spell will not subside until it has burnt his vow to ashes. To undo this spell may cost me my life.  

PRAKRITI: Let him pass through the whole fire. I see his end approaching, and our stormy union will make destruction a bliss. He will give himself to save me, and I will save you.

ACT II

(A few days have elapsed)

PRAKRITI: (She is dancing) I can bear no more. (Her steps falter) I am choking. I cannot look into the mirror anymore. What a whirlwind of agony is raging in that noble man.

MOTHER: Speak to me Prakriti. It is not too late to revoke the spell. Though my own life be extinguished, let me spare this great soul.

PRAKRITI: All right, Mother, stop the spell. . . . No, no, don’t. I must have him. Try a little longer. Let him come a bit nearer. Let him go through with it and come to me. When he enters my house, I shall wash away his suffering. My surrender will comfort and heal him. The fire in me will illumine the darkness of his fall, and the fountain of my life will bathe and refresh his tortured soul. Once more he shall say, “Give me water.” Until that moment let the spell work.

MOTHER: Oh, it takes so long! Wait! The spell is triumphant. I think I have won. But I cannot breathe.

PRAKRITI: Go on with it, Mother. I beg you, a little more.

MOTHER: The rainy season is coming, and their fast is at hand.

PRAKRITI: They have gone to the monastery at Vaisali.

MOTHER: But that is so far away. You have no pity, Prakriti.

PRAKRITI: It is only seven days’ journey. Fifteen days have already gone. His meditation has been shaken—he is coming! And that which was so many million miles away is coming with him.
MOTHER: Prakriti, I have worked the spell to its utmost. Such force would have brought down Indra, wielder of the thunderbolt. And still he had not come! What a struggle! You could not have told me all you saw in the mirror.

PRAKRITI: I saw the heavens covered over with mist which here and there was pierced by lightning. I saw gods as they lay exhausted after the war with the demons. That passed. Then I saw black clouds gathering. There was terrifying lightning. And then I saw my life-giving monk. He looked as if he were on fire. Flames were searing him from every direction. I looked and I froze. I rushed to tell you to break the spell and found you unconscious. I came back to look into the mirror and saw only intolerable agony on his face.

MOTHER: It did not kill you? His suffering burned into me until I couldn’t stand it any longer.

PRAKRITI: The suffering I saw was of us both. My own suffering mingled with his like copper and gold in a furnace.

MOTHER: Now, finally, you have known fear.

PRAKRITI: I knew something greater than fear. I felt like a witness to creation, something mightier than destruction. It all seemed to be for some purpose. Was it life or death? A feeling of release came over me, and I could not contain myself. My whole being leapt up like a joyous flame.

MOTHER: And the monk?

PRAKRITI: He gazed into the distance. He was as steadfast as the sun in its orbit.

MOTHER: Did he look as if he felt your presence?

PRAKRITI: I shudder when I think of it. His eyes went red with anger, as though he was about to curse. Then he stamped out his flaming passion and like a javelin it seemed to re-enter his soul and become fixed there.

MOTHER: And you endured it?

PRAKRITI: I was amazed at myself. A nobody from nowhere—and his suffering and mine were one.

MOTHER: How long will this horror drag on?

PRAKRITI: Until my suffering is soothed. How can he be freed when I am not?

MOTHER: When did you look into the mirror last?
PRAKRITI: Yesterday evening. Some days before, in darkness, he had passed the lion-gate of Vaisali. After that I saw him, sometimes crossing rivers or mountain passes, sometimes trudging along forest paths, alone in the night. At times he seemed more and more in a dream, forgetful of everything, even of the conflict raging in him. His face looked like death, his eyes were fixed on nothing, and his body seemed old and shrunken.

MOTHER: Where is he now?

PRAKRITI: Yesterday at sunset he was at the village Patal on the Upali River, and it was overflowing with the rains. On the bank was an old peepul tree, glimmering with fireflies, beneath which an altar was overgrown with moss. He looked stunned when he reached that spot, recognizing it as the one where the Buddha had preached to the King Suprabhas. He turned his face away. I could not look a moment longer. I threw away the mirror. *(Prakriti hears the nightwatchman pounding with his stick.)* Now the watchman is calling. It must be past midnight. This night may be wasted. Mother, he may be near. Hurry and cast the spell more powerfully. He must find me.

MOTHER: I am no longer able to. My strength is weakening.

PRAKRITI: No, you cannot weaken, Mother! Keep trying. Don’t give up. He may have turned backwards and the chain holding may snap and I will lose him forever. I could not endure it. I beg you, Mother, repeat your earth chant and make the steadfastness of my monk tremble.

MOTHER: Are you prepared for the ending?

PRAKRITI: I am.

MOTHER: Then begin your dance of welcome while I repeat my chant. *(Prakriti dances.)* Prakriti, find your mirror. Look into it again. Tell me when a shadow descends on the altar. Can you see it?

PRAKRITI: No, I will not look. I will only listen and wait. I shall look only when I can look at him.

MOTHER: I can stand it no longer. Something stops my breath, I . . .

PRAKRITI: Carry on a little longer, Mother! Pull him here. He will come, I know! See? There comes the storm announcing his approach. I feel the earth trembling.

MOTHER (gasp ing): . . . Coming to curse you, you wretched girl. I am nearly done. My veins are snapping. I can’t. . . .

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PRAKRITI: Not to curse, no, not to curse! My beloved comes with lightning to smash down the gate of death and to give me a new life. The darkness is breaking. The walls of my prison are giving way, and the great delusion of my life is exposed. I am trembling with fear, but my heart is pounding with joy. Oh my destroyer, you have come! I will seat you on the summit of my degradation and will fashion your throne from my shame, my fear, and my joy!

MOTHER: Look into the mirror. Quick. My time is up.

PRAKRITI: I am afraid to, Mother. His path is nearing the end. How will he look at me? Will I be able to make up for his long torture?

MOTHER: Don't delay, Prakriti, look into the mirror. I want to know. Quick, I can bear it no longer.

PRAKRITI: (Picks up the mirror, looks in it as if transfixed, and then flings it away.) Break the spell, Mother, break it. Undo your spell. Revoke it. Immediately! How wicked of me to have dragged him down to this! That heavenly light on his face! Where has it all gone? He comes with his head bowed, his face pale, his body bearing the load of the soul's defeat. What have I done to him (She kicks away the apparatus of magic.) I am a wretch, a chandalini—how else could I have desecrated my lover? (Ananda enters. Prakriti falls at his feet.) You have come, my master, to redeem me. I have caused you much suffering for which I ask forgiveness. Forgive me. I have dragged you down to my earth. But how else could you have raised me? Oh, pure one, the earth under your feet is made pure. You are blessed.

MOTHER: (Lifting her head and attempting to kneel.) You are blessed and ever victorious, O Lord. At your feet my sin and my life are both at an end. (She dies)

ANANDA: (Chants) I honor the Enlightened One, most pure, an ocean of mercy, the Buddha, endowed with the vision of pure and supreme knowledge, who destroys all sin and suffering in this world.
In 1912, Tagore wrote, “I love India, not because I cultivate the idolatry of geography, not because I have had the chance to be born in her soil, but because she has saved through tumultuous ages the living words that have issued from the illuminated consciousness of her great sons. . . .” This reverence for ideas and ideals, at the same time that it rejects foreign encroachment and exploitation, condemns any kind of nationalism which is pompous or aggressive, and advocates an India which is growing both in self-insight and world consciousness. From a knowledge of the words of the ages comes the wisdom for the decisions of the present.

In Tagore’s view, the problems that confronted ancient India were not so much political as cultural and social. Indian society, since the olden days, has had two conflicting forces at work, the progressive Kshatriyas and the conservative Brahmins. Out of this interaction, India’s history was shaped. Tagore expressed this view in a written lecture, *Bharatvarsher Itihaser Dhara*, which he delivered to the Calcutta public in 1912. Out of the controversy it created came an English translation by the historian Sri Jadunath Sarkar, who approved of it, and it was published in the August–September issue of the *Modern Review*, 1913. Tagore later enlarged it for the *Visva-Bharati Quarterly* in 1923, and it came out in booklet form in 1951 (*Visva-Bharati*).

On July 22, 1904, because of a proposal by the British Government for the partitioning of Bengal, Tagore gave a public lecture in Calcutta, *Swadeshi Samaj*, in which he spoke for the cultural integrity of Bengal and advocated a comprehensive program for the reorganization of rural Bengal on the basis of self-help. Tagore attempted in his own family estates to organize a society according to the proposals in his lecture, and
drafted a set of rules for the guidance of its members. The English translation of the lecture was made by Surendranath Tagore and it appeared in the book, *Greater India* (S. Ganesan, Madras, 1921).

A few months after the partition of Bengal was proposed, there was a further announcement for implementing reforms in primary education. A commission was appointed which advocated that instruction in the primary grades should be imparted through regional languages, some of which were dialects. There was now further agitation in Calcutta and a public protest was organized for the General Assemblies Hall at Scottish Church College on March 11, 1905. Tagore, among others, addressed this meeting, and his written lecture, *Saphalatar Sadupay*, was published in the Bangadarshan in April, 1905. Surendranath Tagore translated it into English and it was published as *The Way to Get It Done* in the May, 1921, issue of the *Modern Review*.

During his lecture tour of Japan and the United States in 1916–1917, Tagore made no attempt to conceal his views on chauvinistic and aggressive nationalism, and when both of these countries were on the verge of World War I, his ideas brought him many enemies in administrative and military circles. But it also brought him friends like Romain Rolland, and other avowed internationalists. *Nationalism* (Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1917) contains the lectures given on this tour, including the essay “Nationalism in India,” which was also later incorporated in Anthony X. Soares’s edition of *Lectures and Addresses of Rabindranath Tagore* (Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1928).

After Tagore’s China tour of 1924, a group of orientalist scholars of Calcutta, including Prabodh C. Bagchi, Suniti Kumar Chatterji, and Kalidas Nag, formed a society to promote cultural exchanges with Southeast Asian countries with which India had close Buddhist associations. At a meeting held in Calcutta University, sponsored by the society, on the eve of his Southeast Asian tour of July, 1927, Tagore gave a lecture, parts of which were published in the July, 1927, issue of *Prabasi*. The English translation (*Greater India*) by Kalidas Nag appeared in the summer, 1943 issue of *The Visva-Bharati Quarterly*.

**A Vision of India’s History**

When communities which differ from each other in race and culture come and settle in the same vicinity, the first attempts at unity
become too obviously mechanical. Some system of adjustment is needed, but in order for it to be successful it must submit to a higher principle—life itself.

The history of India has been the history of a struggle between the mechanical spirit of cadence and conformity in social organization, and the creative spirit of man, which seeks freedom and love in self-expression. We must watch and see if the latter is still alive in India, and if the former can offer service and hospitality to man.

We do not know the heroes of the times when racial strife between Aryan and non-Aryan was at its height, and it is significant that the names of such conquerors have not been sung in Indian epics. It may be that an episode of that race war lies enshrouded in the mythical version of King Janamejaya’s ruthless serpent sacrifice—the attempted extermination of the entire Naga race; there is, however, no special glorification of the king on this account. Yet, he who strove to bring about the reconciliation between Aryan and non-Aryan is worshiped to this day as an Avatar.

As the leading figures of the movement which sought to embrace both Aryan and non-Aryan in a larger synthesis, we find the names of three Kshatriyas most prominent in the story of the Ramayana: Janaka, Visvamitra and Rama-chandra; they are related not merely by kinship and affection, but by the same ideal. What if, as a matter of historical fact, Janaka, Visvamitra and Rama may not have been contemporaries? That does not diminish their nearness in idea. From the standpoint of space, the distance between the earth and the moon may appear large, but there are many double stars in the firmament of history whose distance from each other does not affect their brotherhood. We know from the epic Ramayana that Janaka, Visvamitra and Rama, even if actually separated by time, were nevertheless members of such a triple system.

