





The Splendour of Bharat's Past Be Reborn

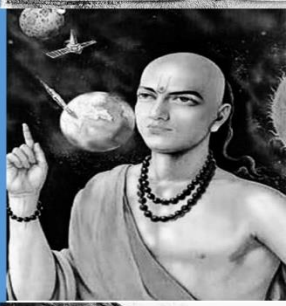
Second Edition

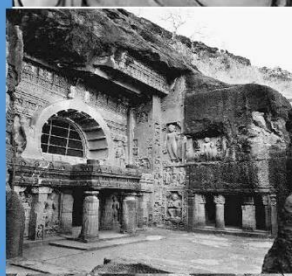
A Compilation from the Works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother

Compiled by Jamshed M Mavalwalla











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Second Edition

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Sri Aurobindo Society
AUROPUBLICATIONS
POWERFUL THOUGHTS, INSPIRING VISION

The Splendour of Bharat's Past Be Reborn

Second Edition

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Earlier e-books released on India are:

1. *India and Her Mission*
2. *The Task of Building India Is Spiritual*

Vijaybhai's Note on Comprehensive Compilation

All over the world, there is a growing interest in spirituality and Yoga. There is a search for the true meaning and purpose of life, for deeper solutions to the problems that confront us all, and for ways in which we can contribute to evolutionary change and progress.

In this search, more and more people are turning to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother for guidance and enlightenment. But in their voluminous writings, they do not know where to find the answers they are looking for.

In this regard the Mother has said,

> "*It is not by books that Sri Aurobindo ought to be studied but by subjects—what he has said on the Divine, on Unity, on religion, on evolution, on education, on self-perfection, on supermind, etc., etc.*"
>
> (CWM 12: 206)

On another occasion She said:

> "*If you want to know what Sri Aurobindo has said on a given subject, you must at least read all he has written on that subject. You will then see that he seems to have said the most contradictory things. But when one has read everything and understood a little, one sees that all the contradictions complement*

one another and are organised and unified in an integral synthesis."

(CWM 16: 309–310)

While several compilations are now available, many sincere spiritual seekers have felt the need for Comprehensive Compilations from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother on specific subjects, in which the contents are further organised into sub-topics, so that one can find everything one is looking for in one place.

This compilation is an effort to fulfil this need and thus help spiritual seekers in their journey and sadhana. We hope that this compilation will help us gain greater mental clarity about a subject so that we can channel our efforts in the right direction. For Sri Aurobindo has written:

"*It is always better to make an effort in the right direction; even if one fails the effort bears some result and is never lost.*"

(CWSA 29: 87)

We will be glad to receive suggestions and feedback from the readers.

Vijay

Preface

Our entire country is celebrating the auspicious occasion of the 150th Birth Anniversary of Sri Aurobindo and the 75th Anniversary of India's Independence on 15 August 2022. This year, we at Sri Aurobindo Ashram and Sri Aurobindo Society present a series of compilations on "India" from the works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

We present the third e-book in the series on India—*The Splendour of Bharat's Past Be Reborn*. Once all the e-books are released, we hope that readers will recognize that the underlying theme of this series is "How India Can Achieve Its Mission". The aim of this series of compilations is to be as comprehensive as possible. All that Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have said about India, as well as all that is directly or indirectly related to India, is included in these compilations.

The quotations in this compilation are from *The Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo* (CWSA); *Collected Works of the Mother*, Second Edition; Shri K. D. Sethna's book *India and the World Scene*; *Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, recorded by Shri A. B. Purani, First Edition; *Talks with Sri Aurobindo* by Shri Nirodbaran; and from Sri Aurobindo's Archives and Research Magazines. A few quotations are also from *Conversations of the Mother with a Sadhak*.

Shri K. D. Sethna (Amal Kiran), Shri A. B. Purani, and Shri Nirodbaran were senior sadhaks who were close to Sri Aurobindo.

In the introduction to the book *India and the World Scene*, Shri K. D. Sethna writes, "Not only were my editorials written under his [Sri Aurobindo's] inner inspiration: they were also sent to him for approval. Only when his 'Yes' was wired to us did we plunge into publication." Thus, these quotations can be taken as representing Sri Aurobindo's opinion.

In the books by Shri Purani and Shri Nirodbaran, Sri Aurobindo, while talking to sadhaks, gave his opinion on many subjects.

After each quotation, the following abbreviations are used to represent the book or source from which it is taken.

CWSA: *The Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo*
CWM: *Collected Works of the Mother*, Second Edition
IWSKDS: *India and the World Scene* by Shri K. D. Sethna, First Edition
ISWFKDS: *The Indian Spirit and the World's Future* by Shri K. D. Sethna
CTMS: *Conversations of the Mother with a Sadhak*
ETABP: *Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo,* recorded by A. B. Purani, First Edition
TWSAN: *Talks with Sri Aurobindo* by Nirodbaran

While the passages from Sri Aurobindo are in the original English, most of the passages from the Mother (selections from her talks and writings) are translations from the original French. We must also bear in mind that the excerpts have been taken out of their original context and that a compilation, by its very nature, is likely to have a personal and subjective approach. A sincere attempt, however, has been made to remain faithful to the vision of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Those who would like to go through the fuller text are advised to refer to the original books.

The section headings and sub-headings have been provided by the compiler to bring clarity to the selected topic.

The idea of taking up this comprehensive compilation on India was suggested to me by Vijaybhai [Sri Vijay Poddar] sometime in 2003. The hard copy of this compilation remained with him for many years. It was in May 2022 that he wrote to me: "I was looking again at your compilation on India. It is extremely comprehensive and very well done. I feel we should go ahead immediately to publish it as an e-book on our website." The quotations compiled in 2003 were drawn from the *Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library* SABCL editions. With the devoted assistance of a few proofreaders, we have carefully revised and brought each of these quotations into conformity with

The Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo CWSA editions, thus enabling us to bring forth this series of e-books.

I aspire, like the flame of a lamp or a candle, to the Divine, praying that the process of India's achievement of her mission may be hastened.

Compiler: Jamshed M. Mavalwalla

Why a Compilation on "India" from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother?

Why should we learn about India from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother? Sri Aurobindo was born in India, and the Mother was born in France. Their lives, however, were not confined by the boundaries of nationality. For both of them, India represented something far greater than a geographical territory or a political entity. India had a deeper significance—a spiritual destiny, a mission, and a role to play in the evolution of humanity.

It is with this understanding that this compilation of quotations on "India" from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother has been prepared.

Sri Aurobindo writes:

> "I am impelled to this labour by the necessity of turning the mind of young India to our true riches, our real source of power, purification and hope for the future and of safeguarding it in the course of its search both from false lights and from the raucous challenges and confident discouragements cast at us by the frail modern spirit of denial. I write, not for the orthodox, nor for those who have discovered a new orthodoxy, Samaj or Panth, nor for the unbeliever; I write for those who acknowledge reason but do not identify reason with Western

materialism; who are sceptics but not unbelievers; who, admitting the claims of modern thought, still believe in India, her mission and her gospel, her immortal life and her eternal rebirth." (CWSA 12: 62–63)

These words point towards the purpose of this compilation. It is an attempt to bring together Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's writings on India so that the younger generation may encounter their vision of India—her true riches, her mission, her spiritual heritage, and her future.

But a question may arise: Why should we learn about India from Sri Aurobindo? Part of the answer lies in a letter Sri Aurobindo wrote to his wife, Mrinalini Devi:

> "I know I have the strength to deliver this fallen race. It is not physical strength,—I am not going to fight with sword or gun,—but the strength of knowledge. The power of the Kshatriya is not the only one; there is also the power of the Brahmin, the power that is founded on knowledge. This feeling is not new in me, it is not of today. I was born with it, it is in my very marrow. God sent me to earth to accomplish this great mission. The seed began to sprout when I was fourteen; by the time I was eighteen the roots of the resolution had grown firm and unshakable." August

30, 1905. (Letter written by Sri Aurobindo to his wife Mrinalini)

These words reveal that his concern for India was not merely political or intellectual. It was deeply rooted in his consciousness and in what he regarded as a great mission entrusted to him.

But Sri Aurobindo was not alone in this vision. The Mother, his collaborator in the spiritual work, gives another dimension to the same question:

> "What must be done to pull the country out of its difficulty? Sri Aurobindo has foreseen all the troubles and he has given the solution. Just now we are approaching his Centenary; [1972] … this would be a wonderful occasion to spread his teaching all over the country: ... his teaching about India, how to organise India, the mission of India. ...
>
> About all that has happened and all that is happening now, he has said clearly that to go back to it is useless. We must give the country its true position, that is, the position of relying on the Divine. Naturally, this is at the other end of what people try to believe now. But Sri Aurobindo explains it in such a way that even those who are against it can agree. You understand? He has found a way of saying it which can be understood by everybody. That's the

only solution, as far as I can see; it is the only solution. All the rest will mean complication, contradiction and fighting.

... And this is above politics, you see. ... It is to organise the country beyond politics. And it is the only way. In politics it is always fight and ugly fight—ugly. And it has become so bad. He was telling me always that things would become worse and worse, because it is the *end* of this age. We are entering into an age where things must be organized differently. It is a difficult time because of that.

Because we know what will come, we can help to make it come sooner and with less turmoil. There is no hope in going backwards; it would make things last endlessly. We must go forward, absolutely, and go beyond, beyond party. And nobody can explain that better than Sri Aurobindo, because he was so much, *so* much beyond party; he saw the advantages and disadvantages of all parties and he stated them exactly.

If you read carefully what he has written—so much—you will find the answer to all these questions. And at the same time you will know that you will have the full support of the Divine Power. The Power that was behind him is behind this transformation. It is time for transformation. We can't cling to the past.

The best way to go beyond politics is to spread the message of Sri Aurobindo. Because he is no more a political element wanting to take power; there are only his ideas and ideals. And, of course, if people could understand and realise his programme, the country could be very strong, very strong." (CWM 15: 405–406)

This compilation also contains quotations from the Mother's *Collected Works of the Mother*. Although the Mother was born in France, she always felt that India was her true country, the country of her soul and spirit. She declared herself Indian by choice and predilection.

"I want to mark this day by the expression of a long cherished wish; that of becoming an Indian citizen. From the first time I came to India—in 1914—I felt that India is my true country, the country of my soul and spirit. I had decided to realise this wish as soon as India would be free. But I had to wait still longer because of my heavy responsibilities for the Ashram here in Pondicherry. Now the time has come when I can declare myself.

But, in accordance with Sri Aurobindo's ideal, my purpose is to show that truth lies in union rather than in division. To reject one nationality in order to obtain another is not an ideal solution. So I hope I

shall be allowed to adopt a double nationality, that is to say, to remain French while I become an Indian.

I am French by birth and early education, I am Indian by choice and predilection. In my consciousness there is no antagonism between the two, on the contrary, they combine very well and complete one another. I know also that I can be of service to both equally, for my only aim in life is to give a concrete form to Sri Aurobindo's great teaching and in his teaching he reveals that all the nations are essentially one and meant to express the Divine Unity upon earth through an organised and harmonious diversity." *15 August 1954* (CWM 13: 43)

The reason for the Mother's deep connection with India becomes clearer in another of her statements:

"It is true that this body was born in Paris and that its soul has declared that it is Indian, but I belong to no nation in particular." (CWM 13: 44)

She further explains why she chose France as the country of her birth:

"It is France that can connect Europe with India. There are great spiritual possibilities for France. She will play a big part in spite of her present bad

condition. It is through France that the spiritual message will reach Europe. That is why I chose France for my birth, although I am not French." (CWM 13: 379–380)

These words suggest that, for the Mother, nationality was never an end in itself. India and France could each have their own role, while both could participate in a larger movement towards human unity.

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, therefore, cannot be understood merely in the narrow sense of being Indian. Their work extended far beyond the boundaries of one country. Their aim was the upliftment of humanity and the movement of the earth towards a higher stage of evolution. Their love for India was intense because they saw in her a special role in the future of humanity.

The Mother says,

"Sri Aurobindo always loved deeply his Motherland. But he wished her to be great, noble, pure and worthy of her big mission in the world. He refused to let her sink to the sordid and vulgar level of blind self-interests and ignorant prejudices. This is why, in full conformity to his will, we lift high the standard of truth, progress and transformation of mankind, without caring for those who, through ignorance, stupidity, envy or bad will, seek to soil it and drag it

down into the mud. We carry it very high so that all who have a soul may see it and gather round it." (CWM 13: 123)

The quotations of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother are several decades old. A natural question therefore arises: How can words spoken so long ago remain relevant to India today?

When a Yogi or a realised person speaks, even on worldly matters, there will be Truth [Capital Truth] in what he says. This Truth will help one much more than what one would arrive at through one's own thinking. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother had the highest spiritual realisations. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother spoke from a vast spiritual vision. Their writings on India were not confined to the problems of a particular decade or generation. Their concern was with the deeper destiny of India and with her place in the evolution of humanity. This is why their words invite us to look beyond the immediate difficulties of the present moment.

