

CHAPTER I

The Nation Lives in Cottages

OUR SACRED MOTHERLAND is a land of religion and philosophy—the birthplace of spiritual giants—the land of renunciation, where and where alone, from the most ancient to the most modern times, there has been the highest ideal of life open to man.¹

Each nation has a theme; everything else is secondary. India's theme is religion. Social reform and everything else are secondary.²

Hidden under the ashes of apparent death, the fire of our national life is yet smouldering and . . . the life of this nation is religion, its language religion, and its idea religion; and your politics, society, municipality, plague-prevention work, and famine-relief work—all these things will be done as they have been done all along here, viz. only through religion; otherwise your frantic yelling and bewailing will end in nothing, my friend!³ If you succeed in the attempt to throw off your religion and take up either politics, or society, or any other things

as your centre, as the vitality of your national life, the result will be that you will become extinct.⁴

From a careful study of the history of the world, it appears that in conformity to the law of nature the four castes, the Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudra do, in every society, one after another in succession, govern the world.⁵ Whether the leadership of society be in the hands of those who monopolise learning or wield the power of riches or arms, the source of its power is always the subject masses.⁶

Those whose heart's blood has contributed to all the progress that has been made in the world—well, who cares to praise them? The world-conquering heroes of spirituality, war, and poetry are in the eyes of all, and they have received the homage of mankind. But where nobody looks, no one gives a word of encouragement, where everybody hates—that living amid such circumstances and displaying boundless patience, infinite love, and dauntless practicality, our proletariat are doing their duty in their homes day and night, without the slightest murmur—well, is there no heroism in this?⁷

The peasant, the shoemaker, the sweeper, and such other lower classes of India have much greater capacity for work and self-reliance than you. They have been silently working through long ages and producing the entire wealth of the land, without a word of complaint.⁸ Never mind if they have not read a few books like you—if they

have not acquired your tailor-made civilisation. What do these matter? But they are the backbone of the nation in all countries. If these lower classes stop work, from where will you get your food and clothing? If the sweepers of Calcutta stop work for a day, it creates a panic, and if they strike for three days, the whole town will be depopulated by the outbreak of epidemics. If the labourers stop work, your supply of food and clothes also stops. And you regard them as low-class people and vaunt your own culture!⁹

These common people have suffered oppression for thousands of years—suffered it without murmur, and as a result have got wonderful fortitude. They have suffered eternal misery, which has given them unflinching vitality. Living on a handful of grain, they can convulse the world; give them only half a piece of bread, and the whole world will not be big enough to contain their energy; they are endowed with the inexhaustible vitality of a Raktabija. And, besides, they have got the wonderful strength that comes of a pure and moral life, which is not to be found anywhere else in the world. Such peacefulness, such contentment, such love, such power of silent and incessant work, and such manifestation of lion's strength in times of action—where else will you find these!¹⁰

Many turn out to be heroes when they have some great task to perform. Even a coward easily gives up his life, and the most selfish man behaves disinterestedly, when there is a multitude to cheer them on; but blessed

indeed is he who manifests the same unselfishness and devotion to duty in the smallest of acts, unnoticed by all—and it is you who are actually doing this ye ever-trampled labouring classes of India! I bow to you.¹¹

Our masses are very ignorant about secular things. Our masses are very good because poverty here is not a crime. Our masses are not violent. Many times I was near being mobbed in America and England, only on account of my dress. But I never heard of such a thing in India as a man being mobbed because of peculiar dress.¹² The poor in the West are devils; compared to them ours are angels, and it is therefore so much the easier to raise our poor.¹³ In every other respect, our masses are much more civilised than the European masses.¹⁴ I have heard it said that our masses are dense, that they do not want any education, and that they do not care for any information. I had at one time a foolish leaning towards that opinion myself, but I find experience is a far more glorious teacher than any amount of speculation, or any amount of books written by globe-trotters and hasty observers. This experience teaches me that they are not dense ... that they are as eager and thirsty for information as any race under the sun.¹⁵