In the history of an idea, a hero often represents the ideal of his race, and in Aryan history, Janaka and Visvamitra, as well as Rama, have become historical symbols; they are composite pictures of numerous personalities having a common purpose. Just as King Arthur, out of the Christendom of the Dark Ages, represents the Christian Knight, the valiant champion of Faith, so in India we get glimpses of the Kshatriya ideal gathering champions for a prolonged crusade. There is proof that these opponents were often Brahmans.

The idea behind the neo-Kshatriya movement cannot be known
today in its full meaning, but it is possible to discern the lines of divergence between Brahmin and Kshatriya.

The four-headed god Brahma represents the four Vedas with all their hymns and regulations of sacrifice. The Brahmin Bhrigu, one of the most renowned priests of the ancient days, is said to have sprung from the heart of Brahma, thereby showing that he occupied a prominent part in the cult of Vedic ceremonialism. In the Bhagavata Purana it says that the Kshatriya king, Kartavirya, stole a sacrificial cow from Yamadagni, a priest of the same Bhrigu clan, and caused the class war led by Parasu-rama, the son of Yamadagni, against the whole Kshatriya community. Unless the stealing of the sacrificial cow stands for an idea, such a Brahmin crusade against the entire Kshatriya class fails to have meaning; it really indicates that among a great body of Kshatriyas there arose a spirit of resistance against sacrificial rites, and this gave rise to a fierce conflict between the two communities.

It has to be noted that the series of battles begun by Parasu-rama, the descendant of Bhrigu, at last came to their end with his defeat at the hands of Rama-chandra. This Kshatriya hero, as we all know, is accepted and adored as an incarnation of Vishnu, the deity of the monotheistic sect of Bhagavatas, meaning that this fight was one of ideals, terminating in the triumph of the religion in which, at a later date, Ramachandra occupied a central place. . . .

Those institutions which are static in their nature raise walls of division; this is why, in the history of religions, priesthood has always maintained dissensions and hindered the freedom of man. But the principle of life unites, it deals with the varied, and seeks unity. The Brahmins, who incorporated the static ideals of society, inaugurated different forms of ritualism and set up sectarian barriers between clans and classes. Of the two original deities of the Indo-Aryan tribe, the Sun and the Fire, the latter especially represented the Brahmin cult. Different forms of sacrifice gathered around it and were accompanied by strict rules of incantation; it came to be intimately associated with the pluralism of divinity, since fire had always been the vehicle of oblation to numerous gods.

The Kshatriyas, on the other hand, as they rallied against all obstacles, developed in their life the principles of expansion and inclusion. Born and nourished amid the clash of forces, the complexities of
the external forms of religious worship could have no special significance for them. However, the Sun-god seems to have a special status; from him, Manu, the lawgiver who was a Kshatriya, and also the great kingly line of Raghu, to which Rama-Chandra belonged, are said to have sprung. This Sun-god, in the course of time, developed into the personal god of the Bhagavata sect, Vishnu, who belonged principally to the Kshatriyas.

From Brahma's four mouths had issued the four Vedas, revealed for all time, and jealously sealed against outsiders—as unchanging as the passive features of Brahma rapt in meditation. This was the symbol of Brahmanism, placid and immutable, filled with the mystery of knowledge. But the four active arms of Vishnu were busy proclaiming the way of the Good, expanding the cycle of unity, maintaining the reign of law, and supporting the spirit of beauty and plenitude. All the symbols carried by Vishnu contain the different aspects of Kshatriya life.

That there was naturally a period of struggle between the cult of ritualism supported by the Brahmins, and the religion of love, is evident. The mark of the Brahmin Bhrigu's kick, which Vishnu carries on his breast, is a myth-relic of the original conflict. The fact that Krishna, a Kshatriya, was not only at the head of the Vaishnava cult, but also the object of its worship, and that in his teaching, as inculcated in the Bhagavad-Gita, there are hints of detraction against Vedic verses, seems to prove that this cult was developed by the Kshatriyas. Another proof is found in the fact that the two nonmythical human avatars of Vishnu, Krishna and Rama-chandra, were both Kshatriyas, and the Vaishnava religion of love was spread by the teaching of the one and the life of the other.

It is significant to note that the lives of great Brahmins of olden times, like Yajnavalkya, are associated with intellectual profundity and spiritual achievement, while those of great Kshatriyas represent an ethical magnanimity which has love for its guiding principle; it is also significant that the people of India, though entertaining a deep veneration for the Brahmin sages, instinctively ascribe divine inspiration to the Kshatriya heroes who actively realized high moral ideals in their personalities. Parasu-rama, the only historical personage belonging to the Brahmin caste who has been given a place in the list of avatars, has never found a place in the hearts
of the people. This shows that, as far as India is concerned, divine power should be used for the reconciliation of different races, not for acquiring dominance over others through physical prowess and military skill.

The religion represented by the third human avatar of Vishnu, who is Buddha, has in it the same moral quality which we find in the life and teaching of Rama and Krishna. It clearly shows the Kshatriya ideal: its freedom, courage of intellect, and self-sacrificing heart.

Foreign critics are too often anxious to misunderstand the conservative spirit of India, attributing it to the trade artifice of an interested priesthood. But they forget that there was no racial difference between Brahmin and Kshatriya; these merely represented two different functions of the body politic, which, though appearing antagonistic, have as a matter of fact cooperated in the evolution of Indian history. Sowing seed in one's own land and reaping the harvest for distant markets are apparently contradictory. The seed-sowers naturally cling to the soil which they cultivate, while the distributors of the harvest develop a different mentality. The Brahmins were the guardians of the seed of culture in ancient India and the Kshatriyas strove to harvest its wisdom. The principle of stability and the principle of movement, though they depend upon each other for truth, are apt to lose their balance and come into fierce conflict. Yet these conflicts, as meteorology shows us on the physical plane, have the effect of purifying the atmosphere and restoring equilibrium; in fact, perfect balance in these opposing forces would lead to a deadlock in creation. Life moves in the cadence of constant adjustment of opposites; it is a perpetual process of the reconciliation of contradictions.

It is evident that the sun, the one source of light and life, had led the thoughts of the Indo-Aryan sages toward the monotheistic ideal. The following prayer addressed to the sun, concludes the Ishopanishad. "O Sun, nourisher of the world, Truth's face lies hidden in thy golden vessel. Take away thy cover for the eyes of him who is a devotee of Truth."

According to the Chandogya Upanishad, the teacher Ghora, after having explained to his disciple Krishna, who had become apipasa, free from desire, the consecration ceremony which leads to giving oneself a new spiritual birth, and in which austerity, almsgiving, and
truthfulness are one's gifts for the priests, ends his teaching with these words: "In the final hour one should take refuge in three thoughts: You are the Indestructible; you are the Unshaken, you are the very Essence of Life." On this point there are these two Rig verses:

Proceeding from primeval seed,
The early morning light they see,
That gleameth higher than the heaven,
From out of darkness all around,
We, gazing on the higher light—
Yea, gazing on the higher light—
To Surya, god among the gods,
We have attained the highest light!
Yes, the highest light!

We find a hint here on the teaching that was developed by Krishna into a great religious movement which preached freedom from desire and absolute devotion to God, and which spiritualized the meaning of ceremonies. That this religion had some association with the sun can be inferred from the legend of Krishna finding an inexhaustible store of food in her vessel after worshiping the sun; also the piercing of the target by Arjuna, which was very likely the mystic disc of the sun, the golden vessel that holds Truth which can be attained only by piercing the cover.

In connection with this we should note that the spiritual religion which Krishna preached must have ignored the exclusiveness of priestly creeds and extended its invitation to peoples of all classes, Aryans and non-Aryans alike. The legend of his intimate relationship with shepherd tribes supports this view, and we still find the religion, of which Krishna is the center, to be the great refuge of the lower castes and outcastes of the present Indian population. The most significant fact of Indian history is that all the human avatars of Vishnu had, by their life and teaching, broken the barriers of priestcraft by acknowledging the fellowship between the privileged and the despised.

One day Rama-chandra, the Kshatriya of royal descent, embraced as his friend the untouchable chandala, Guhaka, an incident which
even today is quoted as proof of the largeness of his soul. During the succeeding period of conservative reaction, an attempt was made to suppress this evidence of Rama-chandra’s liberality of heart in a supplemental canto of the epic which is an obvious interpolation, which stated that Rama beheaded with his own hands an ambitious Sudra for presuming to claim equal status in the attainment of spiritual excellence. It is like the ministers of the Christian religion, in the late war, invoking Christ’s name and justifying the massacre of men.

Nevertheless, India has never forgotten that Rama-chandra was the beloved comrade of a chandala, that he seemed divine to the primitive tribes, some of whom had the totem of monkey, some that of bear. His name is remembered with reverence because he won over his antagonists and built a bridge of love between Aryan and non-Aryan.

This is one swing of the pendulum during Aryan times. We shall never know India truly unless we study the manner in which she reacted to the pull of these two opposite principles: self-preservation, represented by the Brahmin, and self-expansion, represented by the Kshatriya.

When the first overtures toward social union were being made, it became necessary for the Aryans to understand the non-Aryan religion. In the beginning, there was a state of war between the followers of Siva and the worshipers of the Vedic gods. The fortune of arms sometimes favored one side, sometimes the other. Even Krishna’s valiant comrade, Arjuna, once had to acknowledge defeat at the hands of Siva of the Kiratas, a hunter tribe. There is also the well known record of a refusal to give Siva a place in a great Vedic sacrifice, which led to the cessation of the ceremony by the non-Aryans. At last, by the identification of Siva with the Vedic Rudra, an attempt had to be made to bring this constant religious antagonism to an end. And yet in the Mahabharata we find the later story of a battle between Rudra and Vishnu, which ended in the former acknowledging the latter’s superiority. Even in Krishna worship we find the same struggle, and therefore in the popular recitation of Krishna legends we often hear of Brahma’s attempt to ignore Krishna, until the ancestor god of the Aryans is compelled to pay homage to the later divinity of the populace. These stories reveal the persisting
self-consciousness of the new arrivals, even after they had been ad-
mittcd to the privileges of the old, established pantheon.

The advent of the two great Kshatriya founders of religion, Buddha
and Mahavira, in the same eastern part of India where once Janaka
had his seat, brought a spirit of simplification. They exercised a great
force against the maze of religions and doctrines which had bewil-
dered the country. Amid the ceremonial intricacies on one hand, and
the subtleties of metaphysical speculation on the other, the simple
truth was overlooked that creeds and rites have no value in them-
selves, and that human welfare is the one object toward which re-
ligious enthusiasm must be directed. These two Kshatriya sannyasins
refused to admit that any distinctions between men were inherent
and perpetual; according to their teaching, man could be saved by
realizing truth, and not by social conformity or amoral practices.
These teachings rapidly overcame the obstacles of tradition and
habit, and swept over the whole country.

Long before the flood of the Buddhistic influence had subsided,
most of the protecting walls were broken down, and the banks of
discipline through which the forces of unification had been flowing
in a regulated stream were obliterated. In fact, Buddhism, in depart-
ing, left all the aboriginal diversities in India to rear their heads un-
checked, because one of the two guiding forces of Indian history had
been enfeebled, and its spirit of resistance had been enhancing the
process of assimilation.

In the midst of the Buddhistic revolution only the Brahmins were
able to keep themselves intact, because the maintaining of exclusive-
ness had all along been their function; but the Kshatriyas had merged
with the rest of the people, and in the succeeding age most of the
kings had ceased to belong to Kshatriya dynasties. Then came the
Sakas and the Hunas, whose hordes repeatedly flowed into India and
mixed with the elder inhabitants. The Aryan civilization, thus
stricken, summoned all its forces in a supreme attempt at recovery,
and its first effort was directed at regaining its race consciousness.

During this long social and religious revolution, which had the
effect of erasing individual features of the traditional Aryan culture,
the question of identity became paramount, and the chief endeavor
became the rescue of a racial personality from the prevailing chaos.
Aroused by a destructive opposition, for the first time, India sought
to define her individuality. When she now tried to know and name herself, she recalled the empire of Bharata, a legendary suzerain of bygone days, and defining her boundaries accordingly, she called herself Bharata-varsha. In order to restore the fabric of her original civilization, she tried to tie together the lost threads of earlier achievements. Thus, collection and compilation, rather than any new creation, were characteristics of this age. The great sage of this epoch, Vyasa, who is reported to have performed this function, may not have been a real person, but he was, at any rate, the personification of the spirit of the times.