Their vision and guidance can only lift India out of the present challenges she faces and help her achieve her mission. If one reads about the mission that India has to achieve and considers the present-day condition of our country, then one will realise that Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's quotations are as valid today as they were at that

time. On reading these compilations, one will feel that they are relevant to today's conditions.

On reading these compilations, one may discover that the words of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother do not belong only to the past. They can become a living subject of reflection for the present and the future.

There is, however, one caution that needs to be kept in mind while reading the quotations of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother: one need not become dogmatic about them. One really needs to live in the spirit behind these quotations.

It is not enough to know what Sri Aurobindo and the Mother said about India. The greater question is whether we can discover the spirit behind their words and allow that spirit to awaken something within us.

India, in their vision, is not merely a country with a glorious past. She is a country with a future to fulfil. And if that future is indeed a part of humanity's larger evolution, then these words are not merely words about India. They are an invitation—to remember, to understand, to aspire, and to participate.

Jamshed M. Mavalwalla

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Section One: Past Greatness Is a Promise of the Future

I—Bharat's Past Be Reborn with the Help of Her Living Soul

1.

(*Message for the Society for the Spiritual and Cultural Renaissance of Bharat*)

"Let the splendour of Bharat's past be reborn in the realisation of her imminent future with the help and blessings of her living soul." *23 August 1951* (CWM 13: 352)

2.

"The present is only a last deposit of the past at a time of ebb; it has no doubt also to be the starting-point of the future, but in this present all that was in India's past is still dormant, it is not destroyed; it is waiting there to assume new forms. The decline was the ebb-movement of a creative spirit which can only be understood by seeing it in the full tide of its greatness; the renascence is the return of the tide and it is the same spirit that is likely to animate it, although the forms it takes may be quite new. To judge therefore the possibilities of the renascence, the powers that it may reveal and the scope that it may take, we must dismiss the idea that the tendency of metaphysical abstraction is the one note of the Indian spirit which dominates or inspires all its cadences. Its real key-note is

the tendency of spiritual realisation, not cast at all into any white monotone, but many-faceted, many-coloured, as supple in its adaptability as it is intense in its highest pitches. The note of spirituality is dominant, initial, constant, always recurrent; it is the support of all the rest. The first age of India's greatness was a spiritual age when she sought passionately for the truth of existence through the intuitive mind and through an inner experience and interpretation both of the psychic and the physical existence. The stamp put on her by that beginning she has never lost, but rather always enriched it with fresh spiritual experience and discovery at each step of the national life. Even in her hour of decline it was the one thing she could never lose." (CWSA 20: 12-13)

3.

"The instinct of divinity we must never lose hold on: without it we shall be false to our whole historical development and to the power that has made us great in the past and led to our survival while all other ancient civilisations have died. It shows us our 'swabhava', our real fountainhead of action. If we deny our 'swabhava' we shall miss our goal." (IWSKDS: 4)

II—The Greatness of the Past Is a Promise of Greater Ideals of the Future

1.

"The greatness of the ideals of the past is a promise of greater ideals for the future. A continual expansion of what stood behind past endeavour and capacity is the one abiding justification of a living culture." (CWSA 20: 85)

2.

"This great and ancient nation was once the fountain of human light, the apex of human civilisation, the examplar of courage and humanity, the perfection of good government and settled society, the mother of all religions, the teacher of all wisdom and philosophy. It has suffered much at the hands of inferior civilisations and more savage peoples; it has gone down into the shadow of night and tasted often of the bitterness of death. Its pride has been trampled into the dust and its glory has departed. ... We are still God's chosen people and all our calamities have been but a discipline of suffering, because for the great mission before us prosperity was not sufficient, adversity had also its training; to taste the glory of power and beneficence and joy was not sufficient, the knowledge of weakness and torture and humiliation was also needed; it was not enough that we should be able to fill the role of the merciful sage and the beneficent king, we had also to

experience in our own persons the feelings of the outcaste and the slave. But now that lesson is learned, and the time for our resurgence is come." (CWSA 7: 707–708)

3.

"India cannot perish, our race cannot become extinct, because among all the divisions of mankind it is to India that is reserved the highest and the most splendid destiny, the most essential to the future of the human race. It is *she* who must send forth from herself the future religion of the entire world, the Eternal religion which is to harmonise all religion, science and philosophies and make mankind one soul. ...

It was to initiate this great work, the greatest and most wonderful work ever given to a race, that Bhagawan Ramkrishna came and Vivekananda preached." (CWSA 7: 84)

4.

"The traditions of the past are very great in their own place, in the past, but I do not see why we should merely repeat them and not go farther. In the spiritual development of the consciousness upon earth the great past ought to be followed by a greater future." (CTMS: January 14, 1932)

5.

"The spirit and ideals of our civilisation need no defence, for in their best parts and in their essence they were of eternal value. India's internal and individual seeking of them was earnest, powerful, effective. But the application in the collective life of society was subjected to serious reserves. Never sufficiently bold and thoroughgoing, it became more and more limited and halting when the life-force declined in her peoples. This defect, this gulf between ideal and collective practice, has pursued all human living and was not peculiar to India; but the dissonance became especially marked with the lapse of time and it put at last on our society a growing stamp of weakness and failure. There was a large effort in the beginning at some kind of synthesis between the inner ideal and the outer life; but a static regulation of society was its latter end. An underlying principle of spiritual idealism, an elusive unity and fixed helpful forms of mutuality remained always there, but also an increasing element of strict bondage and minute division and fissiparous complexity in the social mass. The great Vedantic ideals of freedom, unity and the godhead in man were left to the inner spiritual effort of individuals. The power of expansion and assimilation diminished and when powerful and aggressive forces broke in from outside, Islam, Europe, the later Hindu society was content with an imprisoned and static self-preservation, a mere permission to live. The form of living became more and

more narrow and it endured a continually restricted assertion of its ancient spirit. Duration, survival was achieved, but not in the end a really secure and vital duration, not a great, robust and victorious survival.

And now survival itself has become impossible without expansion. If we are to live at all, we must resume India's great interrupted endeavour; we must take up boldly and execute thoroughly in the individual and in the society, in the spiritual and in the mundane life, in philosophy and religion, in art and literature, in thought, in political and economic and social formulation the full and unlimited sense of her highest spirit and knowledge. And if we do that, we shall find that the best of what comes to us draped in occidental forms, is already implied in our own ancient wisdom and has there a greater spirit behind it, a profounder truth and self-knowledge and the capacity of a will to nobler and more ideal formations. Only we need to work out thoroughly in life what we have always known in the spirit. There and nowhere else lies the secret of the needed harmony between the essential meaning of our past culture and the environmental requirements of our future." (CWSA 20: 91-92)

III—We Are in No Way Inferior to Our Forefathers

1.

"While admitting the stains and defects which long subjection has induced upon our native capacity and energy, we are conscious of that capacity and energy reviving in us. We point to the unexampled national vigour which has preserved the people of this country through centuries of calamity and defeat, to the great actions of our fore fathers continued even to the other day, to the many men of intellect and character such as no other nation in a subject condition has been able to produce, and we say that a people capable of such unheard-of vitality is not one which can be put down as a nation of children and incapables. We are in no way inferior to our forefathers. We have brains, we have courage, we have an infinite and various national capacity. All we need is a field and an opportunity. That field and opportunity can only be provided by a national government, a free society and a great Indian culture." (CWSA 8: 152)

Section Two: Greatness of Ancient India

I—Greatness of Earlier Indian Civilisation

1.

"We can reply on the cultural issue from the view-point of the past and the valuation of different cultures as acquired contributions to the growth of the human race, that Indian civilisation has been the form and expression of a culture as great as any of the historic civilisations of mankind, great in religion, great in philosophy, great in science, great in thought of many kinds, great in literature, art and poetry, great in the organisation of society and politics, great in craft and trade and commerce. There have been dark spots, positive imperfections, heavy shortcomings; what civilisation has been perfect, which has not had its deep stains and cruel abysses? There have been considerable lacunae, many blind alleys, much uncultured or ill-cultured ground: what civilisation has been without its unfilled parts, its negative aspects? But our ancient civilisation can survive the severest comparisons of either ancient or mediaeval times. More high-reaching, subtle, many-sided, curious and profound than the Greek, more noble and humane than the Roman, more large and spiritual than the old Egyptian, more vast and original than any other Asiatic civilisation, more intellectual than the European prior to the eighteenth century, possessing all that these had and more, it was the most powerful,

selfpossessed, stimulating and wide in influence of all past human cultures." (CWSA 20: 79)

II—India's Ancient Wisdom Lies in Direct Concrete Experience of the Eternal, the Infinite, the Divine

1.

"We never stop to ask: What is meant by India's ancient wisdom? Surely the most pointed answer is: the Upanishads and the Gita. There are various interpretations of these scriptures, but no interpretation can have any value if it denies that these scriptures put before us a life of direct concrete experience of the Eternal, the Infinite, the Divine. This experience must be distinguished from the merely moral frame of mind. One can be a great mystic, a great Yogi, as well as a highly moral person. But to be a practitioner of a moral life—however that may be conceived—does not necessarily make one a great mystic, a great Yogi. To be a knower of Brahman, Atman, Ishwara and let that supra-intellectual knowledge issue in a life lived in the light of a more-than-human consciousness is something far greater than to be a moralist following certain set principles of conduct by means of will-power and fellow-feeling. The moral life in itself can be a fine thing, but it cannot be compared in greatness to the mystical life—the life of a Krishna, a Chaitanya, a Mirabai, a Ramakrishna, a Vivekananda. Nor can we deny that it is

the mystical life, the Yogic spirituality, that is the aim and ideal of the Upanishads and the Gita, the vibrant luminous essence of India's ancient wisdom." (IWSKDS: 13)

III—India's Spiritual and Philosophical Achievements Stand as the Himalayas Stand upon the Earth

1.

"In what field indeed has not India attempted, achieved, created, and in all on a large scale and yet with much attention to completeness of detail? Of her spiritual and philosophic achievement there can be no real question. They stand there as the Himalayas stand upon the earth in the phrase of Kalidasa, pṛthivyā iva mānadaṇḍaḥ, 'as if earth's measuring rod,' mediating still between earth and heaven, measuring the finite, casting their plummet far into the infinite, plunging their extremities into the upper and lower seas of the superconscient and the subliminal, the spiritual and the natural being." (CWSA 20: 244)

IV—Great Saints and Religious Personalities in India Present the Roll-Call of Greatness

1.

"A nation tends to throw out its most vivid types in that line of action which is most congenial to its temperament

and expressive of its leading idea, and it is the great saints and religious personalities that stand at the head in India and present the most striking and continuous roll-call of greatness, just as Rome lived most in her warriors and statesmen and rulers. The Rishi in ancient India was the outstanding figure with the hero just behind, while in later times the most striking feature is the long uninterrupted chain from Buddha and Mahavira to Ramanuja, Chaitanya, Nanak, Ramdas and Tukaram and beyond them to Ramakrishna and Vivekananda and Dayananda." (CWSA 20: 246)

2.

"You will often hear it said that it was the forms of Hinduism which have given us so much national vitality. I think rather it was its spirit. I am inclined to give more credit for the secular miracle of our national survival to Shankara, Ramanuja, Nanak & Kabir, Guru Govind, Chaitanya, Ramdas & Tukaram." (CWSA 12: 38)

V—The Teachings of the Rishis Conceived a Golden Age in Which the Realisation Would Be Terrestrial

1.

"If we go back to the teaching of the Rishis, for example, there was no idea of flight out of the world; for them the realisation had to be terrestrial. They conceived a Golden

Age very well, in which the realisation would be terrestrial. But starting from a certain decline of vitality in the spiritual life of the country, perhaps, from a different orientation which came in, you see... it is certainly starting from the teaching of the Buddha that this idea of flight came, which has undermined the vitality of the country, because one had to make an effort to cut oneself off from life." (CWM 7: 289-290)

VI—Greatness in Science

1.

"It is not an insignificant symptom that, considering how recent and meagre is scientific education in India, we should be able to show at least some names [Jagdish Chandra Bose] that are familiar to European scientists, not to speak of others enjoying a deserved reputation among ourselves. Small as these things may seem, that are yet enough to overthrow the theory of constitutional incapacity." (CWSA 1: 698)

VII—India Was Ranked First in Mathematics, Astronomy, Chemistry, Medicine, Surgery and All the Branches of Physical Knowledge

1.

"… the plain truth is that no nation before the modern epoch carried scientific research so far and with such signal

success as India of ancient times. That is a truth which lies on the face of history for all to read; it has been brought forward with great force and much wealth of detail by Indian scholars and scientists of high eminence, but it was already known and acknowledged by European savants who had taken the trouble to make a comparative study in the subject. Not only was India in the first rank in mathematics, astronomy, chemistry, medicine, surgery, all the branches of physical knowledge which were practised in ancient times, but she was, along with the Greeks, the teacher of the Arabs from whom Europe recovered the lost habit of scientific enquiry and got the basis from which modern science started. In many directions India had the priority of discovery,—to take only two striking examples among a multitude, the decimal notation in mathematics or the perception that the earth is a moving body in astronomy,—*calā pṛthvī sthirā bhāti,* the earth moves and only appears to be still, said the Indian astronomer many centuries before Galileo. This great development would hardly have been possible in a nation whose thinkers and men of learning were led by its metaphysical tendencies to turn away from the study of nature. A remarkable feature of the Indian mind was a close attention to the things of life, a disposition to observe minutely its salient facts, to systematise and to found in each department of it a science, Shastra, well-founded scheme and rule. That is at least a good beginning of the scientific tendency and not

the sign of a culture capable only of unsubstantial metaphysics." (CWSA 20: 123–124)

2.