It was the Brahmins who made a monopoly of the religious books and kept the question of sanction and prohibition in their own hands. And repeatedly calling the other races of India low and vile, they put this belief

into their heads that they were really such. If you tell a man, "You are low, you are vile," in season and out of season, then he is bound to believe in course of time that he is really such. This is called hypnotism.¹⁶

I have no partiality for any party in this caste question, because I know it is a social law and is based on diversity of Guna and Karma.¹⁷

Take the case of caste—in Sanskrit, Jati, i.e. species. ... The original idea of Jati was this freedom of the individual to express his nature, his Prakiti, his Jati, his caste; and so it remained for thousands of years.¹⁸

As there are Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas—one or other of these Gunas more or less—in every man, so the qualities which make a Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, or Shudra are inherent in every man, more or less. But at times one or other of these qualities predominates in him in varying degrees, and it is manifested accordingly. Take a man in his different pursuits, for example: when he is engaged in serving another for pay, he is in Shudrahood; when he is busy transacting some business for profit, on his own account, he is a Vaishya; when he fights to right wrongs, then the qualities of a Kshatriya come out in him; and when he meditates on God or passes his time in conversation about Him, then he is a Brahmin. Naturally, it is quite possible for one to be changed from one caste into another. Otherwise, how did Vishvamitra become a Brahmin and Parashurama a Kshatriya?¹⁹ The son of a Brahmin is not

necessarily always a Brahmin; though there is every possibility of his being one, he may not become so.²⁰

This system of division into different Varnas is the stepping-stone to civilisation, making one rise higher and higher in proportion to one's learning and culture. In Europe, it is everywhere victory to the strong and death to the weak. In the land of Bharata, every social rule is for the protection of the weak.²¹

It is in the nature of society to form itself into groups; and what will go will be these privileges. Caste is a natural order; I can perform one duty in social life, and you another; you can govern a country, and I can mend a pair of old shoes, but that is no reason why you are greater than I, for can you mend my shoes?... You are clever in reading Vedas, but that is no reason why you should trample on my head. Why if one commits murder should he be praised, and if another steals an apple why should he be hanged? This will have to go.²² If you teach Vedanta to the fisherman, he will say, I am as good a man as you; I am a fisherman, you are a philosopher, but I have the same God in me as you have in you. And that is what we want, no privilege for any one, equal chances for all; let every one be taught that the divine is within, and every one will work out his own salvation.²³

It is a significant fact that the two greatest men ancient India produced were both Kshatriyas—Krishna and Buddha—and still more significant is the fact that both

of these God-men threw open the door of knowledge to everyone, irrespective of birth or sex.²⁴

The institution of caste has always been very flexible, sometimes too flexible to ensure a healthy uprise of the races very low in the scale of culture. It put, theoretically at least, the whole of India under the guidance—not of wealth, nor of the sword—but of intellect—intellect chastened and controlled by spirituality. . . . In every other country the highest honour belongs to the Kshatriya—the man of the sword. . . . In India, the highest honour belongs to the man of peace—the Shraman, the Brahmin, the man of God. . . . The law of caste in every other country takes the individual man or woman as the sufficient unit. Wealth, power, intellect, or beauty suffices for the individual to leave the status of birth and scramble up to anywhere he can. . . . Here, too, one has every chance of rising from a low caste to a higher or the highest: only, in this birth-land of altruism, one is compelled to take his whole caste along with him.²⁵

What caste really is, not one in a million understands. There is no country in the world without caste. In India, from caste we reach to the point where there is no caste. Caste is based throughout on that principle. The plan in India is to make everybody a Brahmin, the Brahmin being the ideal of humanity. If you read the history of India you will find that attempts have always been made to raise the lower classes.²⁶

Caste is a social custom, and all our great preachers have tried to break it down. From Buddhism downwards, every sect has preached against caste, and every time it has only riveted the chains. Caste is simply the outgrowth of the political institutions of India; it is a hereditary trade guild.²⁷

Our castes and our institutions . . . have been necessary to protect us as a nation, and when this necessity of self-preservation will no more exist, they will die a natural death.²⁸