The movement began with the compilation of the Vedas. Now that it became necessary to have a unifying agent, the Vedas, as the oldest part of Aryan lore, had to be elevated in order to serve as a center of reference around which the distracted community could rally. Another task undertaken by this age was the gathering and arranging of historical material. In this process, spread over a long period of time, all the scattered myths and legends were assimilated, along with all the beliefs and discussions which lingered in the racial memory. This literary image of old Aryan India was called the Mahabharata—the great Bharata. Even the name shows an awakened consciousness of unity in a people struggling to find expression in a permanent record.

This eagerness to gather all drifting fragments from the wreckage resulted in an indiscriminate overloading of the central narrative of the epic. The artists's natural desire to impart an aesthetic relevancy to the story was swamped by the exigency of the time, for the age needed an immortal epic, a majestic ship fit to cross the sea of time, to carry materials for the building of a permanent shelter for the racial mind.

Therefore, though the Mahabharata may not be history in the modern western definition of the term, it is, nevertheless, a receptacle of historical records which had been written in the living memory of a people. Had any competent person attempted to sift and sort and analyze this material into an ordered array of facts, we would have lost the picture of a changing Aryan society, one in which the lines are vivid or dim, connected or confusing and conflicting, according to the lapses of memory, changes of ideal, and variations of light and
shade incident to time's perspective. In this great work, self-recording annals of history, as they are imprinted on the living tablet of time, are bared to our sight.

The genius of that extraordinary age did not stop at the discovery of a unity in the various historical materials; it also searched out a unified spiritual philosophy running through all contradictions that are found in the metaphysical speculations of the Vedas. The outline presentation of this philosophy was made by the same Vyasa, who had not only the industry to gather and assimilate the details, but also the power to visualize the whole. His compilation is a creative synthesis.

One thing which remains significant is the fact that this age of compilation has insisted upon the sacredness of the Brahmins and of Brahminic lore by means of constant reiteration and exaggerated language. It proves that there was a militant spirit fighting great opposition, and that a complete loss of faith in the freedom of intellect and conscience had occurred among the people. An analogy can be found in the occasional distrust of democracy which we observe among some modern intellectuals of Europe.

The main reason for this was that, during the period of alternating ascendency of Brahmin and Kshatriya, the resulting synthesis had an Aryan character, but during the Buddhist period, when not only non-Aryans but also non-Indians from outside gained free access, it became difficult to maintain organic coherence. A strong undercurrent of race-mingling and religious compromise set in, and as the mixture of races and beliefs began to make itself felt, the Aryan forces of self-preservation struggled to put up a series of walls in order to prevent further encroachments. Only those intrusions which could not be resisted found a place within the barriers.

Let no one imagine, however, that the non-Aryan contributors were received only because of circumstance, and that they had no value of their own. As a matter of fact, the old Dravidian culture should in no way be underrated; the result of its combination with the Aryan was the Hindu civilization, which acquired both richness and depth from the Dravidians. They may not have been introspective or metaphysical, but they were artists, and they could sing, design and build. The transcendental mind of the Aryan, by its mar-
riage with the emotional and creative art of the Dravidian, gave birth to an offspring which was neither fully Aryan, nor Dravidian, but Hindu.

With its Hindu civilization, India was able to realize the universal in the commonplaceness of life; but on the other hand, because of the mixed strain in its blood, whenever Hinduism has failed to attempt the reconciliation of opposites, which is its essence, it has fallen prey to incongruous folly and blind superstition. This is the predicament in which Hindu India has been placed by its birthright. Where a harmony between the differences has been organically effected, beauty has blossomed; so long as it remains wanting, there is no end to deformities. Moreover, we must remember that not only the Dravidian civilization, but also things pertaining to primitive non-Aryan tribes, found entrance into the Aryan polity, and the torment of these unassimilable intrusions has been a darkly cruel legacy left to the succeeding Hindu society.

When the non-Aryan gods found a place in the Aryan pantheon, their inclusion was symbolized by the trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Siva—Brahma representing the ancient tradition of exclusive externality, Vishnu representing the transition when the original Vedic Sun-god became humanized and emerged from the rigid scriptural texts into the world of the pulsing heart, and Siva representing the period when the non-Aryan found entrance into the social organization of the Aryan; but though the Aryan and non-Aryan thus met, they did not merge completely. Like the Ganges and the Jumna at their confluence, they flowed on together in two distinguishable streams.

In spite of Siva’s entry amongst the Aryan gods, his Aryan and non-Aryan aspects remained different. In the former, he is the lord of ascetics, who, having conquered desire, is enraptured in the bliss of nirvana, as bare of raiment as of worldly ties; in the latter, he is terrible, clad in raw, bleeding elephant hide, intoxicated by the hemp decoction. In the former, he is the replica of Buddha, and as such has adorned many a Buddhist shrine; in the latter, he is the overlord of demons, spirits and other dreadful beings, who haunt the places of the dead, and as such has appropriated to himself the worshipers of the phallus, snakes, trees and other totems. In the former, he is wor-
shiped in the quietude of meditation; in the latter, in frenzied orgies of self-torture.

Similarly in the Vaishnava cult, Krishna, who became the mythological god of the non-Aryan religious legends, did not have the same character as the brave and sagacious ruler of Dvaraka who acted as the guide, philosopher and friend of the valiant Arjuna. Alongside the heights of the Celestial Song ranged the popular religious stories of the cowherd tribes.

In spite of all that was achieved, however, it was quite impossible, even for the Aryan genius, to harmonize and assimilate all the practices, beliefs and myths of innumerable non-Aryan tribes. As the non-Aryan element became increasingly predominant in the race mixture, more and more of what was non-Aryan came to be not merely tolerated, but welcomed in spite of incongruities. This led to the formulation of the principle that any religion which satisfied the needs of a particular sect was enough for its salvation; but as a consequence, the organizing force was reduced to the mere compulsion of some common customs, some repetition of external practices, which barely served to hold together these heterogeneous elements. For the mind which has lost its vigor, all external habits become tyrannical; the result for India was that extraneous custom has become rigid, leaving little freedom, even in insignificant details of life. This has developed in the people an excessively strong sense of responsibility to the claims of the class tradition which divides, but not the conviction of that inner moral responsibility which unites.

We have seen how, after the decline of Buddhism, a path had to be cleared through the jungle of undergrowth which had been allowed to grow unchecked during the long inaction of the Brahminic hierarchy. Near the end of its career in India the mighty stream of Buddhism grew sluggish and lost itself in morasses of primitive superstitions and promiscuous creeds and practices, which had their root in non-Aryan crudities; it lost its philosophic depth and its feeling for humanity, which had their origin in the Aryan mind.

The time came for the Brahmins to assert themselves and bring back into all this incongruity some unity of ideal, and it was now a difficult task because of the various racial strains which had become part of the constitution of the Indian people. In order to save their
ideals from this wild exuberance of heterogeneous life, they fixed
them in a permanent rigidity. This had the reactionary effect of
making their own ideals inert, and unfit for adaptation to changes of
time; while it left to all elements of the different races in India a
kind of freedom that was not guided by the dictates of reason. The
result has been a huge medley of customs, ceremonials and creeds,
some of which are old ruins, and some merely the anomalies of living
outgrowths which continue to cling and smother.

Yet, the genius of India continued in spite of the shackled mind
of the people. In Vedic times, as we have seen, it was mainly the
Kshatriyas who brought storms of fresh thought into the atmosphere
of the people's life whenever it showed signs of stagnation; in later
ages, when the Kshatriyas had lost their individuality, the message
of spiritual freedom and unity in man sprang mainly from the ob-
scure strata of the community: the castes that were despised. Though
it has to be admitted that in the medieval age the Brahmin Raman-
anda was the first to give voice to the cry of unity, and consequently
lost his privileges as a Brahmin guru, yet it is still true that most of
our great saints of that time, who took up this cry in their life and
teaching and songs, came from the lower classes: one of them a
Mohammedan weaver, one a cobbler, and several coming from the
ranks of society whose touch would pollute the drinking water of
respectable Hindus. Thus, the living voice of India found its words
even in the darkest days of our decline, proclaiming that he knows
truth who knows the unity of all beings in the spirit.

We cannot see clearly the age in which we now live, yet we feel
that the India of today has aroused herself once more to find her
truth, her harmony, and her oneness, not only among her own peo-
ple, but with the world. The current of her life, which had been
dammed up in stagnation, has found a breach in the wall and can
now feel the waves of humanity outside. We shall learn that we can
reach the world, not through an effacement, but through an expa-
sion of our own individuality. We shall know that just as it is futile
mendicancy to covet the wealth of others, so it means utter destitu-
tion to keep ourselves segregated and starved by refusing a gift which
is the common heritage of man because it is brought to us by a
foreign messenger.

Our western critics, whose own people, whenever confronted by a
close contact with non-western races find no solution to the problem except extermination or expulsion by physical force, and whose caste feeling against darker races is aggressive and contemptuous, are ready to judge us with a sense of superiority when comparing India's history with their own. They do not consider the difficult burden which Indian civilization has taken upon itself from its beginning. India is the one country in the world where the Aryan colonizers had to make constant social adjustments with peoples who vastly outnumbered them, who were physically and mentally alien to their own race, and who were for the most part distinctly inferior to the invaders. Europe, on the other hand, is one in thought; her dress, custom, culture, and with small variations her habits, are one. Yet her inhabitants, although only politically divided, are perpetually making preparations for deadly combats, wherein entire populations indulge in ferocity unparalleled in the history of the barbarian. It is not merely these periodic eruptions that characterize the relationship between the countries of Europe, even after centuries of close contact and intellectual cooperation, but there is also a feeling of mutual suspicion which generates diplomatic deceitfulness and moral obloquy.

India's problem has been far more complex than that of the West, and our rigid system of social regulation has not solved it; to bring order and peace at the cost of life is terribly wasteful, whether in the policy of government or of society. But we can be proud of the fact that for a long series of centuries beset with vicissitudes of stupendous proportions, crowded with things that are incongruous and facts that are irrelevant, India still keeps alive the inner principle of her own civilization against the cyclonic fury of contradictions and the gravitational pull of the dust.

That has been the great function of the Brahmins of this land, to keep the lamp lighted when the storm has been raging on all sides; they endeavored to permeate the mass of obstructive material with some quickening ideal of their own that would transmute it into the life-stuff of a composite civilization. They tried to discover some ultimate meaning in the inarticulate primitive forms struggling for expression, and to give it a voice. In a word, it was the mission of the Brahmin to comprehend by the light of his own mature understanding the undeveloped minds of the people.

It would be wrong for us, when we judge the historical career of
India, to put all the stress upon the accumulated heap that has not yet been assimilated in one consistent cultural body. Our great hope lies in our realization that something positively precious in our achievements still persists in spite of circumstances that are inclement. The best of us still have our aspirations for the supreme goals of life, which is so often mocked by prosperous people who now control the world. We still believe that the world has a deeper meaning than what is apparent, and that therein the human soul finds its ultimate harmony and peace. We still know that only in spiritual wealth does civilization attain its end, not in a prolific production of materials, and not in the competition of intemperate power with power.

It has certainly been unfortunate for us that we have neglected the cult of Anna Brahma, the infinite as manifested in the material world of utility, and we are dearly paying for it. We have for so long set our mind upon realizing the eternal in the intensity of spiritual consciousness, that we have overlooked the importance of realizing the infinite in the world of extension. In this great field of adventure the West has attained a success for which humanity has to be immensely grateful.

Nevertheless, true happiness and peace are awaiting the children of the West in that tapasaya, which is realizing Brahma in spirit, acquiring the inner vision before which the sphere of immortality reveals itself.