"But if her philosophies, her religious disciplines, her long list of great spiritual personalities, think
ers, founders, saints are her greatest glory, as was natural to her temperament and governing idea, they are by no means her sole glories, nor are the others dwarfed by their eminence. It is now proved that in science she went farther than any country before the modern era, and even Europe owes the beginning of her physical science to India as much as to Greece, although not directly but through the medium of the Arabs. And, even if she had only gone as far, that would have been sufficient proof of a strong intellectual life in an ancient culture. Especially in mathematics, astronomy and chemistry, the chief elements of ancient science, she discovered and formulated much and well and anticipated by force of reasoning or experiment some of the scientific ideas and discoveries which Europe first arrived at much later, but was able to base more firmly by her new and completer method. She was well-equipped in surgery and her system of medicine survives to this day and has still its value, though it declined intermediately in knowledge and is only now recovering its vitality." (CWSA 20: 244)

3.

"Sri Aurobindo: Medicine, mathematical notations and astrology all went from India to Arabia, and from there they travelled to Greece. The three humours of which Hippocrates and Galen speak are an Indian idea.

Disciple: At Calcutta and other places they are trying to start Ayurvedic schools. I think it is good. It will be a combination of Eastern and Western systems, especially of Western anatomy and surgery.

Sri Aurobindo: Why! Anatomy and surgery were known to Indians. There were many surgical instruments in India. For an ancient system like the Ayurveda I doubt if the modern method of teaching would do. Modern methods make the whole subject too mental, too intellectual, while the ancient systems were more intuitional. These subjects used to be handed down from Guru to disciple. The same is true of Yoga. One can't think of schools and colleges and studies of Yoga. That would be an American idea. The centre of Yoga teaching in America has been holding classes and giving lectures and courses.

Disciple: Perhaps Hatha Yoga can be taught that way.

Sri Aurobindo: Even that would be only the external part." (ETABP: 209–210)

VIII—Extended Continuous Vigour of Creation in Literature and Poetry in Many Indian Languages

1.

"In literature, in the life of the mind, she lived and built greatly. Not only has she the Vedas, Upanishads and Gita, not to speak of less supreme but still powerful or beautiful work in that field, unequalled monuments of religious and philosophic poetry, a kind in which Europe has never been able to do anything much of any great value, but that vast national structure, the Mahabharata, gathering into its cycle the poetic literature and expressing so completely the life of a long formative age, that it is said of it in a popular saying which has the justice if also the exaggeration of a too apt epigram, 'What is not in this Bharata, is not in Bharatavarsha (India),' and the Ramayana, the greatest and most remarkable poem of its kind, that most sublime and beautiful epic of ethical idealism and a heroic semi-divine human life, and the marvellous richness, fullness and colour of the poetry and romance of highly cultured thought, sensuous enjoyment, imagination, action and adventure which makes up the romantic literature of her classical epoch. Nor did this long continuous vigour of creation cease with the loss of vitality by the Sanskrit tongue, but was paralleled and carried on in a mass of great or of beautiful work in her other languages, in Pali first and Prakrit, much unfortunately lost, and Tamil,

afterwards in Hindi, Bengali, Marathi and other tongues." (CWSA 20: 245)

IX—Creative Activity in Architecture, Sculpture and Painting

1.

"The long tradition of her architecture, sculpture and painting speaks for itself, even in what survives after all the ruin of stormy centuries: whatever judgment may be formed of it by the narrower school of Western aesthetics,—and at least its fineness of execution and workmanship cannot be denied, nor the power with which it renders the Indian mind,—it testifies at least to a continuous creative activity. And creation is proof of life and great creation of greatness of life." (CWSA 20: 245)

2.

"Indian architecture especially demands this kind of inner study and this spiritual self-identification with its deepest meaning and will not otherwise reveal itself to us. The secular buildings of ancient India, her palaces and places of assembly and civic edifices have not outlived the ravage of time; what remains to us is mostly something of the great mountain and cave temples, something too of the temples of her ancient cities of the plains, and for the rest we have the fanes and shrines of her later times, whether situated in temple cities and places of pilgrimage like

Srirangam and Rameshwaram or in her great once regal towns like Madura, when the temple was the centre of life. It is then the most hieratic side of a hieratic art that remains to us. These sacred buildings are the signs, the architectural self-expression of an ancient spiritual and religious culture." (CWSA 20: 272)

X—Great Rulers, Administrators, Soldiers, Conquerors, Heroes and Men with Strong Active Will

1.

"India has not only had the long roll of her great saints, sages, thinkers, religious founders, poets, creators, scientists, scholars, legists; she has had her great rulers, administrators, soldiers, conquerors, heroes, men with the strong active will, the mind that plans and the seeing force that builds. She has warred and ruled, traded and colonised and spread her civilisation, built polities and organised communities and societies, done all that makes the outward activity of great peoples." (CWSA 20: 246)

2.

"But there have been also the remarkable achievements of statesmen and rulers, from the first dawn of ascertainable history which comes in with the striking figures of Chandragupta, Chanakya, Asoka, the Gupta emperors and

goes down through the multitude of famous Hindu and Mahomedan figures of the middle age to quite modern times. In ancient India there was the life of republics, oligarchies, democracies, small kingdoms of which no detail of history now survives, afterwards the long effort at empire-building, the colonisation of Ceylon and the Archipelago, the vivid struggles that attended the rise and decline of the Pathan and Mogul dynasties, the Hindu struggle for survival in the south, the wonderful record of Rajput heroism and the great upheaval of national life in Maharashtra penetrating to the lowest strata of society, the remarkable episode of the Sikh Khalsa. An adequate picture of that outward life still remains to be given; once given it would be the end of many fictions. All this mass of action was not accomplished by men without mind and will and vital force, by pale shadows of humanity in whom the vigorous manhood had been crushed out under the burden of a gloomy and all-effacing asceticism, nor does it look like the sign of a metaphysically minded people of dreamers averse to life and action. It was not men of straw or lifeless and will-less dummies or thin-blooded dreamers who thus acted, planned, conquered, built great systems of administration, founded kingdoms and empires, figured as great patrons of poetry and art and architecture or, later, resisted heroically imperial power and fought for the freedom of clan or people. Nor was it a nation devoid of life which maintained its existence and culture and still

lived on and broke out constantly into new revivals under the ever increasing stress of continuously adverse circumstances. The modern Indian revival, religious, cultural, political, called now sometimes a renaissance, which so troubles and grieves the minds of her critics, is only a repetition under altered circumstances, in an adapted form, in a greater though as yet less vivid mass of movement, of a phenomenon which has constantly repeated itself throughout a millennium of Indian history." (CWSA 20: 246–247)

XI—Greatness in Braveness

1.

"But it is not only in Religion that we are great. We had amongst us brave soldiers like Shivaji, Hyderali, Mahadji Scindia and Ranjit Singh. Can we not again claim to have had an important share in the establishment of that mighty structure—the Indian Empire— … on the foundations of Indian patience, Indian blood and Indian capital?" (CWSA 1: 697–698)

XII—With Supreme Spiritual Elevation, Ancient India Did Not Neglect Life

1.

"On this first firm and noble basis Indian civilisation grew to its maturity and became a thing rich, splendid and

unique. While it filled the view with the last mountain prospect of a supreme spiritual elevation, it did not neglect the life of the levels. It lived between the busy life of the city and village, the freedom and seclusion of the forest and the last overarching illimitable ether. Moving firmly between life and death it saw beyond both and cut out a hundred high-roads to immortality. It developed the external nature and drew it into the inner self; it enriched life to raise it into the spirit. Thus founded, thus trained, the ancient Indian race grew to astonishing heights of culture and civilisation; it lived with a noble, well-based, ample and vigorous order and freedom; it developed a great literature, sciences, arts, crafts, industries; it rose to the highest possible ideals and no mean practice of knowledge and culture, of arduous greatness and heroism, of kindness, philanthropy and human sympathy and oneness; it laid the inspired basis of wonderful spiritual philosophies; it examined the secrets of external nature and discovered and lived the boundless and miraculous truths of the inner being; it fathomed self and understood and possessed the world." (CWSA 20: 176)

XIII—India, Once the Richest Country in the World

1.

"The contrast is indicative of the immense gulf between the teeming wealth of America and the miserable indigence

of India, once the richest country in the world. America is the land above all lands where enjoyment, bhoga, is frankly recognised and accepted. India, many would say, is the land above all lands where bhoga is sternly refused. That is the common view; we are not inclined to think it the correct view. The asceticism of India is a phase, a characteristic of a civilisation dominated by an unfavourable environment and driven in upon itself. The classical period when India was full of life, activity, development, abounding vigour, defending herself successfully against the impact of the outer barbarian, was a period of frank and lavish enjoyment far more intellectual, artistic, perfect than anything Europe has ever been capable of, even at its best. In yet older literature we find the true spirit of India, a splendid capacity for bhoga and tyaga in their highest terms, the utter enjoyment of the householder, the utter renunciation of the sannyasin. To take the utmost joy of life, to be capable of the utmost renunciation of life, at one and the same time, in the same mind and body, to be master of both capacities and bound by neither,—this was the secret of India, the mighty discipline of which Janaka was the traditional exemplar. 'Renounce all that thou mayest enjoy all,'—this is India's characteristic message,—not Buddha's absolute renunciation, not the European's enslavement to his bodily, vital and intellectual desires and appetites. Tyaga within,

bhoga without,—Ananda, the divine delight of the purified soul, embracing both." (CWSA 8: 449–450)

XIV—Great Commercial People

1.

"Our early history is scanty and in many respects, uncertain, but no uncertainty, no scantiness can do away with the fact that this was once a great commercial people. We see a very wealthy nation with organised guilds of artisans, a flourishing inland commerce, a large export and import trade. We hear of busy and flourishing ports through which the manufactures of India flowed out to Europe, to Arabia and Persia and from which in those early times, we sent out our delicate cotton textures, our chintz and muslin, our silk cloth and silk thread, a fine quality of steel; indigo, sugar, spices and drugs; diamonds, ivory and gold. In return we received brass, tin and lead, coral, glass antimony; woollen cloth and wines from Italy, and also specie and bullion." (CWSA 1: 698–699)

2.

"All through the Middle Ages, our manufactures and industries were at a very high level. Every traveller attests the existence of large and flourishing towns (a sure index of industrial prosperity) and praises the skill and ingenuity of our workmen. It was on the Eastern trade that Venice

built her greatness, for then we were indeed the 'Gorgeous East'. Notice, that it is especially in the manufactures which required delicate work, originally of design, or instinctive taste that our products were famous; our carving, our inlaid work and our gossamer cloth.

Coming now to the earlier part of the last century, what do we find? The carrying trade had passed from the Arabs to the East India Company and with it, too, the control of nearly all our exports, especially those in indigo, iron and steel, and the newly imported industries in tobacco, tea and coffee. But there was still a large body of trade in Indian hands; even then our manufactures held their own and were far superior to those of Europe; even then there were thousands of skilled artisans; and we supplied our own wants and exported enormous quantities of goods to other countries." (CWSA 1: 699)

XV—*Dhanvantari*, the Father of Ayurveda, Came to Know the Medicinal Properties of Plants by Intuition

1.

"Disciple: There was a time when barbers occupied a respectable place in medicine.

Sri Aurobindo: Why, during the middle ages, it seems, most of the surgeons were barbers. (*After a pause*) I understand

there are Kavirajas, physicians, who can, by examining the pulse, state the physical condition and the disease of the patient.

Disciple: No one has seen these claims demonstrated. I have heard of some remarkable *Nāḍi*, pulse, specialists who can even say what the patient had eaten a few days ago. (*Laughter*) Can we accept these claims?

Sri Aurobindo: Why not? How do you know they are not correct? Many sciences are built up by experience and intuition. They are handed down by tradition; for example, the Chinese method of treatment by finding and pricking the nerve-centres.

Disciple: It is said of Dhanvantari, the father of Ayurveda, that he came to know the medicinal properties of plants by intuition. He would, it seems, stand before a plant and question the plant and it would reveal its properties to him.

Sri Aurobindo (*smiling*): He was the physician of the Gods and so nothing is unnatural for him. (*Laughter*)

(*After a pause*) Ayurveda is the first system of medicine; it originated in India." (ETABP: 209)

Section Three: Why Was Ancient India Great?

I—The Spirit Was High, Noble and Strenuous

1.