Indian caste is better than the caste which prevails in Europe or America. I do not say it is absolutely good. Where would you be if there were no caste? Where would be your learning and other things, if there were no caste? There would be nothing left for the Europeans to study if caste had never existed! The Mohammedans would have smashed everything to pieces. Where do you find the Indian society standing still? It is always on the move. Sometimes, as in the times of foreign invasions, the movement has been slow, at other times quicker. This is what I say to my countrymen. I do not condemn them. I look into their past. I find that under the circumstances no nation could do more glorious work. I tell them that they have done well. I only ask them to do better.²⁹

Caste is continually changing, rituals are continually changing, so are forms. It is the substance, the principle, that does not change.³⁰

Caste should not go; but should only be readjusted occasionally. Within the old structure is to be found life enough for the building of two hundred thousand new ones. It is sheer nonsense to desire the abolition of caste. The new method is—evolution of the old.³¹

The debt which the world owes to our Motherland is immense. Taking country with country, there is not one race on this earth to which the world owes so much as to the patient Hindu. . . . In ancient and in modern times, seeds of great truth and power have been cast abroad by the advancing tides of national life; but mark you . . . it has been always with the blast of war trumpets and with the march of embattled cohorts. Each idea had to be soaked in a deluge of blood. . . . This, in the main, other nations have taught; but India has for thousand of years peacefully existed. . . . Even earlier, when history has no record, and tradition dares not peer into the gloom of that intense past, even from then until now, ideas after ideas have marched out from her, but every word has been spoken with a blessing behind it and peace before it.³²

The more, therefore, the Hindus study the past, the more glorious will be their future, and whoever tries to bring the past to the door of everyone, is a great benefactor to his nation. The degeneration of India came not because the laws and customs of the ancients were bad, but because they were not allowed to be carried to their legitimate conclusions.³³

CHAPTER II

Our Great National Sin

CONSIDER THAT THE great national sin is the neglect of the masses, and that is one of the causes of our downfall.¹ In India there are two great evils. Trampling on the women, and grinding the poor through caste restrictions.²

Look at the masses of our country! What a look of sadness on their faces and want of courage and enthusiasm in their hearts, with large stomachs and no strength in their hands and feet—a set of cowards frightened at every trifle!³ The real nation who live in [the] cottage have forgotten their manhood, their individuality.⁴ It has never been given to the masses of India to express the inner light which is their inheritance.⁵ Trodden under the foot of the Hindu, Mussulman, or Christian, they have come to think that they are born to be trodden under the foot of everybody who has money enough in his pocket.⁶

Those uncared-for lower classes of India—the peasants and weavers and the rest, who have been conquered

II • OUR GREAT NATIONAL SIN

by foreigners and are looked down upon by their own people—it is they who from time immemorial have been working silently, without even getting the remuneration of their labours!⁷

Where are they through whose physical labour only are possible the influence of the Brahmin, the prowess of the Kshatriya, and the fortune of the Vaishya? What is their history, who, being the real body of society, are designated at all times in all countries as “base-born”?⁸ Ye labouring classes of India, as a result of your silent, constant labours, Babylon, Persia, Alexandria, Greece, Rome, Venice, Genoa, Baghdad, Samarkand, Spain, Portugal, France, Denmark, Holland, and England have successively attained supremacy and eminence! And you?—Well, who cares to think of you!⁹

Engrossed in the struggle for existence, they had not the opportunity for the awakening of knowledge. They have worked so long uniformly like machines guided by human intelligence, and the clever educated section have taken the substantial part of the fruits of their labour. In every country this has been the case. But times have changed. The lower classes are gradually awakening to this fact and making a united front against this, determined to exact their legitimate dues. The masses of Europe and America have been the first to awaken and have already begun the fight. Signs of this awakening have shown themselves in India, too, as is evident from

the number of strikes among the lower classes nowadays. The upper classes will no longer be able to repress the lower, try they ever so much. The well-being of the higher classes now lies in helping the lower to get their legitimate rights.¹⁰

I call him a traitor who, having been educated, nursed in luxury by the heart's blood of the downtrodden millions of toiling poor, never even takes a thought for them. Where, in what period of history your rich men, noblemen, your priests and potentates took any thought for the poor—the grinding of whose faces is the very life-blood of their power?¹¹