I love India, not because I cultivate the idolatry of geography, not because I have had the chance to be born in her soil, but because she has saved through tumultuous ages the living words that have issued from the illuminated consciousness of her great sons: Brahma is truth, Brahma is wisdom, Brahma is infinite; peace is in Brahma, goodness is in Brahma, and the unity of all beings is in Brahma.

We have come to know that what India seeks is not the peace of negation or of some mechanical adjustment, but that which is in goodness, and in the truth of perfect union; that India does not enjoin her children to cease from karma, but to perform karma in the presence of the Eternal, with the knowledge of the spiritual meaning of existence, and that the true prayer of Mother India is:

He who is one, who is above all color distinctions, who dispenses the needs
of men of all colors, who comprehends all things from their beginning to the end, let Him unite us to one another with that wisdom which is the wisdom of goodness.

FROM Greater India

In early life I began reading the so-called history of India, and from day to day a torture was inflicted upon me: cramming the names and dates of the dismal chronicle of India’s repeated defeats and humiliations in her political competition with foreigners from Alexander to Clive. In that historical desert of indignities, we tried desperately to satisfy our hunger for national glorification in the oasis of Rajput Chivalry. Everyone knows with what feverish excitement we tried in those days to use Todd’s Annals of Rajasthan to enrich our Bengali poetry, drama and romance, showing how we had starved in not discovering the true greatness of our country, which was not a mere geographical expression but a continent of human characters and human aspirations. The geography of a country no doubt helps to build bodies, but character develops by the inspiration one derives from the world of human aspirations, and if we know that world to be petty and low then we cannot develop strength to deal with our depressed spirits by merely reading the history of heroic foreign nations. . . .

When a man is hungry he dreams of food. Today, the hunger for political self-assertion is for many reasons the most powerful, and our dreams likewise have taken the form of a political feast. Thus, the voices of higher realities are rejected as irrelevant.

If we follow the course of our modern political self-assertion we touch foreign history at its starting point. In a feverish political urge we had to imagine ourselves to be dream-made Mazzinis, Garibaldis and Washingtons; in our economic life we were caught in the labyrinth of imaginary Bolshevism, Syndicalism or Socialism. These mi-

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rage-like manifestations are not the natural outgrowths of Indian history, but are fantasies born of our recent misfortune and hunger. As the film of this dream-cinema is being unrolled before our eyes, we see the trade-mark "Made in Europe" flashed in the corners, betraying the address of the factory where the film originated.

When we thus ramble over unknown roads after unrealities, we lose our identity in sentimental distractions. Our success, however, can only be achieved through the identification of our own personality. If we could realize that above the sphere of politics and economics there is a world of glory, then we could try to build a real future. But if we lose faith and disdain inner truth, we shall continue, futilely, to build castles in the air.

The real wealth of India was never hidden like an old deed in an iron safe; the only true expression of India was in that which she gave openly and freely. The surplus of her cultural life, which she scattered everywhere, was the core of her personality. Through the capacity to give our assets to others, we earn the right to call the "outsider" our own. Anyone who could discard the bonds of his ego could easily transcend the barriers of external geography. So if we want to know what the true wealth of India consisted of, we should cross oceanic barriers to reach the far-off fields of her self-dedication. From India abroad we may glimpse that eternal grace of India which we often fail to grasp, enveloped as we are by the dust storm of modern history.

When I was in China I found the people there quite different from us; we have little similarity with the Chinese in nose or ears, language or manners. But I felt a kinship with them that I have felt with few of our own people. It was not the result of political power or of conquest; the relationship between China and India was built not through the infliction of suffering, but through the acceptance of sacrifice, and our countries were united through that truth which enables us to feel those who are distant and different to be near and meaningful to us. Foreign political history has not mentioned that truth, and we lack the courage to believe in it, but even today we have the convincing evidence scattered in many places far from India.

In the history of our own middle ages, there was a religious conflict between the Hindus and the conquering Muslims. We also find at that time a succession of saints and devotees—many Muslims were
among that galaxy—who bridged the gulf of religious differences by personal relationships. They were not politicians and could not even dream of accepting as a reality the so-called political union which was based on opportunism. They went where mankind finds its common and unchanging basis of unity, and they accepted, as their motto, that great truth which teaches us to see all as part of ourselves. There were many heroes whose names and faces have been recorded in our histories based on foreign models, and those heroes are now almost lost among the dust heap which summarized their glories. But the deathless messages of those saints and devotees are still running in the life-blood of the Indian people. If we could draw our inspiration from that source, we would see an improvement in our politics and economics and also a strengthening in our general plan of action. Whenever our life is stirred by truth, it expresses energy and comes to be filled, as it were, with a creative ardor. This consciousness of the creative urge is evidence of the force of truth on our mind.

FROM Nationalism

Neither the colorless vagueness of cosmopolitanism, nor the fierce self-idolatry of nation-worship is the goal of human history. And India has been trying to accomplish her task through social regulations of differences, on the one hand, and the spiritual recognition of unity, on the other. She had made grave errors in setting up the boundary walls too rigidly between races, in perpetuating the results of inferiority in her classification; often she has crippled her children's minds and narrowed their lives in order to fit them into her social forms; but for centuries new experiments have been made and adjustments carried out.

Her mission has been like that of a hostess to provide proper accommodation to her numerous guests whose habits and requirements are different from one another. It is giving rise to infinite complexities whose solution depends not merely upon tactfulness but sympathy and true realization of the unity of man. Toward this realization have
worked from the early time of the Upanishads up to the present moment, a series of great spiritual teachers, whose one object has been to set at naught all differences of man by the overflow of our consciousness of God. In fact, our history has not been of the rise and fall of kingdoms, of fights for political supremacy. In our country, records of these days have been despised and forgotten. For they in no way represent the true history of our people. Our history is that of our social life and attainment of spiritual ideals.

But we feel that our task is not yet done. The world-flood swept over our country, new elements have been introduced, and wide adjustments are waiting to be made. . . .

FROM Nationalism in India

India has never had a real sense of nationalism. Even though from childhood I had been taught that idolatry of the nation is almost better than reverence for God and humanity, I believe I have outgrown that teaching, and it is my conviction that my countrymen will truly gain their India by fighting against the education which teaches them that a country is greater than the ideals of humanity. . . .

We must recognize that it is providential that the West has come to India. And yet some one must show the East to the West, and convince the West that the East has her contribution to make to the history of civilization. India is no beggar of the West. And yet even though the West may think she is, I am not for thrusting off Western civilization and becoming segregated in our independence. Let us have a deep association. If providence wants England to be the channel of that communication, of that deeper association, I am willing to accept it with all humility. I have great faith in human nature, and I think the West will find its true mission. I speak bitterly of Western civilization when I am conscious that it is betraying its trust and thwarting its own purpose. The West must not make herself
a curse to the world by using her power for her own selfish needs, but by teaching the ignorant and helping the weak, she should save herself from the worst danger that the strong is liable to incur, by making the feeble acquire power enough to resist her intrusion. And also she must not make her materialism to be the final thing, but must realize that she is doing a service in freeing the spiritual being from the tyranny of matter.

... It was my conviction that what India most needed was constructive work coming from within herself. In this work we must take all risks and go on doing the duties which by right are ours, though in the teeth of persecution; winning moral victory at every step, by our failure and suffering. We must show those who are over us that we have in ourselves the strength of moral power, the power to suffer for truth. Where we have nothing to show, we have only to beg. It would be mischievous if the gifts we wish for were granted to us at once, and I have told my countrymen, time and again, to combine for the work of creating opportunities to give vent to our spirit of self-sacrifice, and not for the purpose ofbegging.

Once again I draw your attention to the difficulties India has had to encounter and her struggle to overcome them. Her problem was the problem of the world in miniature. India is too vast in its area and too diverse in its races. It is many countries packed in one geographical receptacle. It is just the opposite of what Europe truly is, namely, one country made into many. Thus, Europe in its culture and growth has had the advantage of the strength of the many as well as the strength of the one. India, on the contrary, being naturally many, yet adventitiously one, has all along suffered from the looseness of its diversity and the feebleness of its unity. A true unity is like a round globe, it rolls on, carrying its burden easily; but diversity is a many-cornered thing which has to be dragged and pushed with all force. Be it said to the credit of India that this diversity was not her own creation; she has had to accept it as a fact from the beginning of her history.

... In her caste regulations India recognized differences, but not the mutability which is the law of life. In trying to avoid collisions
she set up boundaries of immovable walls, thus giving to her numerous races the negative benefit of peace and order but not the positive opportunity of expansion and movement. She accepted nature where it produces diversity, but ignored it where it uses that diversity for its world-game of infinite permutations and combinations. She treated life in all truth where it is manifold, but insulted it where it is ever moving. Therefore life departed from her social system and in its place she is worshiping with all ceremony the magnificent cage of countless compartments that she has manufactured. . . .

FROM Our Swadeshi Samaj

Our countrymen are mainly villagers, and whenever they have desired to feel in their own veins the throbbing life of the outside world, they have done so through the mela, an invitation from the village for the world to enter its cottage home. On such festive occasions the village forgets its narrowness by means of this hospitable expansion of heart. Just as in the rainy season when the water-courses are filled from the sky, so in mela time the village heart is filled with the spirit of the Universal.

These melas are a natural growth in our country. If you call people to a formal meeting they come with doubt and suspicion, and it takes time for their hearts to open; but those who come to a mela are already in the holiday mood, for they have left plows and hoes and all their cares behind. That is the place and the time to come and sit by the people and talk with them. There is not a district in Bengal where melas are not held at different times in the year. We should make a list of these times and places, and then take the trouble to make the acquaintance of our own people.

If the leaders of the country will abjure empty politics, and make it their business to give new life and objective to these melas, putting their own heart into the work and bringing together the hearts of Hindu and Muslim, and then confer about the real wants of the
people—schools, roads, water reservoirs, grazing commons and the like—then the country will soon awaken.

It is my belief that if a band of workers go from district to district, organizing these Bengal melas, and furnishing them with new compositions by way of jatras, kirtans, recitations, bioscope and lantern shows, gymnastics legerdemain, then the money question will solve itself. In fact, if they undertake to pay the zamindars their usual fees, on being allowed to make the collections, they will stand to make considerable profit, and if this profit be used for national work, it would result in uniting the organizers of the mela with the people, and would enable them to get acquainted with every detail of the country life. The valuable functions they could then perform in connection with national awakening would be too numerous to count.

Religious and literary education has always been imparted in our country in the midst of the joy of festivity. These days, for one reason or another, the zamindars have been drawn to the metropolis, and the festivities at the time of weddings are limited to the dinners and nautches given for their rich town-friends, the poor tenants often being called upon to pay extra impositions for the purpose. Thus, the villages are losing all their joy, and the religious and literary culture, which was a feature of all festivity, and used to be the solace of man, woman and child alike, is getting to be more and more beyond the means of ordinary people. If these organizers can return this current of festivity to the villages, they will reclaim the desert into which the heart of the nation is fast lapsing.

FROM The Way to Get It Done

And yet self-government lies at our very door, waiting for us. No one has tried, nor is it possible for any one even if he does try, to deprive us of it. We can do everything we like for our villages—for their education, their sanitation, and the improvement of their communications—if only we make up our minds to set to work, if only
we can act in unison. For this work we do not need the sanction of a government badge. . . . But what if we cannot make up our minds? What if we will not be united? Then are there ropes and stones enough for us to go and drown ourselves?

I repeat that our education is the thing which we should first of all take into our own hands.

Considering one's own responsibilities as light and others' responsibilities as heavy is not a legitimate moral code. When sitting in judgment on British behavior toward ourselves, it is well to note their human fallibility and the difficulties which they face; but when searching out our own lapses, there must be no excuses or palliations, no lowering of standards on the basis of expediency. The rousing of indignation against the British government may be an easy political method, but it will not lead us to our goal; rather, the cheap pleasure of giving tit for tat, of dealing shrewd blows, will detract from the efficient pursuit of our own path of duty. When a litigant is aroused to a state of frenzy, he thinks nothing of gambling and losing everything. If anger be the basis of our political activities, the excitement tends to become an end in itself, at the expense of the object to be achieved. Side issues then assume an exaggerated importance, and all gravity of thought and action is lost; such excitement is not an exercise of strength, but a display of weakness.
After Tagore's second visit to England, in 1890, he decided to forego the family hopes for his living the life of a gentleman, and dedicated himself to a more creative existence, but because of increasing social responsibilities and continual inward searchings, Tagore recognized his need to help in the process of nation-building. Literary life, in itself, would not suffice for him in an age of crises. While in rural Bengal, where his father had sent him to look after the family estates, and where he had been writing and making occasional public appearances in Calcutta, Tagore turned to education as another creative opportunity, and decided to establish a school of his own.