"The spirit of ancient India was aristocratic; its thought and life moulded in the cast of high and proud nobility, an extreme and lofty strenuousness. The very best in thought, the very best in action, the very best in character, the very best in literature and art, the very best in religion and all the world well lost if only the very best might be attained, such was the spirit of ancient India. The Brahmin who devoted himself to poverty and crushed down every desire in the wholehearted pursuit of knowledge and religious self-discipline; the Kshatriya who, hurling his life joyously into the shock of chivalrous battle, held life, wife, children, possessions, ease, happiness as mere dust in the balance compared with honor and the Kshatriya *dharma*, the preservation of self-respect, the protection of the weak, the noble fulfillment of princely duty; the Vaishya, who toiling all his life to amass riches, poured them out as soon as amassed in self-forgetting philanthropy, holding himself the mere steward and not the possessor of his wealth; the Shudra who gave himself up loyally to humble service, faithfully devoting his life to his *dharma*, however low, in preference to self-advancement and ambition; these were the social ideals of the age.

The imagination of the Indian tended as has been well said to the grand and enormous in thought and

morals. The great formative images of legend and literature to the likeness with which his childhood was encouraged to develop and which his manhood most cherished were of an extreme and lofty type. He saw Harichandra give up all that life held precious and dear rather than that his lips should utter a lie or his plighted word be broken. He saw Prahlada buried under mountains, whelmed in the seas, tortured by the poison of a thousand venomous serpents, yet calmly true to his faith. He saw Buddha give up his royal state, wealth, luxury, wife, child and parent so that mankind might be saved. He saw Shivi hew the falcon, Karna tear his own body with a smile for the joy of making a gift, Duryodhan refuse to yield one inch of earth without noble resistance and warlike struggle. He saw Sita face exile, hardship, privation and danger in the eagerness of wifely love and duty, Savitri rescue by her devotion her husband back from the visible grip of death. These were the classical Indian types. These were the ideals into the mould of which minds of men and women were trained to grow. The sense-conquering thought of the philosopher, the magnificent achievements of the hero, the stupendous renunciations of the Sannyasin, the unbounded liberality of the man of wealth, everything was exaggeration, extreme, filled with an epic inspiration, a world-defying enthusiasm. The bourgeois had no real chance of evolution, though he existed in the rough of course, as in all civilized societies he must exit: on such a

height with so rare an atmosphere, he could not grow: where such tempests of self devotion blew habitually, his warm comfortable personality could not expand." (CWSA 7: 1095–1096)

2.

"The British rule had no call for and would not indeed tolerate the statesman and the soldier; the qualities of fearless courage, robust manhood, splendid daring, large initiative, great aspiration, comprehensive foresight, the princely spirit, the eagle mood, the lion's heart which, whatever else might fail and perish, remained always alive in India since first the Aryan set foot on Indian soil thousands of years ago were no longer needed; they were suppressed as a danger to the new state of things or died a natural death for sheer want of light, room and air**.** And if there was no room at all for the Kshatriya, there was hardly any for the man of pure learning, the sage, the Sannyasin." (Sri Aurobindo Archives and Research: Vol.2, No.1; Pg 8)

II—Stupendous Vitality

1.

"… spirituality itself does not flourish on earth in the void, even as our mountaintops do not rise like those of an enchantment of dream out of the clouds without a base.

Section Three: Why Was Ancient India Great?

When we look at the past of India, what strikes us next is her stupendous vitality, her inexhaustible power of life and joy of life, her almost unimaginably prolific creativeness. For three thousand years at least,—it is indeed much longer,—she has been creating abundantly and incessantly, lavishly, with an inexhaustible many-sidedness, republics and kingdoms and empires, philosophies and cosmogonies and sciences and creeds and arts and poems and all kinds of monuments, palaces and temples and public works, communities and societies and religious orders, laws and codes and rituals, physical sciences, psychic sciences, systems of Yoga, systems of politics and administration, arts spiritual, arts worldly, trades, industries, fine crafts,—the list is endless and in each item there is almost a plethora of activity. She creates and creates and is not satisfied and is not tired; she will not have an end of it, seems hardly to need a space for rest, a time for inertia and lying fallow. She expands too outside her borders; her ships cross the ocean and the fine superfluity of her wealth brims over to Judaea and Egypt and Rome; her colonies spread her arts and epics and creeds in the Archipelago; her traces are found in the sands of Mesopotamia; her religions conquer China and Japan and spread westward as far as Palestine and Alexandria, and the figures of the Upanishads and the sayings of the Buddhists are reechoed on the lips of Christ. Everywhere,

as on her soil, so in her works there is the teeming of a superabundant energy of life." (CWSA 20: 7–8)

2.

"The asceticism of India is a phase, a characteristic of a civilization dominated by an unfavorable environment and driven in upon itself. The classical period when India was full of life, activity, development, abounding vigour, defending herself successfully against the impact of the outer barbarian, was a period of frank and lavish enjoyment far more intellectual, artistic, perfect than any thing Europe has ever been capable of, even at its best. In yet older literature we find the true spirit of India, a splendid capacity for Bhoga and Tyaga in their highest terms, the utter enjoyment of the householder, the utter renunciation of the Sannyasin. To take the utmost joy of life, to be capable of the utmost renunciation of life, at one and the same time, in the same mind and body, to be master of both capacities and bound by neither,—this was the secret of India, the mighty discipline of which Janaka was the traditional exemplar. 'Renounce all that thou mayest enjoy all',—this is India's characteristic message,—not Buddha's absolute renunciation, not the European's enslavement to his bodily, vital and intellectual desires and appetites. Tyaga within, Bhoga without,—Ananda, the divine delight of the purified soul, embracing both." (CWSA 8: 449–450)

III—Strong Intellectuality

1.

"For the third power of the ancient Indian spirit was a strong intellectuality, at once austere and rich, robust and minute, powerful and delicate, massive in principle and curious in detail. Its chief impulse was that of order and arrangement, but an order founded upon a seeking for the inner law and truth of things and having in view always the possibility of conscientious practice. India has been preeminently the land of the Dharma and the Shastra. She searched for the inner truth and law of each human or cosmic activity, its dharma; that found, she laboured to cast into elaborate form and detailed law of arrangement its application in fact and rule of life. Her first period was luminous with the discovery of the Spirit; her second completed the discovery of the Dharma; her third elaborated into detail the first simpler formulation of the Shastra; but none was exclusive, the three elements are always present.

In this third period the curious elaboration of all life into a science and an art assumes extraordinary proportions. The mere mass of the intellectual production during the period from Asoka well into the Mahomedan epoch is something truly prodigious, as can be seen at once if one studies the account which recent scholarship gives of it, and we must remember that that scholarship as yet

only deals with a fraction of what is still lying extant and what is extant is only a small percentage of what was once written and known. There is no historical parallel for such an intellectual labour and activity before the invention of printing and the facilities of modern science; yet all that mass of research and production and curiosity of detail was accomplished without these facilities and with no better record than the memory and for an aid the perishable palm-leaf. Nor was all this colossal literature confined to philosophy and theology, religion and Yoga, logic and rhetoric and grammar and linguistics, poetry and drama, medicine and astronomy and the sciences; it embraced all life, politics and society, all the arts from painting to dancing, all the sixty-four accomplishments, everything then known that could be useful to life or interesting to the mind, even, for instance, to such practical side minutiae as the breeding and training of horses and elephants, each of which had its Shastra and its art, its apparatus of technical terms, its copious literature. In each subject from the largest and most momentous to the smallest and most trivial there was expended the same all-embracing, opulent, minute and thorough intellectuality. On one side there is an insatiable curiosity, the desire of life to know itself in every detail, on the other a spirit of organisation and scrupulous order, the desire of the mind to tread through life with a harmonised knowledge and in the right rhythm and measure. Thus an ingrained and dominant

spirituality, an inexhaustible vital creativeness and gust of life and, mediating between them, a powerful, penetrating and scrupulous intelligence combined of the rational, ethical and aesthetic mind each at a high intensity of action, created the harmony of the ancient Indian culture.

Indeed without this opulent vitality and opulent intellectuality India could never have done so much as she did with her spiritual tendencies. It is a great error to suppose that spirituality flourishes best in an impoverished soil with the life half-killed and the intellect discouraged and intimidated. The spirituality that so flourishes is something morbid, hectic and exposed to perilous reactions. It is when the race has lived most richly and thought most profoundly that spirituality finds its heights and its depths and its constant and many-sided fruition. In modern Europe it is after a long explosion of vital force and a stupendous activity of the intellect that spirituality has begun really to emerge and with some promise of being not, as it once was, the sorrowful physician of the malady of life, but the beginning of a large and profound clarity." (CWSA 20: 8-10)

2.

"The first age of India's greatness was a spiritual age when she sought passionately for the truth of existence through the intuitive mind and through an inner experience and interpretation both of the psychic and the physical

existence. The stamp put on her by that beginning she has never lost, but rather always enriched it with fresh spiritual experience and discovery at each step of the national life. Even in her hour of decline it was the one thing she could never lose.

But this spiritual tendency does not shoot upward only to the abstract, the hidden and the intangible; it casts its rays downward and outward to embrace the multiplicities of thought and the richness of life. Therefore the second long epoch of India's greatness was an age of the intellect, the ethical sense, the dynamic will in action enlightened to formulate and govern life in the lustre of spiritual truth. After the age of the Spirit, the age of the Dharma; after the Veda and Upanishads, the heroic centuries of action and social formation, typal construction and thought and philosophy, when the outward forms of Indian life and culture were fixed in their large lines and even their later developments were being determined in the seed. The great classical age of Sanskrit culture was the flowering of this intellectuality into curiosity of detail in the refinements of scholarship, science, art, literature, politics, sociology, mundane life. We see at this time too the sounding not only of aesthetic, but of emotional and sensuous, even of vital and sensual experience. But the old spirituality reigned behind all this mental and all this vital activity, and its later period, the post-classical, saw a lifting up of the whole lower life and an impressing upon it of the

values of the spirit. This was the sense of the Puranic and Tantric systems and the religions of Bhakti. Later Vaishnavism, the last fine flower of the Indian spirit, was in its essence the taking up of the aesthetic, emotional and sensuous being into the service of the spiritual. It completed the curve of the cycle." (CWSA 20: 13)

3.

"The ancient civilisation of India founded itself very expressly upon four human interests; first, desire and enjoyment, next, material, economic and other aims and needs of the mind and body, thirdly, ethical conduct and the right law of individual and social life, and, lastly spiritual liberation; *kama, artha, dharma, moksa*. The business of culture and social organisation was to lead, to satisfy, to support these things in man and to build some harmony of their forms and motives. Except in very rare cases the satisfaction of the three mundane objects must run before the other; fullness of life must precede the surpassing of life. The debt to the family, the community and the gods could not be scamped; earth must have her due and the relative its play, even if beyond it there was the glory of heaven or the peace of Absolute. There was no preaching of a general rush to the cave and the hermitage." (CWSA 20: 125-126)

IV—Images of Legends Which Ancient Indian Childhood Was Encouraged to Develop Were of an Extreme and Lofty Type

1.

"The imagination of the Indian tended as has been well said to the grand & enormous in thought and morals. The great formative images of legend & literature to the likeness with which his childhood was encouraged to develop & which his manhood most cherished were of an extreme & lofty type. He saw Harischundra give up all that life held precious & dear rather than that his lips should utter a lie or his plighted word be broken. He saw Prahlada buried under mountains, whelmed in the seas, tortured by the poison of a thousand venomous serpents, yet calmly true to his faith. He saw Buddha give up his royal state, wealth, luxury, wife, child & parents so that mankind might be saved. He saw Shivi hew the flesh from his own limbs to save one small dove from the pursuing falcon; Karna tear his own body with a smile for the joy of making a gift; Duryodhan refuse to yield one inch of earth without noble resistance & warlike struggle. He saw Sita face exile, hardship, privation & danger in the eagerness of wifely love & duty, Savitri rescue by her devotion her husband back from the visible grip of death. These were the classical Indian types. These were the ideals into the mould of which the minds of men & women were trained to grow.

The sense-conquering thought of the philosopher, the magnificent achievements of the hero, the stupendous renunciations of the Sannyasin, [the] unbounded liberality of the man of wealth, everything was exaggeration, extreme, filled with an epic inspiration, a world-defying enthusiasm." (CWSA 7: 1096–1097)

V—The Vedas and the Upanishads Are the Soul Which Subsequently Created Great Philosophies

1.

"And we see how the soul of India was born and how arose this great birth-song in which it soared from its earth into the supreme empyrean of the spirit. The Vedas and the Upanishads are not only the sufficient fountain-head of Indian philosophy and religion, but of all Indian art, poetry and literature. It was the soul, the temperament, the ideal mind formed and expressed in them which later carved out the great philosophies, built the structure of the Dharma, recorded its heroic youth in the Mahabharata and Ramayana, intellectualised indefatigably in the classical times of the ripeness of its manhood, threw out so many original intuitions in science, created so rich a glow of aesthetic and vital and sensuous experience, renewed its spiritual and psychic experience in Tantra and Purana, flung itself into grandeur and beauty of line and colour, hewed and cast its thought and vision in stone and bronze,

poured itself into new channels of self-expression in the later tongues and now after eclipse reemerges always the same in difference and ready for a new life and a new creation." (CWSA 20: 341)

2.