The root of all evils in India is the condition of the poor. . . . Priest-power and foreign conquest have trodden them down for centuries, and at last the poor of India have forgotten that they are human beings.¹² Our aristocratic ancestors went on treading the common masses of our country underfoot, till they became helpless, till under this torment the poor, poor people nearly forgot that they were human beings.¹³ The chief cause of India's ruin has been the monopolising of the whole education and intelligence of the land, by dint of pride and royal authority, among a handful of men.¹⁴ The poor, the low, the sinner in India have no friends, no help—they cannot rise, try however they may. They sink lower and lower every day, they feel the blows showered upon them by a cruel society, and they do

not know whence the blow comes.¹⁵ They have been compelled to be merely hewers of wood and drawers of water for centuries, so much so, that they are made to believe that they are born as slaves, born as hewers of wood and drawers of water.¹⁶ Ay, in this country of ours, the very birth-place of the Vedanta, our masses have been hypnotised for ages into that state. To touch them is pollution, to sit with them is pollution! Hopeless they were born, hopeless they must remain! And the result is that they have been sinking, sinking, sinking, and have come to the last stage to which a human being can come.¹⁷

Why is it that our country is the weakest and the most backward of all countries?—Because Shakti is held in dishonour there.¹⁸ Writing down Smritis etc., and binding them by hard rules, the men have turned the women into mere manufacturing machines!¹⁹ Look at our girls, becoming mothers below their teens! Good Lord! I now see it all. Brother, “यत्र नार्यस्तु पूज्यन्ते रमन्ते तत्र देवताः—The gods are pleased where women are held in esteem”—says the old Manu. We are horrible sinners, and our degradation is due to our calling women “despicable worms,” “gateways to hell,” and so forth. Goodness gracious!! There is all the difference between heaven and hell!! “याथातथ्यतोऽर्थान् व्यदधात्—He adjudges gifts according to the merits of the case.” Is the Lord to be hoodwinked by idle talk? The Lord has said, “त्वं स्त्री त्वं

पुमानसि त्वं कुमार उत वा कुमारी—Thou art the woman, Thou art the man, Thou art the boy and the girl as well.” And we on our part are crying, “दूरमपसर रे चण्डाल—Be off, thou outcaste!” “केनैषा निर्मिता नारी मोहिनी—Who has made the bewitching woman?”²⁰

The nation is sinking, the curse of unnumbered millions is on our heads—those to whom we have been giving ditch-water to drink when they have been dying of thirst and while the perennial river of water was flowing past, the unnumbered millions whom we have allowed to starve in sight of plenty, the unnumbered millions to whom we have talked about Advaita and whom we have hated with all our strength, the unnumbered millions for whom we have invented the doctrine of Lokachara [usage], to whom we have talked theoretically that we are all the same and are all one with the same Lord, without even an ounce of practice.²¹

No religion on earth preaches the dignity of humanity in such a lofty strain as Hinduism, and no religion on earth treads upon the necks of the poor and the low in such a fashion as Hinduism.²² Are we *men*? . . . We do not touch them, we avoid their company! . . . Wherein does our religion lie now? In “Don’t-touchism” alone, and no where else!²³ When, when, O Lord, shall man be brother to man?²⁴

In religion there is no caste; caste is simply a social institution.²⁵ Religion therefore is not to blame, but men.²⁶

The people, tired of ceremonials and wondering at the philosophers, joined in masses the materialists. This was the beginning of that caste question and that triangular fight in India between ceremonials, philosophy, and materialism which has come down unsolved to our own days.²⁷

That we have fallen is the sure sign that the basis of the Jati Dharma has been tampered with. Therefore, what you call the Jati Dharma is quite contrary to what we have in fact. First, read your own Shastras through and through, and you will easily see that what the Shastras define as caste-Dharma, has disappeared almost everywhere from the land.²⁸