In a place called Santiniketan, about one hundred miles from Calcutta, his father had already inaugurated a center for retreat and meditation, and when his youngest son, Rabindranath, approached him with the idea of adding a creative educational center, he agreed. Tagore, with his wife and children, and with a few friends and their families, started an experimental school where he hoped to provide children, not only with modern ideas and proper textbooks, but with the inspiration of nature and the fellowship of young growing minds. Tagore was particularly enthusiastic about bringing children into contact with creative artists and thinkers who would provide an incentive for children to express themselves in poetry, music, and other arts.

In addition to the personal contact with, and experience of nature, Tagore's school provided the following opportunities: fellowship in an all-Indian community; relationships with international representatives; co-educational learning; the absence of sectarian or any other barriers.

When World War I erupted, Tagore's main reaction was to expand his original school and make it, as he called it, "The Guest House of
India.” The word “Visva-Bharati,” which was used for this new academic unit of Santiniketan, means “world university,” and its purpose was to provide young and old with the climate of mutual acceptance in a world torn by hatred and suspicion. This international center, with its academic, artistic, and scientific departments, soon acquired a world-wide reputation and attracted scholars from practically every major nation of the East and the West.

Since Tagore’s death, Santiniketan has become one of the major universities of India, receiving its charter from Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, Chancellor of the University. By common agreement, it has been selected as the place where Tagore’s concepts of creative education will be continued.

Santiniketan is discussed in the selection, “My School,” a chapter from Personality (Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1917), which is a collection of lectures Tagore delivered during his coast-to-coast lecture tour of the United States in 1916–1917.

During his China visit of 1924 (April 12–May 29), Tagore gave many talks, some of which were delivered informally and extemporaneously. Leonard Elmhirst, who accompanied him and acted as his private secretary, took notes in longhand at these talks, and later transcribed them for the Chinese press. These transcriptions were published in 1925, with a minimum of editing and revision, as Talks in China (Visva-Bharati), a paperback volume long out of print.

FROM Talks in China

TO STUDENTS

I

When I was very young I gave up learning and ran away from my lessons. That saved me, and I owe all that I possess today to that courageous step. I fled the classes which instructed, but which did not inspire me, and I gained a sensitivity toward life and nature.

It is a great world to which we have been born, and if I had cultivated a callous mind, and smothered this sensitivity under a pile
of books, I would have lost this world. We can ignore what is scattered in the blue sky, in the seasonal flowers, in the delicate relationships of love and sympathy and mutual friendship, only if we have deadened the thrill of touching the reality which is everywhere—in man, in nature, in everything. I kept this sensitiveness.

If mother Nature could do it, she would bless and kiss me, and would say, "You have loved me." I have lived not as a member of a society or group, but as a scamp and a vagabond, free in a world which I have seen face to face. I have experienced the mystery of its being: its heart and soul. You may call me uneducated and uncultured, just a foolish poet; you may become great scholars and philosophers; and yet I think I would still retain the right to laugh at pedantic scholarship.

I know, really, that you do not dislike me because I know less mathematics than you; for you believe that I have attained the secret of existence in some other way—not through analysis, but as a child who enters his mother's chamber. I have kept the child spirit, and have found entrance to my mother's chamber; it was from her that the symphony of awakening light sang to me from the distant horizon, and I sing now in response to it. Because of this I am close to you, the young hearts of a foreign country whom my heart recognizes as fellow voyagers along the path of dreamland.

II

You who are young do not need for the guidance of your conscience the props of ready-made maxims, or the pruning hooks of prohibition, or the doctrines from dead leaves of books. Your soul has a natural yearning for the inspiration of the sunlight and spring, and for everything that secretly helps the seed to sprout and the bud to blossom.

You are here with the gift of young life which, like the morning star, shines with hope for the unborn day of your country's future. I am here to sing the hymn of praise to youth, I who am the poet of youth, your poet.

You know that fairy tale, the eternal story of youth, which is popular in almost all parts of the world. It is about the beautiful princess taken captive by a cruel giant and the young prince who starts out to free her from his dungeon. When we heard that story in our boy-
hood, do you remember how our enthusiasm was stirred, how we felt ourselves setting out as that prince to rescue the princess, overcoming all obstacles and dangers, and at last succeeding in bringing her back to freedom. Today the human soul is lying captive in the dungeon of a Giant Machine, and I ask you, my young princes, to feel this enthusiasm in your hearts and be willing to rescue the human soul from the chains of greed.

We traveled here from Shanghai along your great river, Yang Tse. During the night I often came out to watch the scene on the banks, the sleeping cottages with their solitary lamps, the silence spreading over the hills, dim with mist. When morning broke I found great delight in the fleets of boats coming down the river, their sails high in the air—a picture of perfect grace and freedom. It moved my heart deeply; I felt that my own sail had caught the wind, and was carrying me from my captivity, from the sleeping past, bringing me out into the great world of man.

This age to which we belong, does it not still represent night in the human world, a world sleeping while individual races are shut up within their own limits, calling themselves nations, barricading themselves, as these sleeping cottages were barricaded, with closed doors, bolts and bars, and prohibitions of all kinds? Does not all this represent the dark age of civilization, and have we not begun to realize that it is the robbers who are out and awake? The torches which these men hold high are not the lights of civilization, but only pointings to the path of exploitation.

This age must be described as the darkest age in human civilization, but I do not despair. As the first bird, when the dawn is still dark, proclaims the rising of the sun, so my heart sings the coming of a great future which is near. We must be ready to welcome this new age. There are some people, who are proud and wise and practical, who say that it is not in human nature to be generous, that men will always fight one another, that the strong will conquer the weak, and that there can be no real moral foundation for man's civilization. We cannot deny the facts of their assertion that the strong have power in the human world, but I refuse to accept this as a revelation of truth.

We in the East once tried to muzzle the brute in man and control its ferocity, but today the forces of intellect have overwhelmed our
belief in spiritual and moral strength. Power in animals was at least in harmony with life, but not bombs, poison gases, and murderous airplanes—the weapons supplied by science.

We should know that truth, any truth that man acquires, is for everyone. Money and property belong to individuals, to each of you, but you must never exploit truth for your personal aggrandizement; that would be selling God's blessing for a profit. However, science is also truth; it has its place in the healing of the sick, and in giving more food and leisure for life. When it helps the strong crush the weak, and rob those who are asleep, it is using truth for impious ends. Those who are thus sacrilegious will suffer and be punished, for their own weapons will be turned against them.

The time has come to discover another great power, that which gives us the power of sacrifice, the strength to suffer, not merely to cause suffering. This will help us to defeat brute greed and egotism, as in the prehistoric age when intelligence overcame the power of mere muscle.

Let the morning of this new age dawn in the East, from which great streams of idealism have sprung in the past, making the fields of life fertile with their influence. I appeal to you to make a trial of this moral power through martyrdom. Prove how, through the heroism of suffering and sacrifice, not weak submission, we can demonstrate our wealth and strength. Know that no organization, however large, can help you, no league of prudence or of power, but only individual faith in the infinite, the invisible, the incorruptible, the fearless.

The great human societies are the creation not of profiteers, but of dreamers. The millionaires who produce bales of merchandise in enormous quantities have never yet built a great civilization; it is they who are about to destroy what others have built. Come to the rescue and free the human soul from the dungeon of the machine. Proclaim the spirit of man and prove that it lies not in machine-guns and cleverness, but in a simple faith.

III

My friends, from across the distance of age I gaze at your young faces beaming with intelligence and eager interest. I am approaching
the shore of the sunset-land; you stand over there with the rising sun. My heart reaches out to your hearts and blesses them.

I envy you. When I was a boy, in the dusk of the waning night, we did not fully know to what a great age we had been born; its meaning and message have become clear. I believe there are individuals all over the world who have heard its call.

What a delight it may be for you, and what a responsibility, belonging to a period which is one of the greatest in the whole history of man! We dimly realize the greatness of this age in the light of the pain and suffering that has come upon us, a suffering that is worldwide; we do not even know what form it is going to take.

Now that I am in China, I ask you, I ask myself, what have you got, what out of your own house can you offer in homage to this new age? You must answer this question. Do you know your own mind? Your own culture? What is best and most permanent in your own history? You must know that if you are to save yourselves from the greatest of insults: obscurity and rejection. Bring your light and add it to this great festival of lamps: world culture.

I have heard it said (some among your own people say it) that you are pragmatic and materialistic, that you cling to this life and this world, that you do not send out your dreams to search the heavens for a life beyond.

I cannot, however, bring myself to believe that any nation in this world can be great and yet be materialistic. I have a belief that no people in Asia can be wholly given to materialism. There is something in the blue vault of the sky, in the golden rays of the sun, in the wide expanse of the starlit night, in the procession of the seasons, each bringing its own basket of flowers which somehow gives to us an understanding of the inner music of existence, and I can see that you are not deaf to it.

Materialism is exclusive, and those who are materialistic claim individual rights of possessing and storing. You are not individualists in China; your society is itself the creation of your communal soul. It is not the outcome of a materialistic, of an egoistic mind, a medley of unrestricted competition, which refuses to recognize its obligations to others.

I see that you in China have not developed the prevailing world malady, the meaningless multiplication of millions, and the produc-
tion of those strange creatures called multi-millionaires. I have heard that, unlike others, you do not give great value to the brute power of militarism. All this could not be possible if you were really materialists.

Is it true that you love this world and the material things about you with an intense attachment, but not by enclosing your possessions within exclusive walls? You share your wealth, you make distant relatives your guests, and you are not inordinately rich. This is only possible because you are not materialistic.

I have traveled through your country and I have seen with what immense care you have made the earth fruitful, with what a perfection you have endowed the articles of everyday use. How could this have been possible through a greedy attachment to material things?

If you had acknowledged greed as your patron, then, at a touch, mere utility would have withered all the beauty and grace of your environment. Have you not seen this? In Shanghai, in Tientsin,—huge demons of ugliness that stalk over the world—in New York, London, Calcutta, Singapore and Hongkong, all huge with ugliness? Everything they touch becomes dead, denuded of grace as if God's blessing had been withdrawn. Peking shows no sign of this, but reveals a marvellous beauty of human association. Even the most ordinary shops have a simple decoration; this shows that you have loved your life. Love gives beauty to everything it touches. Not greed and utility; they produce offices, but not dwelling houses.

To be able to love material things, to clothe them with tender grace, and yet not be attached to them, this is a great service. Providence expects that we should make this world our own, and not live in it as though it were a rented tenement. We can only make it our own through some service, and that service is to lend it love and beauty from our soul. Your own experience shows you the difference between the beautiful, the tender, the hospitable, and the mechanically neat and monotonously useful.

Gross utility kills beauty. We now have all over the world huge productions of things, huge organizations, huge administrations of empire—all obstructing the path of life. Civilization is waiting for a great consummation, for an expression of its soul in beauty. This must be your contribution to the world.

What is it that you have done by beautifying things? You have
made, for me who comes from a distant country, even things hospitable by touching them with beauty. Instead of finding them obstacles, I acknowledge them as my own because my soul delights in their beauty. With its piles of things, life in other countries has become like some royal grave of ancient Egypt; these things darkly shout "Keep away." When I find this attractiveness in your every day artifacts they send out their invitation: "Come and accept us."

Are you going to forget the obligations of your great gift, and let this genius for turning everything into beauty go to waste, to kill it by letting in a flood of maleficence?