"Mother, you said that the Vedic age was like a promise. A promise to whom?

To the Earth and men.

They left a kind of oral document of their experience. It was transmitted—and this was the promise.

They used an imaged language. Some people say that it was because they wanted it to be an initiation which would be understood only by the initiates. But it could also be an absolutely spontaneous expression without a precise aim to veil things, but which could not be understood except by those who had the experience. For it is quite obviously something that is not mental, which came spontaneously—as though it sprang from the heart and the aspiration—which was the completely spontaneous expression of an experience or knowledge, and naturally, an expression which was poetic, which had its own rhythm, its own beauty and could be accessible only to those who had an identical experience. …

…

… Well when read with an ordinary consciousness, they seem sometimes even altogether banal. But if one has the experience, one sees that there is a power of realisation and a truth of expression which give you the key to the experience itself. ” (CWM 7: 354–355)

3.

“The people and the civilisation that count among their great works [of Indian Literature] and their great names the Veda and the Upanishads, the mighty structures of the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, Kalidasa and Bhavabhuti and Bhartrihari and Jayadeva and the other rich creations of classical Indian drama and poetry and romance, the Dhammapada and the Jatakas, the Panchatantra, Tulsidas, Vidyapati and Chandidas and Ramprasad, Ramdas and Tukaram, Tiruvalluvar and Kamban and the songs of Nanak and Kabir and Mirabai and the southern Shaiva saints and the Alwars,—to name only the best-known writers and most characteristic productions, though there is a very large body of other work in the different tongues of both the first and the second excellence,—must surely be counted among the greatest civilisations and the world's most developed and creative peoples. A mental activity so great and of so fine a quality commencing more than three thousand years ago and still not exhausted is unique and the best and most undeniable witness to something

extraordinarily sound and vital in the culture." (CWSA 20: 315)

Section Four: Realise That We Are Great and Glorious

I—Consciousness of Greatness Has To Be Re-awakened

1.

"There are many people who admit the superiority of Eastern civilisation, who recognise its humanitarian and socialistic aspect, who are not blind to its predominating feature of spirituality, who admire the absence of a militant Materialism in it, who praise the way in which it has balanced the interest of the different classes in the society, who are conscious how much attention it gives to the highest needs of humanity. But still patriotism is not a living and moving impulse with them. … For Eastern civilsation though it is not dead, though it is a living force, is yet submerged force, and that not because it has no intrinsic merit but because it has been transmitted to a class of people devoid of a love for things their own. It seems as if they have no past to guide, instruct or inspire them. They are beginning, as it were, with a clean slate …

… We must first realise that we are great and glorious, that we are proud and noble, and it is through voluntary prostration that we are being stamped into the dust. No material ideal of riches and prosperity has ever made a nation. But when the sense of honour has been touched, when the consciousness of greatness has been re-awakened, then and then only have the scattered units of a fallen nation clustered round one mighty moral force." (CWSA 7: 511–512)

II—India Has the Undisputed Right to Extend Spiritual Sway Over the World

1.

"… physical expansion proceeds from a desire for spiritual expansion and history also supports the assertion. But why should not India then be the first power in the world? Who else has the undisputed right to extend spiritual sway over the world? This was Swami Vivekananda's plan of campaign. India can once more be made conscious of her greatness by an overmastering sense of the greatness of her spirituality. This sense of greatness is the main feeder of all patriotism. This only can put an end to all self-depreciation and generate a burning desire to recover the lost ground." (CWSA 7: 511–513)

III—Parsis, Enterprising and Industrially Capable Can Be Leaders in Industry and Philanthropy

1.

"And if we consider classes rather than individuals, can it be denied that the Parsis are an enterprising and industrially capable race? Or can it be doubted that the community which could produce a leader in industry and philanthropy like Mr. Tata, will, as circumstances improve, take a leading place in the commercial world?" (CWSA 1: 698)

IV—Bhatias, Khojas and the Merchants of Sindh Have Enterprise and Commercial Capacity

1.

"Or can enterprise and commercial capacity be denied to classes like the Bhatias, Khojas and the merchants of Sindh? When we have individuals and classes like these in our midst, we may well enquire why it is that we stand so poorly in industry and commerce, without fearing that the answer, however ungratifying to our feelings, will lead us to despair." (CWSA 1: 698)

V—In the Decline, There Were New Gains

1.

"Even in the decline all was not loss; there were needed developments, there were spiritual and other gains of the greatest importance for the future. If the high spiritualised mind and stupendous force of spiritual will, *tapasya*, that characterised ancient India were less in evidence, there were new gains of spiritual emotion and sensitiveness to spiritual impulse on the lower planes of consciousness, that had been lacking before. Architecture, literature, painting, sculpture lost the grandeur, power, nobility of old, but evoked other powers and motives full of delicacy, vividness and grace. There was a descent from the heights to the lower levels, but a descent that gathered riches on its way

and was needed for the fullness of spiritual discovery and experience. And in the worst period of decline and failure the spirit was not dead in India, but only torpid, concealed and shackled; now emerging in answer to a pressure of constant awakening shocks for a strong self-liberation it finds that its sleep was a preparation of new potentialities behind the veil of that slumber. The decline of our past culture may even be regarded as a needed waning and dying of old forms to make way not only for a new, but, if we will that it should be so, a greater and more perfect creation." (CWSA 20: 84–85)

VI—Nothing Can Prevent Us from Evolving

1.

"There is a theory which affects to regard the races inhabiting the tropical and subtropical regions of the earth as disinherited by some mysterious law of Nature from all hope of originality, enterprise and leadership. These things belong to the temperate regions; the tropics are to be for ever no more than the field for the energies of the superior races, to whom alone belong empire, civilisation, trade and manufacture. …

Yet even if we accept this picture of ourselves without the necessary modifications, we need not accept this interpretation of inherent inferiority. For my part I demur to any such hasty generalisation; yet however much

of it be true be sure that there is no law of Nature which can prevent you from changing it. To suppose that any nation can be shut out from the operation of the law of Evolution is utterly unscientific, and, in the light of history, absurd.

Granted that originality among us is low, that enterprise is deficient, and that leadership has passed out of our hands; is there in the first place no qualification to the entire truth of the assertion? And in the second, is this state of things due to immutable causes and therefore of old existence, or is it the result of recent and removable tendencies? It is true that such originality and power as we still possess has hitherto busied itself mostly in other paths than those of industry and the sciences which help industry. It has worked chiefly on the lines of Religion and Philosophy which have always been the characteristic bent of the national mind, continuing through Rammohan Ray, Dayanand Saraswati and Keshavchandra Sen, the long and unbroken line of great religious teachers from Gautama to Chaitanya and Kabir. It is true that teachings of fatalism and inactive detachment have depressed the vitality of the people. Yet there is no reason to believe that this depression and this limitation are not removable and are constitutional." (CWSA 1: 696–697)

Section Five: All That Is Ancient Is Not Great

I—Not to Recreate Manu and Unintelligent Customs

1.

"One is astonished at the position of the orthodox. They labour to deify everything that exists. Hindu society has certain arrangements and habits which are merely customary. There is no proof that they existed in ancient times nor any reason why they should last into the future. It has other arrangements and habits for which textual authority can be quoted, but it is oftener the text of the modern Smritikaras than of Parasara and Manu. Our authority for them goes back to the last five hundred years. I do not understand the logic which argues that because a thing has lasted for five hundred years it must be perpetuated through the aeons. Neither antiquity nor modernity can be the test of truth or the test of usefulness. All the Rishis do not belong to the past; the Avatars still come; revelation still continues.

Some claim that we must at any rate adhere to Manu and the Puranas, whether because they are sacred or because they are national. Well, but, if they are sacred, you must keep to the whole and not cherish isolated texts while disregarding the body of your authority. You cannot pick and choose; you cannot say 'This is sacred and I will keep to it, that is less sacred and I will leave it alone.' When you so treat your sacred authority, you are proving that to you it has no sacredness. You are juggling with truth; for

you are pretending to consult Manu when you are really consulting your own opinions, preferences or interests. To recreate Manu entire in modern society is to ask Ganges to flow back to the Himalayas. Manu is no doubt national, but so is the animal sacrifice and the burnt offering. Because a thing is national of the past, it need not follow that it must be national of the future. It is stupid not to recognise altered conditions.

We have similar apologies for the unintelligent preservation of mere customs; but, various as are the lines of defence, I do not know any that is imperiously conclusive. Custom is *shishtachar*, decorum, that which all well-bred and respectable people observe. But so were the customs of the far past that have been discontinued and, if now revived, would be severely discountenanced and, in many cases, penalised; so too are the customs of the future that are now being resisted or discouraged,—even, I am prepared to believe, the future no less than the past prepares for us new modes of living which in the present would not escape the censure of the law. It is the *achar* that makes the *shishta*, not the *shishta* who makes the *achar*. The *achar* is made by the rebel, the innovator, the man who is regarded in his own time as eccentric, disreputable or immoral, as was Sri Krishna by Bhurisrava because he upset the old ways and the old standards. Custom may be better defended as ancestral and therefore cherishable. But if our ancestors had persistently held that

view, our so cherished customs would never have come into being. Or, more rationally, custom must be preserved because its long utility in the past argues a sovereign virtue for the preservation of society. But to all things there is a date and a limit. All long-continued customs have been sovereignly useful in their time, even totemism and polyandry. We must not ignore the usefulness of the past, but we seek in preference a present and a future utility." (CWSA 12: 50-51)

II—India's Fundamental Error about the Meaning of Life

1.

"Must we not abandon the world, if we would possess God? forsake Maya if we would become one in the Atman? … We know the answer of Shankara, the answer of the later Adwaitin, the Mayavadin; and the answer of most religious minds in India since Buddhism conquered our intellects has not been substantially different. To flee the world & seek God, sums up their attitude. There have been notable exceptions, but the general trend hardly varies. The majority of the pre-Buddhistic Hindus answered the question, if I am not mistaken, in a different sense & attained to a deeper consummation. They answered it in the sense of the Isha Upanishad & the Gita; they held divine life in the Brahman here to be a possibility.

… The results upon the nation which produced this tremendous negation, have been prodigious [abnormal]. India has become the land of saints & ascetics, but progressively also of a decaying society and an inert, effete & helpless people. The indignant denunciation of the Vishnu Purana against the certain results to society of the Buddhist heresy has been fulfilled in the fate of our strongly Buddhicised Hindu nation. We see increasing upon it through the centuries the doom announced in the grave warnings of the Gita against the consequences of inaction, 'utsideyur ime lokah . . sarirayatrapi akarmanah . . sankarasya cha karta syam upahanyam imah prajah . . buddhibhedam janayed ajnanam karmasanginam' etc. The religious life of this country has divided itself into two distinct & powerful tendencies, the Hinduism of the withdrawal from life which has organised itself in the monastery & the hermitage and the Hinduism of social life which has resolved itself into a mass of minute ceremony & unintelligent social practice. Neither is pure; both are afflicted with sankara, mixture & confusion of dharmas; for the life of the monastery is stricken with the tendency towards a return to the cares & corruptions of life, the life of society sicklied over & rendered impotent by the sense of its own illusion & worthlessness faced with the superiority of the monastic ideal. If a man or a nation becomes profoundly convinced that this phenomenal life is an illusion, its aims & tendencies of a moment & its values

all false values, you cannot expect either the man or the nation to flourish here, whatever may be gained in Nirvana. For the nation any sustained & serious greatness of aim & endeavour becomes impossible. … But for all that our great fundamental mistake about life has told heavily; it has cursed our rajasic activity with continual inefficiency and our sattwic tendencies with a perpetual weight of return to tamas. … we have divided ourselves into the exclusive seekers after the unconditioned knowledge & the exclusive lingerers in the phenomenal ignorance. … No nation, not even a chosen race, can with impunity build its life on a fundamental error about the meaning of life. We are here to manifest God in our mundane existence; our business is to express & formulate in phenomenal activity such truth as we can command about the Eternal; and in order to do that effectively we must answer the riddle set for us of the coexistence of the eternal & the phenomenal—we must harmonise God & Nature on peril of our destruction. The European nations have invariably decayed after a few centuries of efflorescence because they have persisted in ignorance, & been obstinate in Avidya. We who possess the secret but misunderstand it, have taken two millenniums to decay, but in the end we have decayed & brought ourselves to the verge of actual death & decomposition. We can preserve ourselves only by returning to the full & harmonious truth of our religion, truth of Purana & Tantra which we have mistranslated into

a collection of fables and of magic formulae, truth of Veda which we have mistranslated into the idea of vacant & pompous ceremonial & the truth of Vedanta which we have mistranslated into the inexplicable explanation, the baffling mystery of an incomprehensible Maya. Veda & Vedanta are not only the Bible of hermits or the textbook of metaphysicians, but a gospel of life and a guide to life for the individual, for the nation & for all humanity." (CWSA 17: 372–375)

2.

"India has or rather *had* the knowledge of the *Spirit*, but she neglected matter and suffered for it.

The West has the knowledge of matter but rejected the Spirit and suffers badly for it.