What was the cause of India’s downfall?—the giving up of this idea of caste. As [the] Gita says, with the extinction of caste the world will be destroyed. . . . The present caste is not the real Jati, but a hindrance to its progress. It really has prevented the free action of Jati, i.e. caste or variation. . . . Every Hindu knows that astrologers try to fix the caste of every boy or girl as soon as he or she is born. That is the real caste—the individuality, and Jyotisha [astrology] recognises that. And we can only rise by giving it full sway again. This variety does not mean inequality, nor any special privilege.²⁹ Every frozen aristocracy or privileged class is a blow to caste and is not caste. Let Jati have its sway; break down every barrier in the way of caste, and we shall rise.³⁰

Those who say that if the ignorant and the poor be given liberty, i.e. full right to their body, wealth etc., and if their children have the same opportunity to better their condition and acquire knowledge as those of the rich and the highly situated, they would become perverse—do they say this for the good of society or blinded by their selfishness?³¹

Priestcraft is the bane of India. Can man degrade his brother, and himself escape degradation?... Can one injure anyone without injuring himself? The mass of Brahmin and Kshatriya tyranny has recoiled upon their own heads with compound interest; and a thousand years of slavery and degradation is what the inexorable law of Karma is visiting upon them.³²

They who sucked the life-blood of the poor, whose very education was at their expense, whose very power was built on their poverty, were in their turn sold as slaves by hundreds and thousands, their wives and daughters dishonoured, their property robbed for the last 1,000 years, and do you think it was for no cause?³³

The masses who comprise the lowest castes, through ages of constant tyranny of the higher castes and by being treated by them with blows and kicks at every step they took, have totally lost their manliness and become like professional beggars.³⁴ They pay for our education, they build our temples, but in return they get kicks.³⁵

If anybody is born of a low caste in our country, he is

gone for ever, there is no hope for him.³⁶ And come and see... in Travancore, the most priest-ridden country in India—where every bit of land is owned by the Brahmins... nearly one-fourth has become Christian!³⁷ Just see, for want of sympathy from the Hindus, thousands of Pariahs in Madras are turning Christians. Don't think this is simply due to the pinch of hunger; it is because they do not get any sympathy from us.³⁸

Why amongst the poor of India so many are Mohammedans? It is nonsense to say, they were converted by the sword. It was to gain their liberty from the... zemindars and from the... priest, and as a consequence you find in Bengal there are more Mohammedans than Hindus amongst the cultivators, because there were so many zemindars there.³⁹

Who reduced the Bhangis and the Pariahs to their present degraded condition?⁴⁰ Who is responsible? And the answer comes every time: Not the English; no, they are not responsible; it is we who are responsible for all our misery and all our degradation, and we alone are responsible.⁴¹ It is the Pharisees and Sadducees in Hinduism, hypocrites, who invent all sorts of engines of tyranny in the shape of doctrines of Paramarthika and Vyavaharika.⁴²

There is a howling cry that we are very poor, but how many charitable associations are there for the well-being of the poor? How many people really weep for the

sorrows and sufferings of the millions of poor in India? Are we *men*? What are we doing for their livelihood, for their improvement?⁴³

We speak of many things parrot-like, but never do them; speaking and not doing has become a habit with us. What is the cause of that? Physical weakness.⁴⁴ That physical weakness is the cause of at least one-third of our miseries. We are lazy, we cannot work; we cannot combine, we do not love each other; we are intensely selfish, not three of us can come together without hating each other, without being jealous of each other.⁴⁵

Our nation is totally lacking in the faculty of organisation. It is this one drawback which produces all sorts of evil. We are altogether averse to making a common cause for anything. The first requisite for organisation is obedience.⁴⁶

There are two curses here: first our weakness, secondly, our hatred, our dried-up hearts. You may talk doctrines by the millions, you may have sects by the hundreds of millions; ay, but it is nothing until you have heart to feel. Feel for them as your Veda teaches you, till you find they are parts of your own bodies, till you realise that you and they, the poor and the rich, the saint and the sinner, are all parts of One Infinite Whole, which you call Brahman.⁴⁷