Deformity has already made its bed in your markets; it is fast encroaching upon your heart and your admiration. Suppose you accept it as your permanent guest, suppose you succeed in doing this violence to yourselves, then in a generation or two you will destroy this great gift. What will remain? What will you offer humanity in return for the privilege to exist? However, it is impossible for me to believe that you have the temperament that will enable you to maintain ugliness.

You may say: "We want progress." Well, you made wonderful progress in your past ages; you devised great inventions that were borrowed and copied by other peoples. You did not lie idle, and yet all that progress never encumbered your life with non-essentials.

Why should there forever remain a gulf between progress and perfection? If you can bridge this gulf with the gift of beauty, you will do a great service to humanity. Your mission is proving that a love for the earth, and for the things of the earth, is possible without materialism, a love without greed. . . .

I am old and tired; this is perhaps my last meeting with you. With all my heart I take this occasion to entreat you not to be turned by the call of vulgar strength, of stupendous size, by the spirit of storage, by the multiplication of millions, without meaning and without end.

Cherish the ideal of perfection, and to that, relate all your work and all your movements. Though you love the material things of earth, they will not hurt you and you will bring heaven to earth and soul into things.
TO TEACHERS

I have been told that you would like to hear about the educational crusade I have undertaken, but it will be difficult for me to give you a distinct idea of my institution of learning, which has grown gradually during the last twenty-four years. My own mind has grown with it, and my own ideal of education has reached its fullness so slowly and so naturally, that I find it difficult to analyze and place it before you.

The first question you may all ask is: what urged me to take up education. Until I was forty or more, I had spent most of my time in literary pursuits. I had never any desire to participate in practical work because I had a conviction that I did not have the gift. Perhaps you know the truth, or shall I make a confession? When I was thirteen I finished going to school. I do not want to boast about it, I merely give it to you as a historical fact.

So long as I was forced to attend school, I felt an unbearable torture. I often counted the years before I would have my freedom. My elder brothers had finished their academic career and were engaged in life, each in his own way. How I envied them when, after a hurried meal in the morning, I found the inevitable carriage that took us to school, ready at the gate. How I wished that, by some magic spell, I could cross the intervening fifteen or twenty years and suddenly become a grown-up man. I afterwards realized that what then weighed on my mind was the unnatural pressure of a system of education which prevailed everywhere.

Children’s minds are sensitive to the influences of the world. Their subconscious minds are active, always imbibing some lesson, and realizing the joy of knowing. This sensitive receptivity helps them, without any strain, to master language, which is the most complex and difficult instrument of expression, full of indefinable ideas and abstract symbols. Through their natural ability to guess they learn the meaning of words which we cannot explain. It may be easy for a child to know what the word “water” means, but how difficult it must be for him to know what idea is associated with the simple word “yesterday.” Yet how easily they overcome such innumerable diffi-
culties because of the extraordinary sensitiveness of their subconscious mind. Because of this their introduction to the world of reality is easy and joyful.

In this critical period, the child's life is subjected to the education factory, lifeless, colorless, dissociated from the context of the universe, within bare white walls staring like eyeballs of the dead. We are born with that God-given gift of taking delight in the world, but such delightful activity is fettered and imprisoned, muted by a force called discipline which kills the sensitiveness of the child mind which is always on the alert, restless and eager to receive first-hand knowledge from mother nature. We sit inert, like dead specimens of some museum, while lessons are pelted at us from on high, like hail stones on flowers.

In childhood we learn our lessons with the aid of both body and mind, with all the senses active and eager. When we are sent to school, the doors of natural information are closed to us; our eyes see the letters, our ears hear the abstract lessons, but our mind misses the perpetual stream of ideas from nature, because the teachers, in their wisdom, think these bring distraction, and have no purpose behind them.

When we accept any discipline for ourselves, we try to avoid everything except that which is necessary for our purpose; it is this purposefulness, which belongs to the adult mind, that we force upon school children. We say, "Never keep your mind alert, attend to what is before you, what has been given you." This tortures the child because it contradicts nature's purpose, and nature, the greatest of all teachers, is thwarted at every step by the human teacher who believes in machine-made lessons rather than life lessons, so that the growth of the child's mind is not only injured, but forcibly spoiled.

Children should be surrounded with the things of nature which have their own educational value. Their minds should be allowed to stumble upon and be surprised at everything that happens in today's life; the new tomorrow will stimulate their attention with new facts of life. What happens in a school is that every day, at the same hour, the same book is brought and poured out for him. His attention is never alerted by random surprises from nature.

Our adult mind is always full of things we have to arrange and deal with, and therefore the things that happen around us, such as
the coming of morning, leave no mark upon us. We do not allow
them to because our minds are already crowded; the stream of lessons
perpetually flowing from the heart of nature does not touch us, we
merely choose those which are useful, rejecting the rest as undesirable
because we want the shortest path to success.

Children have no such distractions. With them every new fact or
event comes to a mind that is always open with an abundant hospi-
tality, and through this exuberant, indiscriminate acceptance, they
learn innumerable facts within an amazingly short time, compared
with our own slowness. These are the most important lessons in life,
and what is still more wonderful is that the greater part of them are
abstract truths.

The child learns so easily because he has a natural gift, but adults,
because they are tyrants, ignore natural gifts and say that children
must learn through the same process that they learned by. We insist
upon forced mental feeding and our lessons become a form of torture.
This is one of man's most cruel and wasteful mistakes.

Because I underwent this process when I was young, and remem-
bered the torture of it, I tried to establish a school where boys might
be free in spite of the school. Knowing something of the natural
school which Nature supplies to all her creatures, I established my
institution in a beautiful spot, far away from town, where the children
had the greatest freedom possible, especially in my not forcing upon
them lessons for which their mind was unfitted. I do not wish to
exaggerate, however, and I must admit that I have not been able to
follow my own plan in every way. Forced as we are to live in a society
which is itself tyrannical, and which cannot always be gainsaid,
I was often obliged to concede to what I did not believe in, but what
the others around me insisted on. Yet I always had it in my mind to
create an atmosphere; I felt this was more important than classroom
teaching.

The atmosphere was there; how could I create it? The birds sang
to the awakening light of the morning, the evening came with its
own silence, and the stars brought the peace of night.

We had the open beauty of the sky, and the seasons in all their
magnificent color. Through this intimacy with nature we took the
opportunity of instituting festivals. I wrote songs to celebrate the
coming of spring and the rainy season which follows the long months
of drought; we had dramatic performances with decorations appropriate to the seasons.

I invited artists from the city to live at the school, and left them free to produce their own work. If the boys and girls felt inclined to watch, I allowed them to do so. The same was true with my own work; I was composing songs and poems, and would often invite the teachers to sing or read with them. This helped to create an atmosphere in which they could imbibe something intangible, but life-giving. . . .

When races come together, as in the present age, it should not be merely the gathering of a crowd; there must be a bond of relation, or they will collide with each other.

Education must enable every child to understand and fulfill this purpose of the age, not defeat it by acquiring the habit of creating divisions and cherishing national prejudices. There are of course natural differences in human races which should be preserved and respected, and the task of our education should be to realize unity in spite of them, to discover truth through the wilderness of their contradictions.

We have tried to do this in Visva-Bharati. Our endeavor has been to include this ideal of unity in all the activities in our institution, some educational, some that comprise different kinds of artistic expression, some in the shape of service to our neighbors by helping the reconstruction of village life.

The children began to serve our neighbors, to help them in various ways and to be in constant touch with the life around them. They also had the freedom to grow, which is the greatest possible gift to a child. We aimed at another kind of freedom; a sympathy with all humanity, free from all racial and national prejudices.

The minds of children are usually shut inside prison houses, so that they become incapable of understanding people who have different languages and customs. This causes us to grope after each other in darkness, to hurt each other in ignorance, to suffer from the worst form of blindness. Religious missionaries themselves have contributed to this evil; in the name of brotherhood and in the arrogance of sectarian pride they have created misunderstanding. They make this permanent in their textbooks, and poison the minds of children.

I have tried to save children from the vicious methods which al-
ienate their minds, and from other prejudices which are fostered through histories, geographies and lessons full of national prejudices. In the East there is a great deal of bitterness against other races, and in our own homes we are often brought up with feelings of hatred. I have tried to save the children from such feelings, with the help of friends from the West, who, with their understanding and their human sympathy and love, have done us a great service.

We are building our institution upon the ideal of the spiritual unity of all races. I want to use the help of all other races, and when I was in Europe I appealed to the great scholars of the West, and was fortunate enough to receive their help. They left their own schools to come to our institution, which is poor in material things, and they helped us develop it.

I have in my mind not merely a University, for that is only one aspect of our Visva-Bharati, but the idea of a great meeting place for individuals from all countries where men who believe in spiritual unity can come in touch with their neighbors. There are such idealists, and when I traveled in the West, even in remote places, many persons without any special reputation wanted to join this work.

It will be a great future, when base passions are no longer stimulated within us, when human races come closer to one another, and when through their meeting new truths are revealed.

There will be a sunrise of truth and love through insignificant people who have suffered martyrdom for humanity, like the great personality who had only a handful of disciples from among the fisherfolk and who at the end of his career seemingly presented a picture of failure at a time when Rome was at the zenith of her glory. He was reviled by those in power, ignored by the crowd, and he was crucified; yet through that symbol he lives forever.

There are martyrs of today who are sent to prison and persecuted, who are not men of power, but who belong to a deathless future.
FROM Personality

MY SCHOOL

... childhood should be given its full measure of life's draught, for which it has an endless thirst. The young mind should be saturated with the idea that it has been born in a human world which is in harmony with the world around it. And this is what our regular type of school ignores with an air of superior wisdom, severe and disdainful. It forcibly snatches away children from a world full of the mystery of God's own handiwork, full of the suggestiveness of personality. It is a mere method of discipline which refuses to take into account the individual. It is a manufactory specially designed for grinding out uniform results. It follows an imaginary straight line of the average in digging its channel of education. But life's line is not the straight line, for it is fond of playing the seesaw with the line of the average, bringing upon its head the rebuke of the school. For according to the school life is perfect when it allows itself to be treated as dead, to be cut into symmetrical conveniences. And this was the cause of my suffering when I was sent to school. For all of a sudden I found my world vanishing from around me, giving place to wooden benches and straight walls staring at me with the blank stare of the blind.

But the legend is that eating of the fruit of knowledge is not consonant with dwelling in paradise. Therefore men's children have to be banished from their paradise into a realm of death, dominated by the decency of a tailoring department. So my mind had to accept the tight-fitting encasement of the school which, being like the shoes of a mandarin woman, pinched and bruised my nature on all sides and at every movement. I was fortunate enough in extricating myself before insensibility set in.

Though I did not have to serve the full penal term which men of my position have to undergo to find their entrance into cultured society, I am glad that I did not altogether escape from its molestation. For it has given me knowledge of the wrong from which the children of men suffer.

The cause of it is this, that man's intention is going against God's
intention as to how children should grow into knowledge. How we should conduct our business is our own affair, and therefore in our offices we are free to create in the measure of our special purposes. But such office arrangement does not suit God's creation. And children are God's own creation.

We have come to this world to accept it, not merely to know it. We may become powerful by knowledge, but we attain fullness by sympathy. The highest education is that which does not merely give us information but makes our life in harmony with all existence. But we find that this education of sympathy is not only systematically ignored in schools, but it is severely repressed. From our very childhood habits are formed and knowledge is imparted in such a manner that our life is weaned away from nature and our mind and the world are set in opposition from the beginning of our days. Thus the greatest of educations for which we came prepared is neglected, and we are made to lose our world to find a bagful of information instead. We rob the child of his earth to teach him geography, of language to teach him grammar. His hunger is for the Epic, but he is supplied with chronicles of facts and dates. He was born in the human world, but is banished into the world of living gramophones, to expiate for the original sin of being born in ignorance. Child-nature protests against such calamity with all its power of suffering, subdued at last into silence by punishment.

We all know children are lovers of the dust; their whole body and mind thirst for sunlight and air as flowers do. They are never in a mood to refuse the constant invitations to establish direct communication coming to their senses from the universe.