An integral education which could, with some variations, be adapted to all the nations of the world, must bring back the legitimate authority of the Spirit over a matter fully developed and utilised." (CWM 13: 361)

3.

"What is India's true genius and what is her destiny?

To teach to the world that matter is false and impotent unless it becomes the manifestation of the Spirit.

How does the Mother view the progress of Science and Technology in India? What contribution can it make to the growth of the Spirit in man?

Its only use is to make the material basis stronger, completer and more effective for the manifestation of the Spirit." (CWM 13: 362)

4.

"It is one of the greatest weapons of the Asura at work when you are taught to shun beauty. It has been the ruin of India. The Divine manifests in the psychic as love, in the mind as knowledge, in the vital as power and in the physical as beauty. If you discard beauty it means that you are depriving the Divine of this manifestation in the material and you hand over that part to the Asura." (CWM 13: 372–373)

5.

"Naturally, there is the same idea in India**,** this idea of the complete renunciation of all physical reality, the profound contempt for the material world which is considered an illusion and a falsehood, that leaves, as Sri Aurobindo used to say, the field free to the sovereign sway of the adverse forces. If you escape from the concrete reality to seek a distant and abstract one, you leave the whole field of concrete realisation at the full disposal of the adverse

forces —which have taken hold of it and more or less govern it now—in order to go away yourself to realise what Sri Aurobindo calls here a zero or a void unit—to become the sovereign of a nought. It is the return into Nirvana. This idea is everywhere in the world but expresses itself in different forms.

Because until now evil has been opposed by weakness, by a spiritual force without any power for transformation in the material world, this tremendous effort of goodwill has ended only in deplorable failure and left the world in the same state of misery and corruption and falsehood. It is on the *same* plane as the one where the adverse forces are ruling that one must have a greater power than theirs, a power which can conquer them totally *in that very domain.* To put it otherwise, a spiritual force which would be capable of transforming both the consciousness and the material world. This force is the supramental force. What is necessary is to be receptive to its action on the physical plane, and not to run away into a distant Nirvana leaving the enemy with full power over what one abandons." (CWM 9: 4–5)

III—Caste System Is Against the Fundamental Tendency of Hinduism

1.

"Caste was originally an arrangement for the distribution of functions in society, … our civilisation has always been

preponderatingly spiritual and moral, and caste division in India had a spiritual object and a spiritual and moral basis. … The division of caste in India was conceived as a distribution of duties. A man's caste depended on his *dharma,* his spiritual, moral and practical duties, and his *dharma* depended on his *svabhava*, his temperament and inborn nature. A Brahmin was a Brahmin not by mere birth, but because he discharged the duty of preserving the spiritual and intellectual elevation of the race, and he had to cultivate the spiritual temperament and acquire the spiritual training which could alone qualify him for the task. The Kshatriya was a Kshatriya not merely because he was the son of warriors and princes, but because he discharged the duty of protecting the country and preserving the high courage and manhood of the nation, and he had to cultivate the princely temperament and acquire the strong and lofty Samurai training which alone fitted him for his duties. So it was with the Vaishya whose function was to amass wealth for the race and the Sudra who discharged the humbler duties of service without which the other castes could not perform their share of labour for the common good. This was what we meant when we said that caste was a socialistic institution. No doubt there was a gradation of social respect which placed the function of the Brahmin at the summit and the function of the Sudra at the base, but this inequality was accidental, external, *vyavaharika*. Essentially there was, between the devout

Brahmin and the devout Sudra, no inequality in the single Virat Purusha of which each was a necessary part. Chokha Mela, the Maratha Pariah, became the guru of Brahmins proud of their caste purity; the Chandala taught Shankaracharya: for the Brahman was revealed in the body of the Pariah and in the Chandala there was the utter presence of Shiva the Almighty. Heredity entered into caste divisions, and in the light of the conclusions of modern knowledge who shall say erroneously? But it entered into it as a subordinate element. For Hindu civilisation being spiritual based its institutions on spiritual and moral foundations and subordinated the material elements and material considerations. Caste therefore was not only an institution which ought to be immune from the cheap second-hand denunciations so long in fashion, but a supreme necessity without which Hindu civilisation could not have developed its distinctive character or worked out its unique mission.

But to recognise this is not to debar ourselves from pointing out its later perversions and desiring its transformation. It is the nature of human institution to degenerate, to lose their vitality, and decay, and the first sign of decay is the loss of flexibility and oblivion of the essential spirit in which they were conceived. The spirit is permanent, the body changes; and a body which refuses to change must die. The spirit expresses itself in many ways while remaining essentially the same, but the body

must change to suit its changing environments if it wishes to live. There is no doubt that the institution of caste degenerated. It ceased to be determined by spiritual qualifications which, once essential, have now come to be subordinate and even immaterial and is determined by the purely material tests of occupation and birth. By this change it has set itself against the fundamental tendency of Hinduism which is to insist on the spiritual and subordinate the material and thus lost most of its meaning. The spirit of caste arrogance, exclusiveness and superiority came to dominate it instead of the spirit of duty, and the change weakened the nation and helped to reduce us to our present condition. It is these perversions which we wish to see set right. The institution must transform itself so as to fulfil its essential and permanent object under the changed conditions of modern times. If it refuses to change, it will become a mere social survival and crumble to pieces. If it transforms itself, it will yet play a great part in the fulfilment of civilisation" " (CWSA 7: 683–684)

2.

"Let Hindus remember that caste as it stands is merely *jat*, the trade guild sanctified but no longer working, it is not the eternal religion, it is not *chaturvarnya*." (CWSA 12: 53)

3.

"A flagrant example can be found in the treatment of our outcastes. There are those who would excuse it as an

unavoidable error in the circumstances of the past; there are others who contend that it was the best possible solution then available. There are still others who would justify it and, with whatever modifications, prolong it as necessary to our social synthesis. The contention is highly disputable. The excuse was there, but it is no justification for continuance. A solution which condemns by segregation one sixth of the nation to permanent ignominy, continued filth, uncleanliness of the inner and outer life and a brutal animal existence instead of lifting them out of it is no solution but rather an acceptance of weakness and a constant wound to the social body and to its collective spiritual, intellectual, moral and material welfare. A social synthesis which can only live by making a permanent rule of the degradation of our fellowmen and countrymen stands condemned and foredoomed to decay and disturbance. The evil effects may be kept under for a long time and work only by the subtler unobserved action of the law of Karma; but once the light of Truth is let in on these dark spots, to perpetuate them is to maintain a seed of disruption and ruin our chances of eventual survival." (CWSA 20: 89-90)

4.

"Its [Indian Mind] intuitions were sufficiently clear and courageous not to be blinded by its own most cherished ideas and fixed habits of life. If it was obliged to stereotype

caste as the symbol of its social order, it never quite forgot, as the caste-spirit is apt to forget, that the human soul and the human mind are beyond caste. For it had seen in the lowest human being the Godhead, Narayana. It emphasised distinctions only to turn upon them and deny all distinctions." (CWSA 20: 11)

5.

"The ancient Chaturvarnya must not be judged by its later disintegrated degeneration and gross meaningless parody, the caste system. But neither was it precisely the system of the classes which we find in other civilisations, priesthood, nobility, merchant class and serfs or labourers. It may have had outwardly the same starting-point, but it was given a very different revealing significance. The ancient Indian idea was that man falls by his nature into four types. There are, first and highest, the man of learning and thought and knowledge; next, the man of power and action, ruler, warrior, leader, administrator; third in the scale, the economic man, producer and wealth-getter, the merchant, artisan, cultivator: these were the twice-born, who received the initiation, Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya. Last came the more undeveloped human type, not yet fit for these steps of the scale, unintellectual, without force, incapable of creation or intelligent production, the man fit only for unskilled labour and menial service, the Shudra. The economic order of society was cast in the form and

gradation of these four types. The Brahmin class was called upon to give the community its priests, thinkers, men of letters, legists, scholars, religious leaders and guides. The Kshatriya class gave it its kings, warriors, governors and administrators. The Vaishya order supplied it with its producers, agriculturists, craftsmen, artisans, merchants and traders. The Shudra class ministered to its need of menials and servants. As far as this went, there was nothing peculiar in the system except its extraordinary durability and, perhaps, the supreme position given to religion, thought and learning, not only at the top of the scale,—for that can be paralleled from one or two other civilisations,—but as the dominant power. The Indian idea in its purity fixed the status of a man in this order not by his birth, but by his capacities and his inner nature, and, if this rule had been strictly observed, that would have been a very clear mark of distinctness, a superiority of a unique kind. … In practice we find that birth became the basis of the Varna." (CWSA 20: 170–171)

6.

"For the real greatness of the Indian system of the four varnas did not lie in its well-ordered division of economic function; its true originality and permanent value was in the ethical and spiritual content which the thinkers and builders of the society poured into these forms. This inner content started with the idea that the intellectual, ethical

and spiritual growth of the individual is the central need of the race. Society itself is only the necessary framework for this growth; it is a system of relations which provides it with its needed medium, field and conditions and with a nexus of helpful influences. A secure place had to be found in the community for the individual man from which he could at once serve these relations, helping to maintain the society and pay it his debt of duty and assistance, and proceed to his own self-development with the best possible aid from the communal life. Birth was accepted in practice as the first gross and natural indicator; for heredity to the Indian mind has always ranked as a factor of the highest importance: it was even taken in later thought as a sign of the nature and as an index to the surroundings which the individual had prepared for himself by his past soul-development in former existences. But birth is not and cannot be the sole test of Varna." (CWSA 20: 172)

IV—The Aim of Escape from Rebirth Strikes a Chord of Weakness

1.

"The aim of escape from rebirth, now long fixed in the Indian mentality as the highest object of the soul, has replaced the enjoyment of a heaven beyond fixed in the mentality of the devout by many religions as their divine lure. Indian religion also upheld that earlier and lower call

when the gross external interpretation of the Vedic hymns was the dominant creed, and the dualists in later India also have kept that as part of their supreme spiritual motive. Undoubtedly a release from the limitations of the mind and body into an eternal peace, rest, silence of the Spirit, makes a higher appeal than the offer of a heaven of mental joys or eternised physical pleasures, but this too after all is a lure; its insistence on the mind's world-weariness, the life-being's shrinking from the adventure of birth strikes a chord of weakness and cannot be the supreme motive. The desire of personal salvation, however high its form, is an outcome of ego; it rests on the idea of our own individuality and its desire for its personal good or welfare, its longing for a release from suffering or its cry for the extinction of the trouble of becoming and makes that the supreme aim of our existence. To rise beyond the desire of personal salvation is necessary for the complete rejection of this basis of ego. If we seek the Divine, it should be for the sake of the Divine and for nothing else, because that is the supreme call of our being, the deepest truth of the spirit." (CWSA 23: 268–269)

2.

"The true salvation or the true freedom from the chain of rebirth is not the rejection of terrestrial life or the individual's escape by a spiritual self-annihilation, even as the true renunciation is not the mere physical

abandonment of family and society; it is the inner identification with the Divine in whom there is no limitation of past life and future birth but instead the eternal existence of the unborn Soul. He who is free inwardly, even doing actions, does nothing at all, says the Gita; for it is Nature that works in him under the control of the Lord of Nature. Equally, even if he assumes a hundred times the body, he is free from any chain of birth or mechanical wheel of existence since he lives in the unborn and undying spirit and not in the life of the body. Therefore attachment to the escape from rebirth is one of the idols which, whoever keeps, the sadhaka of the integral Yoga must break and cast away from him. For his Yoga is not limited to the realisation of the Transcendent beyond all world by the individual soul; it embraces also the realisation of the Universal, 'the sum-total of all souls', and cannot therefore be confined to the movement of a personal salvation and escape. Even in his transcendence of cosmic limitations he is still one with all in God; a divine work remains for him in the universe." (CWSA 23: 270–271)

V—Why Did the Degradation and Denationalisation of India Take Place?

1.

"Dr. Coomaraswamy complains of the survivals of the past in the preparations for the future. But no movement,

however vigorous, can throw off in a few years the effects of a whole century. We must remember also why the degradation and denationalization … came into being. A painful but necessary work had to be done, and because the English nation were the fittest instrument for his purpose, God led them all over those thousands of miles of alien Ocean, gave strength to their hearts and subtlety to their brains, and set them up in India to do His work, which they have been doing faithfully, … The spirit and ideals of India had come to be confined in a mould which, however beautiful, was too narrow and slender to bear the mighty burden of future. When that happens, the mould has to be broken and even the ideal lost for a while, in order to be recovered free of constraint and limitation. We have to recover the Aryan spirit and ideal and keep it intact but enshrined in new forms and more expansive institutions. We have to treasure jealously everything in our social structure, manners, institutions, which is of permanent value, essential to our spirit or helpful to the future; but we must not cabin the expanding and aggressive spirit of India in temporary forms which are the creation of the last few hundred years. That would be a vain and disastrous endeavour. The mould is broken; we must remould in larger outlines and with a richer content. For the work of destruction England was best fitted by her stubborn individuality and by that very commercialism and

materialism which made her the anti-type in temper and culture of the race she governed." (CWSA 8: 247)

2.