CHAPTER III

Awakening the Masses

THE MASSES IN our country are like the sleeping Leviathan.¹ Can you put life into this dead mass—dead to almost all moral aspiration, dead to all future possibilities—and always ready to spring upon those that would try to do good to them? Can you take the position of a physician who tries to pour medicine down the throat of a kicking and refractory child?²

I heard in Japan that it was the belief of the girls of that country that their dolls would be animated if they were loved with all their heart. . . . I too believe that India will awake again if anyone could love with all his heart the people of the country—bereft of the grace of affluence, of blasted fortune, their discretion totally lost, downtrodden, ever-starved, quarrelsome, and envious.³

We, as a nation, have lost our individuality, and that is the cause of all mischief in India. We have to give back to the nation its lost individuality and *raise the masses*.⁴ India is to be raised, the poor are to be fed, education is to

be spread, and the evil of priestcraft is to be removed. . . . More bread, more opportunity for everybody.⁵

The first thing required is the worship of the Kurma [tortoise] Incarnation, and the belly-god is this Kurma, as it were. Until you pacify this, no one will welcome your words about religion. India is restless with the thought of how to face this spectre of hunger. . . . First of all, you must remove this evil of hunger and starvation, this constant anxiety for bare existence, from those to whom you want to preach religion; otherwise, lectures and such things will be of no benefit.⁶ First bread and then religion. We stuff them too much with religion, when the poor fellows have been starving. No dogmas will satisfy the cravings of hunger.⁷

A great fuss has been made for half a century about social reform. Travelling through various places of India these last ten years, I observed the country full of social reform associations. But I did not find one association for them by sucking whose blood the people known as "gentlemen" have become and continue to be gentlemen!⁸ If we want to regenerate India, we must work for them.⁹ No amount of politics would be of any avail until the masses in India are once more well educated, well fed, and well cared for.¹⁰

Remember that the nation lives in the cottage. But, alas! nobody ever did anything for them. . . . The fate of a nation does not depend upon the number of husbands

their widows get, but upon the *condition of the masses*. Can you raise them? Can you give them back their lost individuality without making them lose their innate spiritual nature? . . . This is to be done and *we will do it*.¹¹

A nation is the sum total of so many individual men.¹² I have no ambition beyond training individuals up.¹³ We are to take care of ourselves—that much we can do. . . . For the world can be good and pure, only if our lives are good and pure. It is an effect, and we are the means. Therefore, let us purify ourselves. Let us make ourselves perfect.¹⁴

The uplift of the women, the awakening of the masses must come first, and then only can any real good come about for the country, for India.¹⁵

To the reformers I will point out that I am a greater reformer than any one of them. They want to reform only little bits. I want root-and-branch reform. Where we differ is in the method. Theirs is the method of destruction, mine is that of construction. I do not believe in reform; I believe in growth. I do not dare to put myself in the position of God and dictate to our society, "This way thou shouldst move and not that." I simply want to be like the squirrel in the building of Rama's bridge, who was quite content to put on the bridge his little quota of sand-dust. . . . This wonderful national machine has worked through ages, this wonderful river of national life is flowing before us. Who knows, and who dares to say,

whether it is good and how it shall move?... Feed the national life with the fuel it wants, but the growth is its own; none can dictate its growth to it. Evils are plentiful in our society, but so are there evils in every other society. ... Why condemn?... Everybody can show what evil is, but he is the friend of mankind who finds a way out of the difficulty. ... Did India ever stand in want of reformers? Do you read the history of India? Who was Ramanuja? Who was Shankara? Who was Nanak? Who was Chaitanya? Who was Kabir? Who was Dadu? Who were all these great preachers, one following the other, a galaxy of stars of the first magnitude?... They all tried, and their work is still going on. The difference is this. ... They had no curses on their lips as modern reformers have; their lips pronounced only blessings. ... That makes a whole world of difference. We must grow according to our nature. Vain is it to attempt the lines of action that foreign societies have engrafted upon us; it is impossible. ... I do not condemn the institutions of other races; they are good for them, but not for us. What is meat for them may be poison for us. This is the first lesson to learn. With other sciences, other institutions, and other traditions behind them, they have got their present system. We, with our traditions, with thousands of years of Karma behind us, naturally can only follow our own bent, run in our own grooves; and that we shall have to do.¹⁶