But unfortunately for children their parents, in the pursuit of their profession, in conformity to their social traditions, live in their own peculiar world of habits. Much of this cannot be helped. For men have to specialize, driven by circumstances and by need of social uniformity.

But our childhood is the period when we have or ought to have more freedom—freedom from the necessity of specialization into the narrow bounds of social and professional conventionalism. . . .

There are men who think that by the simplicity of living introduced in my school I preach the idealization of poverty which pre-
vailed in the medieval age. The full discussion of this subject is outside the scope of my paper, but seen from the point of view of education, should we not admit that poverty is the school in which man had his first lessons and his best training? Even a millionaire's son has to be born helplessly poor and to begin his lesson of life from the beginning. He has to learn to walk like the poorest of children, though he has means to afford to be without the appendage of legs. Poverty brings us into complete touch with life and the world, for living richly is living mostly by proxy, thus living in a lesser world of reality. This may be good for one's pleasure and pride, but not for one's education. Wealth is a golden cage in which the children of the rich are bred into artificial deadening of their powers. Therefore in my school, much to the disgust of the people of expensive habits, I had to provide for this great teacher—this bareness of furniture and materials—not because it is poverty, but because it leads to personal experience of the world.

... What tortured me in my school days was the fact that the school had not the completeness of the world. It was a special arrangement for giving lessons. It could only be suitable for grown-up people who were conscious of the special need of such places and therefore ready to accept their teaching at the cost of dissociation from life. But children are in love with life, and it is their first love. All its color and movement attract their eager attention. And are we quite sure of our wisdom in stifling this love? Children are not born ascetics, fit to enter at once into the monastic discipline of acquiring knowledge. At first they must gather knowledge through their love of life, and then they will renounce their lives to gain knowledge, and then again they will come back to their fuller lives with ripened wisdom.

But society has made its own arrangements for manipulating men's minds to fit its special patterns. These arrangements are so closely organized that it is difficult to find gaps through which to bring in nature. There is a serial adjustment of penalties which follows to the end one who ventures to take liberty with some part of the arrangements, even to save his soul. Therefore it is one thing to realize truth and another to bring it into practice where the whole current of the prevailing system goes against you. This is why when I had to face
the problem of my own son’s education I was at a loss to give it a practical solution. The first thing that I did was to take him away from the town surroundings into a village and allow him the freedom of primeval nature as far as it is available in modern days. He had a river, noted for its danger, where he swam and rowed without check from the anxiety of his elders. He spent his time in the fields and on the trackless sand banks, coming late for his meals without being questioned. He had none of those luxuries that are not only customary but are held as proper for boys of his circumstance. For which privations, I am sure, he was pitied and his parents blamed by the people for whom society has blotted out the whole world. But I was certain that luxuries are burdens to boys. They are the burdens of other people’s habits, the burdens of the vicarious pride and pleasure which parents enjoy through their children.

Yet, being an individual of limited resources, I could do very little for my son in the way of educating him according to my plan. But he had freedom of movement, he had very few of the screens of wealth and respectability between himself and the world of nature. Thus he had a better opportunity for a real experience of this universe than I ever had. But one thing exercised my mind more than anything else as the most important.

The object of education is to give man the unity of truth. Formerly, when life was simple, all the different elements of man were in complete harmony. But when there came the separation of the intellect from the spiritual and the physical, the school education put entire emphasis on the intellect and on the physical side of man. We devote our sole attention to giving children information, not knowing that by this emphasis we are accentuating a break between the intellectual, the physical and the spiritual life.

I believe in a spiritual world—not as anything separate from this world—but as its innermost truth. With the breath we draw we must always feel this truth, that we are living in God. Born in this great world, full of the mystery of the infinite, we cannot accept our existence as a momentary outburst of chance drifting on the current of matter toward an eternal nowhere. We cannot look upon our lives as dreams of a dreamer who has no awakening in all time. We have a personality to which matter and force are unmeaning unless related to something infinitely personal, whose nature we have discovered, in
some measure, in human love, in the greatness of the good, in the martyrdom of heroic souls, in the ineffable beauty of nature which can never be a mere physical fact nor anything but an expression of personality.

In India we still cherish in our memory the tradition of the forest colonies of great teachers. These places were neither schools nor monasteries, in the modern sense of the word. They consisted of homes where with their families lived men whose object was to see the world in God and to realize their own life in him. Though they lived outside society, yet they were to society what the sun is to the planets, the center from which it received its life and light. And here boys grew up in an intimate vision of eternal life before they were thought fit to enter the state of the householder.

Thus in the ancient India the school was where life itself was. There the students were brought up, not in the academic atmosphere of scholarship and learning, or in the maimed life of monastic seclusion, but in the atmosphere of living aspiration. They took the cattle to pasture, collected firewood, gathered fruit, cultivated kindness to all creatures and grew in their spirit with their own teachers' spiritual growth. This was possible because the primary object of these places was not teaching but giving shelter to those who lived their life in God.

That this traditional relationship of the masters and disciples is not a mere romantic fiction is proved by the relic we still possess of the indigenous system of education which has preserved its independence for centuries to be about to succumb at last to the hand of the foreign bureaucratic control. These charus-pathis, which is the Sanskrit name for the university, have not the savor of the school about them. The students live in their master's home like the children of the house, without having to pay for their board and lodging or tuition. The teacher prosecutes his own study, living a life of simplicity, and helping the students in their lessons as a part of his life and not of his profession.

This ideal of education through sharing a life of high aspiration with one's master took possession of my mind.

All round our ashram is a vast open country, bare up to the line of the horizon except for sparsely growing stunted date palms and
prickly shrubs struggling with ant-hills. Below the level of the field there extend numberless mounds and tiny hillocks of red gravel and pebbles of all shapes and colors, intersected by narrow channels of rainwater. Not far away toward the south near the village can be seen through the intervals of a row of palm trees the gleaming surface of steel blue water, collected in a hollow of the ground. A road used by the village people for their marketing in the town goes meandering through the lonely fields, with its red dust staring in the sun. Travelers coming up this road can see from a distance on the summit of the undulating ground the spire of a temple and the top of a building, indicating the Santiniketan ashram, among its amalaki groves and its avenue of stately sal trees.
ART AND LITERARY CRITICISM

His own paintings and experiments with design made Tagore confront, in an unexpected manner, the meaning and purpose of art. The creative impulse, as he had emphasized in his early essays, was rooted in man's desire to express and enhance the experience of life; man shared the divinity of the universal Creator by shaping the material world, the community, and his own personality according to the implicit laws of being. Art was socially valuable not only because it served the immediate purpose of bringing the spirit of harmony into individual or group existence, but also because it revealed the richness and relational beauty of life itself. In his theory of poetics, expressed in a brilliant series of dialogues, Panchabhuter Diary ("The Diary of Five Elements" written in Bengali in 1897-1898; translated in the Visva-Bharati Quarterly in 1937), he had already interpreted art both as otherness, or transcendence, and as an added intimacy with the nature of daily reality. But toward the end of his life we find him increasingly concerned with art as form, with the genesis and organization of artistic inspiration in terms of wood, paint, stone, or musical structure. Seasoned words, metrical innovations, and conscious artistry gave a new richness and tone to his poems. Art, as he knew through his own creation of "pure form," that is to say of non-representational and yet vivid composition in color or line, was for him man's response to the mystery of design, to the essential form of life. The old battle of ethics and aesthetics could be transcended, as it were, by involvement in the completeness of the art experience.

Mainly, he found in art, even more than in creative science, man's answer to the total reality. An artist responds through reverence, understanding and delight to the invitation of life; no part of his personality is
ignored in a total response. Whether a poet uses modern images, or an ancient myth, or transcripts drawn straight from the city street or a children's toyshop, a crowded market or a lonely terrace with a slanted view of the evening sky or river, he is answering, in Tagore's words, the call of the real. In so doing he has to use his immediate or previous experiences, he is guided by the collective experience of human societies preserved in the form of traditions—and of course, he is inspired by masterpieces of other artists—but his personality as an artist is centrally related to the divine nature of reality. An artist, therefore, is aroused not by knowledge or emotion alone, but by the wholeness of his perception and imagination; the many-sided and contingent factors of experience are unified in the light of a supreme encounter. The spectacle and meaning of life mold the metrical form when an artist surrenders to his revelation and makes it his own.

It will be seen that Tagore's essays draw distinctions between true and meretricious originality, discuss contemporary trends of representational as well as abstract art, and enter into controversies on modernism in poetry. It may be contended that though he himself was a link between many decades of literature, he also favored the literary trends as he knew them in his formative years. But even when he disagreed with modern realism in poetry he sought to understand what he believed was an over-compensation, rather than a fullness of expression, in an era of self-dividedness and doubt. He sought the early Chinese poetry for its subtle clarity and balance, he found amplitude in the simple lyrics of the Elizabethans, and though he had reached a complex brevity in his own highly modernistic painting and had introduced skeletal vers libre forms into his impassioned new poetry, he remained true to his main thesis that art is a largely self-unconscious process, the wealth and overflow of an inner radiance.

In old Sanskrit texts Tagore found an affirmation of his theory that art is abundance, that it comes from a surplus of experience. The art instinct cannot be confined to intellectual purpose, social values, or a moral judgment. Man is born with the capacity to transcend himself and his surroundings; in art he reveals this quality of transcendence. For Tagore this was not a matter of ontological thought but of everyday observation. The color that goes into a child's dress, the flowers arranged in a vase, the music in a festival revealed the surplus that reached beyond man's immediate purpose. It is evident that such an interpretation of art does not rule out the spiritual or religious insight, neither does it exclude the validity of scientific exploration; in fact, Tagore's use of the word "real," as applied to art, demands an integral view of man's creative personality.
In this chapter, selections are included from lectures, articles, and letters. "What Is Art?" is from one of the lectures delivered by Tagore during his United States tour of 1916–1917.

"The Religion of an Artist," a lecture which was first published in the Visva-Bharati Quarterly under the title of "The Meaning of Art," and was also issued as the Dacca University Bulletin XII in 1926. The original address was given by Tagore at Curzon Hall, University of Dacca, February 10, 1926. Before it was incorporated in its present form in Contemporary Indian Philosophy (edited by Sarvatpalli Radhakrishnan, George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., London, 1936), it was considerably revised by Tagore.

"Modern Poetry" (Adhunik Kavya) was written at the request of the Parichay group of progressive writers of Bengal who asked Tagore to publish his ideas on the "modern versus Victorian" controversy which was current in the thirties. It was first published in the May, 1933, issue of Parichay, and later included in the book, Sahityer Pathe, a collection of literary essays published by Visva-Bharati in 1936. The English translation made by Indira Devi was published in the Spring, 1946 issue of the Visva-Bharati Quarterly.

The short selection on Japanese poetry is an excerpt from On the Way to Japan, a collection of letters written during his world tour of 1916.

What Is Art?

I shall not define art, but question myself about the reason for its existence, and try to find out whether it owes its origin to some social purpose, or to the need of catering to our aesthetic enjoyment, or whether it has come out of some impulse of expression which is the impulse of our being itself.

A fight has been going on for a long time around the saying, "Art for Art's sake," which seems to have fallen into disrepute among a section of Western critics. It is a sign of the recurrence of the ascetic ideal of the puritanic age, when enjoyment as an end in itself was held to be sinful. But all puritanism is a reaction. It does not represent truth in its normal aspect. When enjoyment loses its direct touch with life, growing fastidious and fantastic in its world of elaborate
conventions, then comes the call for renunciation which rejects happiness itself as a snare. I am not going into the history of modern art, which I am not at all competent to discuss, yet I can assert, as a general truth, that when a man tries to thwart himself in his desire for delight, converting it merely into his desire to know, or to do good, then the cause must be that his power of feeling delight has lost its natural bloom and healthiness.

The rhetoricians in old India had no hesitation in saying that enjoyment is the soul of literature—the enjoyment which is disinterested. But the word "enjoyment" has to be used with caution. When analyzed, its spectrum shows an endless series of rays of different colors and intensity throughout its different world of stars. The art world contains elements which are distinctly its own and which emit lights that have their special range and property. It is our duty to distinguish and arrive at their origin and growth.