"In the history of all great cultures therefore we find a passage through three periods, for this passage is a necessary consequence of this truth of things. There is a first period of large and loose formation; there is a second period in which we see a fixing of forms, moulds and rhythms; and there is a closing or a critical period of superannuation, decay and disintegration. This last stage is the supreme crisis in the life of a civilisation; if it cannot transform itself, it enters into a slow lingering decline or else collapses in a death agony brought about by the rapid impact of stronger and more immediately living though not necessarily greater or truer powers or formations. But if it is able to shake itself free of limiting forms, to renovate its ideas and to give a new scope to its spirit, if it is willing to understand, master and assimilate novel growths and necessities, then there is a rebirth, a fresh lease of life and expansion, a true renascence.

Indian civilisation passed in its own large and leisurely manner through all these stages. Its first period was that of a great spiritual outflowering in which the forms were supple, flexible and freely responsive to its essential spirit. That fluid movement passed away into an age of strong intellectuality in which all was fixed into distinct,

sufficiently complex, but largely treated and still supple forms and rhythms. There came as a consequence a period of richly crystallised fixity shaken by crises which were partly met by a change of ideas and a modification of forms. But the hard binding of set forms triumphed at last and there was a decline of the inspiring spirit, a stagnation of living force, a progressive decay of the outward structure. This decay was accompanied and at once arrested for a moment and hastened in the end by the impact of other cultures. Today we are in the midst of a violent and decisive crisis brought about by the inflooding of the West and of all for which it stands. An upheaval resulted that began with the threat of a total death and irretrievable destruction of the culture; but its course is now uplifted on the contrary by the strong hope of a great revival, transmutation and renascence." (CWSA 20: 168-169)

3.

"The evening of decline which followed the completion of the curve was prepared by three movements of retrogression. First there is, comparatively, a sinking of that superabundant vital energy and a fading of the joy of life and the joy of creation. Even in the decline this energy is still something splendid and extraordinary and only for a very brief period sinks nearest to a complete torpor; but still a comparison with its past greatness will show that the

decadence was marked and progressive. Secondly, there is a rapid cessation of the old free intellectual activity, a slumber of the scientific and the critical mind as well as the creative intuition; what remains becomes more and more a repetition of ill-understood fragments of past knowledge. There is a petrification of the mind and life in the relics of the forms which a great intellectual past had created. Old authority and rule become rigidly despotic and, as always then happens, lose their real sense and spirit. Finally, spirituality remains but burns no longer with the large and clear flame of knowledge of former times, but in intense jets and in a dispersed action which replaces the old magnificent synthesis and in which certain spiritual truths are emphasised to the neglect of others. This diminution amounts to a certain failure of the great endeavour which is the whole meaning of Indian culture, a falling short in the progress towards the perfect spiritualisation of the mind and the life. The beginnings were superlative, the developments very great, but at a certain point where progress, adaptation, a new flowering should have come in, the old civilisation stopped short, partly drew back, partly lost its way. The essential no doubt remained and still remains in the heart of the race and not only in its habits and memories, but in its action it was covered up in a great smoke of confusion." (CWSA 20: 14)

4.

"Two oriental nations have come powerfully under the influence of Western ideas and felt the impact of European civilization during the nineteenth century, India and Japan. The results have been different. The smaller nation [Japan] has become one of the mightiest Powers in the modern world, the larger [India] in spite of far greater potential strength, a more original culture, a more ancient and splendid past and a far higher mission in the world, remains a weak, distracted, subject and famine-stricken people, politically, economically, morally and intellectually dependent on the foreigner and unable to realise its great possibilities. … Why has Japan so admirably transformed herself? Why has the attempt at transformation in India been a failure? The solution of problems of this kind has to be sought not in abstraction, not in machinery, but in men. It is the spirit in man which moulds his fate; it is the spirit of a nation which determines its history." (CWSA 7: 1091)

5.

"Describe the type of human character which prevails in a nation during a given period of its life under given conditions, and it is possible to predict in outline what the general history of the nation must be during that period. … Japan remained faithful to her ancient spirit; she merely took over certain forms of European social and political organization … and poured into these forms the old potent

dynamic spirit of Japan, the spirit of the Samurai. It is the samurai type which has been dominant … during the nineteenth century. In India the mass of the nation has remained dormant; European culture has had upon it a powerful disintegrating and destructive influence, but has been powerless to reconstruct or revivify. But in the upper strata a new type has been evolved to serve the necessities and interests of the foreign rulers, a type which is not Indian, but foreign … the spirit of this new and foreign graft has predominated and determined the extent and quality of our progress. This type is the bourgeois. In India the bourgeois, in Japan the Samurai, in this single difference is comprised the whole contrasted histories of the two nations during the nineteenth century." (CWSA 7: 1091–1092)

6.

What is the bourgeois? … The bourgeois is the average contented middle class citizen … He is a man of facile sentiments and skin-deep personality; generally 'enlightened' but not inconveniently illuminated. In love with his life, his ease and above all things his comforts, he prescribes the secure maintenance of these precious possessions … In the conduct of public movements he has an exaggerated worship for external order, moderation and decorum and hates over-earnestness and over-strenuousness." (CWSA 7: 1092–1093)

7.

"Such is the bourgeois and it was the bourgeois of the mildest & most inefficient type who reigned in India in the nineteenth century. … In India the bourgeois: in Japan the Samurai, that one enormous difference explains the difference in the histories of the two countries during the second half of the last century." (CWSA 7: 1095)

VI—Other Causes of India's Decline

1.

"There is no national life perfect or sound without the *chaturvarnya*. The life of the nation must contain within itself the life of the Brahmin,—spirituality, knowledge, learning, high and pur thical aspiration and endeavour; the life of the Kshatriya,—manhood and strength moral and physical, the love of battle, the thirst for glory, the sense of honour, chivalry, self-devotion, generosity, grandeur of soul; the life of the Vaishya,—trade, industry, thrift, prosperity, benevolence, philanthropy; the life of the Shudra,—honesty, simplicity, labour, religious and quiet service to the nation even in the humblest position and the most insignificant kind of work. The cause of India's decline was the practical disappearance of the Kshatriya and the dwindling of the Vaishya. …

When the *chaturvarnya* disappears, there comes *varnasankara*, utter confusion of the great types which

keep a nation vigourous and sound. The Khastriya dwindled, the Vaishya dwindled, the Brahmin and Shudra were left. The inevitable tendency was for the Brahmin type to disappear and the first sign of his disappearance was utter degeneracy, the tendency to lose himself and while keeping some outward signs of the Brahmin to gravitate towards Shudrahood. In the Kaliyuga the Shudra is powerful and attracts into himself the less vigorous Brahmin, as the earth attracts purer but smaller bodies, and the Brahmatej, the spiritual force of the latter, already diminished, dwindles to nothingness. For the Satyayuga to return, we must get back the Brahmatej and make it general. For the Brahmatej is the basis of all the rest and in the Satyayuga all men have it more or less and by it the nation lives and is great." (CWSA 7: 18–19)

2.

"The Brahmin stands for religion, science, scholarship and the higher morality; the Kshatriya for war, politics and administration; the Vaishya for the trades, professions and industries; the Shudra for labour and service. It is only when these four great departments of human activity are all in a robust and flourishing condition that the nation is sound and great. When any of these disappear or suffer, it is bad for the body politic. And the two highest are the least easy to be spared. If they survive in full strength, they can provide themselves with the two others, but if either

the Kshatriya or the Brahmin go, if either the political force or the spiritual force of a nation is lost, that nation is doomed unless it can revive or replace the missing strength. And of the two the Brahmin is the most important. He can always create the Kshatriya, spiritual force can always raise up material force to defend it. But if the Brahmin becomes the Shudra, then the lower instinct of the serf and the labourer becomes all in all, the instinct to serve and seek a living as the one supreme object of life, the instinct to accept safety as a compensation for lost greatness and inglorious ease and dependence in place of the ardours of high aspiration for the nation and the individual. When spirituality is lost all is lost. This is the fate from which we have narrowly escaped by the resurgence of the soul of India in Nationalism." (CWSA 7: 20)

3.

"As the civilisation grew in richness and complexity, it lost indeed the first grand simplicity of its early order. The intellect towered and widened, but intuition waned or retreated into the hearts of the saints and adepts and mystics. A greater stress came to be laid on scientific system, accuracy and order, not only in all the things of the life and mind, but even in the things of the spirit; the free flood of intuitive knowledge was forced to run in hewn channels. Society became more artificial and complex, less free and noble; more of a bond on the individual, it was

less a field for the growth of his spiritual faculties. The old fine integral harmony gave place to an exaggerated stress on one or other of its elemental factors. *Artha* and *kama*, interest and desire were in some directions developed at the expense of the dharma. The lines of the dharma were filled and stamped in with so rigid a distinctness as to stand in the way of the freedom of the spirit. Spiritual liberation was pursued in hostility to life and not as its full-orbed result and high crowning. But still some strong basis of the old knowledge remained to inspire, to harmonise, to keep alive the soul of India. Even when deterioration came and a slow collapse, even when the life of the community degenerated into an uneasily petrified ignorance and confusion, the old spiritual aim and tradition remained to sweeten and humanise and save in its worst days the Indian peoples. For we see that it continually swept back on the race in new waves and high outbursts of life-giving energy or leaped up in intense kindlings of the spiritualised mind or heart, even as it now rises once more in all its strength to give the impulse of a great renascence." (CWSA 20: 176)

4.

"Coming now to the earlier part of the last century, what do we find? The carrying trade had passed from the Arabs to the East India Company and with it, too, the control of nearly all our exports, especially those in indigo, iron and

steel, and the newly imported industries in tobacco, tea and coffee. But there was still a large body of trade in Indian hands; even then our manufactures held their own and were far superior to those of Europe; even then there were thousands of skilled artisans; and we supplied our own wants and exported enormous quantities of goods to other countries. Where, then, has all this trade gone and what has caused our decline?

The most obvious answer is, as I have said, the difference between Europe and India in industrial methods and appliances. But this is not quite sufficient to explain it. A deeper examination of the facts at our disposal shows that the life had almost left Indian industry before Europe had brought her machines to any remarkable development, and long before those wonderful changes which the application of chemistry and electricity have more recently wrought in industry. Nor can we ascribe it to a superiority which England possessed in industrial and technical education, for at that time there was no such training and England has never relied on it for commercial capacity. If we go a little deeper into the matter we find that there is a further reason which does not depend on the natural working of economic laws but which is political in its nature, the result of the acquisition of political power by the East India Company and the absorption of India into the growing British Empire.

As Mr Dutt shows in his able *Economic History of British India*, this political change had the gravest effect on our economic life. In the first place we had the economic policy of the East India Company which, so far as its export trade was concerned, accepted manufactures indeed, but paid an equal, if not greater, attention to raw materials. Even our internal trade was taken from us by the policy of the East India Company; there were heavy transit duties on all inland commerce and there were commercial Residents in every part of the Company's possessions, who managed to control the work of the local artisans, and so thoroughly that outside their factories all manufacture came to an end.

On this came the protective policy of the British Government, which, despite the powerful interests of the East India Company, crushed Indian manufactures by prohibitive duties. Then came the application of steam to manufacture. It is scarcely to be wondered at, if with all this against us at home and abroad, our manufactures declined and with the great advance in the improvement in machinery and the initiation of a Free Trade policy, this decline was hastened into ruin.

Moreover, a country not exporting manufactures is necessarily stagnant, and commercial progress and self-adaptability cease. Once the manufacturing superiority of India had been transferred to England, it was impossible for the weaker country to recover its position without some

measure of protection. Not only was the struggle in itself unequal but the spectacle of a mighty commerce, overshadowing and dominating ours, flooding our markets and taking away our produce for its own factories, induced a profound dejection, hopelessness and inertia among our people. Unable to react against that dominating force we came to believe that the inability was constitutional and inherent in ourselves; there is a tendency in fact to hypnotise ourselves into apathy by continual repetition of the formula that Indians, as a race, are lacking in enterprise, deficient in business faculties, barren in organising power. If, therefore, I have dwelt upon our old manufactures and commerce and the way in which they were crushed, it is not with the unprofitable object of airing an old grievance, but in order to point out that there is no reason for this discouraging view of ourselves. We were a trading and manufacturing country from ancient times down to the present century, and if our manufactures have fallen into decay, our commerce languished, it was under a burden which would have crushed the most flourishing industry of the most energetic people." (CWSA 1: 699–701)

VII—Weakness of Not Reacting Against Circumstances

1.

"Our weakness lies in this that we have for many years lain prostrate under a fictitious sense of our own helplessness

and made no adequate attempt to react against our circumstances. We have succumbed where we should have exhausted every possibility of resistance and remedy. We have allowed the home-keeping propensities and the out-of-date semi-religious prejudices, which have gathered round the institution of caste, to prevent us from choosing the line of activity most consonant with our abilities, or from seeking in other lands for fresh markets and the knowledge of new industries." (CWSA 1: 701)

VIII—We Were Deficient in Science and Its Application

1.