For man, as well as for animals, it is necessary to give expression to feelings of pleasure and displeasure, fear, anger and love. In animals, these emotional expressions have gone little beyond their bounds of usefulness. But in man, though they still have roots in their original purposes, they have spread their branches far and wide in the infinite sky high above their soil. Man has a fund of emotional energy which is not all occupied with his self-preservation. This surplus seeks its outlet in the creation of art, for man’s civilization is built upon his surplus.

It has to be conceded that man cannot help revealing his personality also in the world of use. But there self-expression is not his primary object. In everyday life, when we are mostly moved by our habits, we are economical in our expression, for then our soul-consciousness is at its low level—it has just volume enough to glide on in accustomed grooves. But when our heart is fully awakened in love, or in other great emotions, our personality is in its flood-tide. Then it feels the longing to express itself for the very sake of expression. Then comes art, and we forget the claims of necessity, the thrift of usefulness; the spires of our temples try to kiss the stars and the notes of our music to fathom the depth of the ineffable.

Therefore we find all abstract ideas are out of place in true art, where, in order to gain admission, they must come under the disguise of personification. This is the reason why poetry tries to select words
that have vital qualities—words that are not for mere information, but have become naturalized in our hearts and have not been worn out of their shapes by too constant use in the market. For instance, the English word "consciousness" has not yet outgrown the cocoon stage of its scholastic inertia, therefore it is seldom used in poetry; whereas its Indian synonym "chetana" is a vital word and is of constant poetical use. On the other hand, the English word "feeling" is fluid with life, but its Bengali synonym "amubhuti" is refused in poetry, because it merely has meaning and no flavor. And likewise there are some truths coming from science and philosophy which have acquired life's color and taste, and some which have not. . . .

If you ask me to draw some particular tree—and I am no artist—I try to copy every detail, lest I should otherwise lose the peculiarity if not the personality. But when the true artist comes, he overlooks all details and gets into the essential characterization. He looks on that tree as unique, not as the botanist who generalizes and classifies. It is the function of the artist to particularize that one tree. . . .

In India, the greater part of our literature is religious because God with us is not a distant God. He belongs to our homes as well as to our temples. We feel His nearness to us in all the human relationships of love and affection, and in our festivities. He is the chief guest whom we honor. In seasons of flowers and fruits, in the coming of the rain, in the fullness of the autumn, we see the hem of His mantle and hear His footsteps. We worship Him in all the true objects of our worship and love Him wherever our love is true. In the woman who is good we feel Him, in the man who is true we know Him, in our children He is born again and again, the Eternal Child. Therefore religious songs are our love songs, and our domestic occurrences, such as the birth of a son or the coming of the daughter from her husband's house to her parents and her departure again, are woven in our literature as a drama whose counterpart is in the divine. . . .

So we find that our world of expression does not accurately coincide with the world of facts, because personality surpasses facts on every side. It is conscious of its infinity and creates from its abundance, and because, in art, things are challenged from the standpoint of the immortal Person, those things which are important in our customary life of facts become unreal when placed on the pedestal of art. A newspaper account of domestic incident in the life of a commercial
magnate may create agitation in society, yet would lose all its significance if placed by the side of great works of art. We can well imagine how it would hide its face in shame, if by some cruel accident it found itself in the neighborhood of Keats’s “Ode on a Grecian Urn.”

Yet the very same incident, if treated deeply, divested of its conventional superficiality, might have a better claim in art than the negotiation for raising a big loan for China, or the defeat of British diplomacy in Turkey. A mere household event of a husband’s jealousy of his wife, as depicted in one of Shakespeare’s tragedies, has greater value in the realm of art than the code of caste regulations in Manu’s scripture or the law prohibiting inhabitants of one part of the world from receiving human treatment in another. For when facts are looked upon as mere facts, having their chain of consequences in the world of facts, they are rejected by art. . . .

Everywhere in man’s world the Supreme Person is suffering from the killing of the human reality by the imposition of the abstract. In our schools the idea of the class hides the reality of the school children; they become students and not individuals. Therefore it does not hurt us to see children’s lives crushed in their classes like flowers pressed between book leaves. In government, the bureaucracy deals with generalizations and not with men. And therefore it costs it nothing to indulge in wholesale cruelties. Once we accept as truth such a scientific maxim as “Survival of the Fittest” it immediately transforms the whole world of human personality into a monotonous desert of abstraction, where things become dreadfully simple because robbed of their mystery of life. . . .

FROM “The Religion of an Artist”

II

The renowned Vedic commentator, Sayanacharya, says:

The food offering which is left over after the completion of sacrificial rites is praised because it is symbolical of Brahma, the original source of the universe.
According to this explanation, Brahma is boundless in his superfluity, which inevitably finds its expression in the eternal world process. Here we have the doctrine of the genesis of creation, and therefore of the origin of art. Of all living creatures in the world, man has his vital and mental energy vastly in excess of his need which urges him to work in various lines of creation for its own sake. Like Brahma himself, he takes joy in productions that are unnecessary to him, and therefore representing his extravagance and not his hand-to-mouth penury. The voice that is just enough can speak and cry to the extent needed for everyday use, but that which is abundant sings, and in it we find our joy. Art reveals man's wealth of life, which seeks its freedom in forms of perfection which are an end in themselves.

All that is inert and inanimate is limited to the bare fact of existence. Life is perpetually creative because it contains in itself that surplus which ever overflows the boundaries of the immediate time and space, restlessly pursuing its adventure of expression in the varied forms of self-realization. Our living body has its vital organs that are important in maintaining its efficiency, but this body is not a mere convenient sac for the purpose of holding stomach, heart, lungs and brains; it is an image—its highest value is in the fact that it communicates its personality. It has color, shape and movement, most of which belong to the superfluous, that are needed only for self-expression and not for self-preservation.

This living atmosphere of superfluity in man is dominated by his imagination, as the earth's atmosphere by the light. It helps us to integrate desultory facts in a vision of harmony and then to translate it into our activities for the very joy of its perfection; it invokes in us the Universal Man who is the scer and the doer of all times and countries. The immediate consciousness of reality in its purest form unobscured by the shadow of self-interest, irrespective of moral or utilitarian recommendation, gives us joy as does the self-revealing personality of our own. What in common language we call beauty, which is in harmony of lines, colors, sounds, or in grouping of words or thoughts, delights us only because we cannot help admitting a truth in it that is ultimate. “Love is enough,” the poet has said; it carried its own explanation, the joy of which can only be expressed in a form of art which also has that finality. Love gives evidence to something which is outside us but which intensely exists and thus stimulates the sense of our own existence. It radiantly reveals the
reality of its objects, though these may lack qualities that are valuable or brilliant.

The "I am" in me realizes its own extension, its own infinity whenever it truly realizes something else. Unfortunately, owing to our limitations and a thousand and one preoccupations, a great part of our world, though closely surrounding us, is far away from the lamp-post of our attention; it is dim, it passes by us, a caravan of shadows, like the landscape seen in the night from the window of an illuminated railway compartment; the passenger knows that the outside world exists, that it is important, but for the time being the railway carriage for him is far more significant. If among the innumerable objects in this world there be a few that come under the full illumination of our soul and thus assume reality for us, they constantly cry to our creative mind for a permanent representation. They belong to the same domain as the desire of ours which represents the longing for the permanence of our own self.

I do not mean to say that things to which we are bound by the tie of self-interest have the inspiration of reality; on the contrary, these are eclipsed by the shadow of our own self. The servant is not more real to us than the beloved. The narrow emphasis of utility diverts our attention from the complete man to the merely useful man. The thick label of market price obliterates the ultimate value of reality.

That fact that we exist has its truth in the fact that everything else does exist, and the "I am" in me crosses its finitude whenever it deeply realizes itself in the "Thou art." This crossing of the limit produces joy, the joy that we have in beauty, in love, in greatness. Self-forgetting, and in a higher degree, self-sacrifice, is our acknowledgment of our experience of the infinite. This is the philosophy which explains our joy in all arts, the arts that in their creation intensify the sense of the unity which is the unity of truth we carry within ourselves. The personality in me is a self-conscious principle of a living unity; it at once comprehends and yet transcends all the details of facts that are individually mine, my knowledge, feeling, wish and will, memory, my hope, my love, my activities, and all my belongings. This personality which has the sense of the One in its nature, realizes it in things, thoughts and facts made into units. The principle of unity which it contains is more or less perfectly satisfied.
in a beautiful face or a picture, a poem, a song, a character or a harmony of interrelated ideas or facts and then for it these things become intensely real, and therefore joyful. Its standard of reality, the reality that has its perfect revelation in a perfection of harmony, is hurt when there is a consciousness of discord, because discord is against the fundamental unity which is in its center.

All other facts have come to us through the gradual course of our experience, and our knowledge of them is constantly undergoing contradictory changes through the discovery of new data. We can never be sure that we have come to know the final character of anything that there is. But such a knowledge has come to us immediately with a conviction which needs no arguments to support it. It is this, that all my activities have their sources in this personality of mine, which is indefinable and yet about the truth of which I am more certain than anything in this world. Though all the direct evidence that can be weighed and measured supports the fact that only my fingers are producing marks on the paper, yet no sane man ever can doubt that it is not these mechanical movements that are the true origin of my writings but some entity that can never be known, unless known through sympathy. Thus we have come to realize in our own person the two aspects of activities, one of which is the aspect of law represented in the medium, and the other the aspect of will residing in the personality.

Limitation of the unlimited is personality; God is personal where he creates.

He accepts the limits of his own law and the play goes on, which is this world whose reality is in its relation to the person. Things are distinct not in their essence but in their appearance; in other words, in their relation to one to whom they appear. This is art, the truth of which is not in substance or logic, but in expression. Abstract truth may belong to science and metaphysics, but the world of reality belongs to art.

The world as an art is the play of the Supreme Person reveling in image making. Try to find out the ingredients of the image, they elude you, they never reveal to you the eternal secret of appearance. In your effort to capture life as expressed in living tissue, you will find carbon, nitrogen and many other things utterly unlike life but never life itself. The appearance does not offer any commentary of itself.
through its material. You may call it maya and pretend to disbelieve it, but the great artist mayavin, is not hurt. For art is maya, it has no other explanation but that it seems to be what it is. It never tries to conceal its evasiveness, it mocks even its own definition and plays the game of hide-and-seek through its constant flight in changes.

And thus life, which is an incessant explosion of freedom, finds its meter in a continual falling back in death. Every day is a death, every moment even. If not, there would be an amorphous desert of deathlessness eternally dumb and still. So life is maya, as moralists love to say, it is and is not. All that we find in it is the rhythm through which it shows itself. Are rocks and minerals any better? Has not science shown us one fact, that the ultimate difference between one element and another is only that of rhythm? The fundamental distinction of gold from mercury lies merely in the difference of rhythm in their respective atomic constitutions like the distinction of the king from his subject which is not in their different constituents, but in their different meters of their situations and circumstances. There you find behind the scene the artist, the magician of rhythm, who imparts an appearance of substance to the unsubstantial.

What is rhythm? It is the movement generated and regulated by harmonious restriction. This is the creative force in the hand of the artist. So long as words remain in uncadenced prose form they do not give any lasting feeling of reality. The moment they are taken and put into rhythm they vibrate into a radiance. It is the same with the rose. In the pulp of its petals you may find everything that went to make the rose, but the rose which is maya, an image, is lost; its finality which has the touch of the infinite is gone. The rose appears to me to be still, but because of its meter of composition it has a lyric of movement within that stillness, which is the same as the dynamic quality of a picture that has a perfect harmony. It produces a music in our consciousness by giving it a swing of motion synchronous with its own. Had the picture consisted of a disharmonious aggregate of colors and lines, it would be deadly still.

In perfect rhythm, the art form becomes like the stars which in their seeming stillness are never still, like a motionless flame that is nothing but movement. A great picture is always speaking, but news from a newspaper, even of some tragic happening, is still-born. Some news may be a mere commonplace in the obscurity of a journal, but