"But if this theory of the inferiority of the tropical races be untrue; if we find that in the past we had great men whose influence is with us even today; we must look for some other cause for the difference and ask what it is that India has not today but which she had in that older stage of her history and which Europe has at the present day. We have not far to seek. It is obvious that it is the clear and practical examination of Life and Nature which men call Science and its application to the needs of Life which men call Industry, in which we are deficient and in which Europe excels. And if we question the past we learn that this is exactly what has not come down to us through the ages along with our Religion and Philosophy." (CWSA 1: 698)

IX—Why Do We Cling to Old Customs?

1.

"The masses of India are lost in a hopeless ignorance, and that is why they are so intensely conservative and lacking in confidence and initiative. We cling to old customs because we do not know that they are not essential to our religion, and we dare not adopt new ideas or establish new industries because we do not know how to set about it. But there is another side to this ignorance and that is that we let our old customs hamper us and blind us in the present, because we do not understand the past." (CWSA 1: 718)

X—No System, However Perfect, Can Go On for 2000 Years

1.

"Remember two inevitable tendencies in history: one, that no system, however perfect, however glorious, however far-reaching, can go on for 2000 years (or 200 for that matter) without enormous changes being made in it simply by time; the other, that the religious, the political and mental conditions of a nation are indissolubly connected and interwoven, so that you cannot alter a single feature in one of them without changing all three. Now apply these principles to the past.

Section Five: All That Is Ancient Is Not Great

From 500 A.D. we find a steady decline in the political and mental condition of the country down to the two centuries of darkness from which we emerged into the periods of the Rajputs and the Muslim conquest. Follow the fortunes of India down the next eight centuries and note the steady decline in Hindu power, both political and mental, till we come to the time when Europeans obtained a firm footing in India and conquered the country with very slender means, meeting and solving each problem as it arose. For 1400 years the record is one of steady decline in political and mental nationality. How then can religion have fared, and especially all those social institutions which depend on religion? Surely it is clear that just as our trade and our political power collapsed before the attacks made upon them because they were inefficient, the other features of our system cannot have escaped degradation and that in clinging to them blindly we are clinging to the very tendencies, the very forces that have dragged us down. The fact that we cling so tightly to them has ruined both them and us. Consider the effects of cumulative physical heredity on the capacity of any caste when the action, for which that caste and its institutions were designed, is taken out of its power.

Here then is the problem: to carry out a great change in this respect, to realise our ignorance and to make up our minds to face the question, how and what to change boldly and altogether. We have changed before when it has

suited our convenience, adopting details from the Muslims when it fell in with our wishes, and many of us, even our conservatives, are European in their tastes at times. It is obvious that much of our religion and many of our social institutions of to-day have nothing in them except perhaps a faint shadow of their old vigour and glory on which our old greatness was founded.

India needs a great national movement in which each man will work for the nation and not for himself or for his caste, a movement carried out on common-sense lines. It does not mean that we are to adopt a brand-new system from Europe, but it does mean that we must borrow a little common-sense in our solutions of the problems of life." (CWSA 1: 718–720)

XI—Untouchability Was Never a Part of Hinduism

1.

"It is absurd to claim that untouchability is part and parcel of Hinduism. It is certainly no part of those foundational scriptures of the Hindus: the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Gita. In ancient India the castes were guilds for different crafts and professions, with no odious distinctions or taboos. Later they got rigid. In the days of India's decline they became more and more obnoxious, particularly by thrusting several millions outside the pale. But even when we condemn the injustice to so many it is

well to remember that injustice of this type in general is not something peculiarly associated with Hindu society. Will Durant, the famous American writer on civilisation and culture, pointedly asks: "Does the attitude of a Brahmin to a Pariah differ, except in words, from that of a British lord to a navvy, or a Park Avenue banker to an East Side huckster, or a white man to a negro, or a European to an Asiatic?" What is clear from Durant's question is that there is a deplorable tendency in human nature towards unjust discrimination. And a social structure with Buddhism as the religious ingredient of it is as likely as Hinduism or Christianity to become gradually stratified and to develop superiorities and inferiorities. If Buddha preached brotherhood, so did Christ and so did the ancient Hindu seers and saints. In fact the essential oneness of all things, the basic equality of all creatures was never so forcefully declared as by the mystics of Hinduism who saw the Divine everywhere.” (IWSKDS: 45)

Section Six: Study the Past to See What Made India Great and Add What the West Can Teach Us

I—See What We Need and Reject What Is Not Great

1.

"We must resolutely see what we need, and if we find a plain and satisfactory solution adopt it whether we have traditional authority for it or not. Turn to the past and see what made India great, and if you find anything in our present customs which does not square with what you find there, make up your minds to get rid of it boldly, without thinking that it will ruin you to do so. Study the past till you know what knowledge you can get from it which you can use in the present and add to it what the West can teach us, especially in the application of Science to the needs of life.

... Let each of you make up his mind that he will live by what his reason tells him is right, no matter whether it be opposed or approved by any sage, custom or tradition. Think, and then act at once. Enough time has been wasted in waiting for time to solve our problems. Wait no longer but strike and strike home.

We have our 'ancient regime' of custom and prejudice to overcome: let us meet them by a new Liberty, Equality and Fraternity; a Liberty of action, Equality of opportunity and the Fraternity of a great national ideal. Then you may hope to see India a nation again, with a national art and a national literature and a flourishing

commerce, and then, but not till then, may you demand a national government." (CWSA 1: 720)

2.

"For this past and present are creating the greater steps of that future and much of it will survive even in that which supplants it. There is behind our imperfect cultural figures a permanent spirit to which we must cling and which will remain permanent even hereafter; there are certain fundamental motives or essential idea-forces which cannot be thrown aside, because they are part of the vital principle of our being and of the aim of Nature in us, our *svadharma*. But these motives, these idea-forces are, whether for nation or for humanity as a whole, few and simple in their essence and capable of an application always varying and progressive. The rest belongs to the less internal layers of our being and must undergo the changing pressure and satisfy the forward-moving demands of the Time-Spirit. There is this permanent spirit in things and there is this persistent swadharma or law of our nature; but there is too a less binding system of laws of successive formulation,—rhythms of the spirit, forms, turns, habits of the nature, and these endure the mutations of the ages, *yugadharma*. The race must obey this double principle of persistence and mutation or bear the penalty of a decay and deterioration that may attaint even its living centre." (CWSA 20: 86–87)

II—India Has to Give the Ancient Wisdom Applicable to Modern Needs

1.

"Without this God-realisation a man cannot give a new vitality, a contemporary life, to India's ancient wisdom—for he will not at all embody that wisdom at its purest and profoundest. This is not to refuse greatness to him, but it is not the greatness ancient India upheld as the top reach of the human soul. If India has anything to give humanity at present, it is that wisdom in a form suitable and applicable to modern needs, that wisdom with a further development of its potency in certain directions. But in the absence of that wisdom the greatness one may achieve in oneself and induce in others is certainly never what ancient India considered the highest achievement in life and what modern India in tune with her inmost being could charge with appropriate new values and offer as the highest achievement." (IWSKDS: 14–15)

III—Reawakening Spirituality in Indian Men

1.

"We have said that Brahmatej is the thing we need most of all and first of all. In one sense, that means the pre-eminence of religion; … Brahmateja, which is rather spirituality, the force and energy of thought and action

arising from communion with or self-surrender to that within us which rules the world. In that sense we shall use it. This force and energy can be directed to any purpose God desires for us; it is sufficient to knowledge, love or service; it is good for the liberation of an individual soul, the building of a nation or the turning of a tool. It works from within, it works in the power of God, it works with superhuman energy. The reawakening of that force in three hundred millions of men by the means which our past has placed in our hands, that is our object." (CWSA 8: 21)

Section Seven: How Shall India Grow in Greatness?

I—India Is Feeling Young, and Her Future Is Waiting To Be Moulded

1.

"With the withdrawal of the British from India we got the feeling of a new life. There was a sense of bright beginnings, a sudden intensity of national consciousness as if we had just been born as a great country. Naturally, with freedom freshly won, we think of ourselves as a young people whose future is waiting to be moulded according to its heart's desire. And we are casting our eyes all around for examples and models to guide us in our endeavour to build a beautiful and prosperous India.

But let us not forget one basic fact. The feeling of youth that we have now is not due solely to our liberation from political bondage. No doubt, many hidden energies have found release by this liberation and their breaking forth is conducive to the sense of youth. Yet, when we reflect that we are the only nation in the world whose civilisation has continued alive for so many thousands of years, we cannot help wondering how after so long a history we can still feel young. .. We go back and back into remote antiquity and we have come out into the living present with fundamentally the same consciousness travelling down the centuries. According to any computation we are extremely old and by now should feel utterly exhausted. The departure of the British from our

shores should have left us only with happy relief at being allowed a peaceful death. Instead, we are full of dreams and are willing to dance on the edge of a hundred precipices. How is it that a song is on our lips and the heart in us is leaping forward to gigantic trials and passioning for a dear and difficult greatness?

Strange indeed that our interminable past should hang on us so lightly. Some eternal child [referring to lord Krishna, the Divine] seems to be laughing within the land. And it is this eternal child's laughter and not the falling of political chains that is the true cause of the delightful stir of life with which we are filled today. The falling of the chains has only given a fine edge to a youthfulness that is the very essence of the Indian nation." (IWSKDS: 8)

II—India's Power of Self-Renewal with Its Inner Self—An Idea Can Rise Phoenix-Like

1.

"At the same time, in the light of the strange youthfulness that is our essence we should look back at our own history and attempt to understand how and why we are vigorously and hopefully what we are despite such a lengthy past trailing behind us.

Surely it is no accident that civilisations seeming equally rich and powerful as ours died and disappeared. There is only one view of the history of civilisations that

can explain our survival and our youthfulness. It is the view put forth by Sri Aurobindo and formulable in no terms save the mystical. We must regard every nation, every large and distinguishable human collectivity, as a super-organism with a common body and mind. This super-organism, like the individual, passes through a cycle of birth, growth, adolescence, ripeness and decline. The decline generally ends in death. But there resides in the vast subtleties of the collective being of a people a power of self-renewal with the help of its inner life-idea. The inner life-idea is the key to a nation's psychology and is more tenacious than the outer form. If it is great and intense and the body is strong enough and the surface mind plastic and adaptive without being loose or unstable, then the collective being can keep unimpaired through vicissitudes, even rise phoenix-like out of an apparent perishing and one cycle will evolve into another and many cycles run their course before the final collapse. Certain of the ancient civilisations had this kind of continuity and resurrection. But even they could not last indefinitely. For, the inner life-idea itself of a super-organism is only a projection of the authentic soul-principle behind, which is meant to serve as a vehicle of the eternal Spirit whose manifestation in time is the whole universe. The cosmic Self or Virat, as the Rishis called it, acting through its particularised representative, the soul-principle, is the true source and support of the inner life-idea of the collective being, as it is of the individual. And if

this source and support is not sufficiently contacted in consciousness, the eternal is never brought into the temporal and ultimately comes dissolution or a fusion into other races." (IWSKDS: 9–10)

III—A People Living in the Experience of Soul-Principle Is Everlastingly Young

1.

"But when there is a constant look into the Inmost, a persistent pressure upon the deepest and widest Self, a people acquires the secret of perpetual life-renewal and never ages, no matter how many millenniums pass, what foreign invasions interfere with its physical expression and what defects and decadences set in as a result of its own folly. Even death may threaten again and again, but every time a renascence occurs and the wrinkles straighten out, the stiff limbs recover healthy resilient tissue, the crust of dull habit and stifling conservative restraint breaks to reveal an enterprising and creative consciousness that was never moribund within. A people living not only with a keen and independent psychological stress rather than with a merely refined and superficially mentalised animal urge, a people living also in the experience of its profound soul-principle and thereby in the presence of Virat, the infinite Self of the cosmos seeking its own highest manifestation

through human history, such a people never dies and is everlastingly young." (IWSKDS: 10)

IV—When India Sees the Supreme Godhead, the Divine World-Mother, Then She Will Carry It to a Still More Glorious Height

1.

"India is the one outstanding instance of a never-dying ever-resurgent collectivity. And the sooner she throws off the cloud of scepticism put by her recent intercourse with the West upon so many of her intelligentsia, and quickens to her own profundities and sees as the Soul of her soul the supreme Godhead, the Divine World-Mother, the more apt will she be to use her acutely felt youthfulness today for genuine growth in greatness: then she will carry to a still more glorious height than in the past the wonder of her perpetually young civilisation." (IWSKDS: 10)

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53. Indian Spiritual Nationalism

Compilations Related to Sadhana Continued

54. Descent of Higher Consciousness General
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56. Higher Destiny by Descent of Higher Consciousness
57. Nexus Between Psychic Being and Higher Consciousness
58. Cure of Illness by Higher Consciousness
59. Descent Can Transform Our Being
60. How the Descent Helps the Evolution
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62. Causes and Remedies of Suffering
63. Through Yoga One Can Come Out of Suffering
64. Suffering as Means of Progress
65. Release from Suffering in Indian Philosophy
66. How to Account for Suffering If Existence Is Delight
67. Delight Secretly Supports All Our Sufferings
68. Purity in Sadhana

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