Let me tell you as one who has been working—at least trying to work—all his life, that there is no regeneration for India until you be spiritual.¹⁷ Religion and religion alone is the life of India, and when that goes India will die.¹⁸ So every improvement in India requires first of all an upheaval in religion. Before flooding India with socialistic or political ideas, first deluge the land with spiritual ideas.¹⁹

The national ideals of India are RENUNCIATION and SERVICE. Intensify her in those channels, and the rest will take care of itself.²⁰

All the reformers in India made the serious mistake of holding religion accountable for all the horrors of priestcraft and degeneration and went forthwith to pull down the indestructible structure, and what was the result? Failure! Beginning from Buddha down to Ram Mohan Roy, everyone made the mistake of holding caste to be a religious institution and tried to pull down religion and caste all together, and failed.²¹

Hear me, my friend, I have discovered the secret through the grace of the Lord. Religion is not [at] fault.²² I claim that no destruction of religion is necessary to improve the Hindu society, and that this state of society exists not on account of religion, but because religion has not been applied to society as it should have been. This I am ready to prove from our old books, every word of it.²³ This state of things must be removed, not by

destroying religion but by following the great teachings of the Hindu faith.²⁴

For good or for evil, the religious ideal has been flowing into India for thousands of years; for good or evil, the Indian atmosphere has been filled with ideals of religion for shining scores of centuries; for good or for evil, we have been born and brought up in the very midst of these ideas of religion, till it has entered into our very blood and mingled with every drop in our veins, and has become one with our constitution, become the very vitality of our lives. Can you give such religion up without the rousing of the same energy in reaction, without filling the channel which that mighty river has cut out for itself in the course of thousands of years? Do you want that the Ganga should go back to its icy bed and begin a new course? Even if that were possible, it would be impossible for this country to give up her characteristic course of religious life and take up for herself a new career of politics or something else. You can work only under the law of least resistance, and this religious line is the line of least resistance in India. This is the line of life, this is the line of growth, and this is the line of well-being in India—to follow the track of religion.²⁵

I do not mean to say that other things are not necessary. I do not mean to say that political or social improvements are not necessary, but what I mean is this, and I want you to bear it mind, that they are secondary

here and that religion is primary. The Indian mind is first religious, then anything else.²⁶ Our life-blood is spirituality. If it flows clear, if it flows strong and pure and vigorous, everything is right; political, social, any other material defects, even the poverty of the land, will all be cured if that blood is pure.²⁷ In India social reform has to be preached by showing how much more spiritual a life the new system will bring; and politics has to be preached by showing how much it will improve the one thing that the nation wants—its spirituality.²⁸

Everything goes to show that Socialism or some form of rule by the people, call it what you will, is coming on the boards. The people will certainly want the satisfaction of their material needs, less work, no oppression, no war, more food. What guarantee have we that this or any civilisation will last, unless it is based on religion, on the goodness of man?²⁹ Spiritual knowledge is the only thing that can destroy our miseries for ever; any other knowledge satisfies wants only for a time.³⁰

Hence our object . . . is to see that everyone down to the Chandala be helped to attain the right to Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha [virtue, wealth, legitimate enjoyment and liberation].³¹ Keep the motto before you—"Elevation of the masses without injuring their religion."³²

Another great lesson we have to remember: imitation is not civilisation. . . . Imitation, cowardly imitation,

never makes for progress. It is verily the sign of awful degradation in a man. . . . We have indeed many things to learn from others, yea, that man who refuses to learn is already dead. . . . Learn everything that is good from others, but bring it in, and in your own way absorb it; do not become others. Do not be dragged away out of this Indian life; do not for a moment think that it would be better for India if all the Indians dressed, ate, and behaved like another race.³³

Look back, therefore, as far as you can, drink deep of the eternal fountains that are behind, and after that, look forward, march forward and make India brighter, greater, much higher than she ever was.³⁴

Most of the reforms that have been agitated for during the past century have been ornamental. Every one of these reforms only touches the first two castes, and no other. The question of widow marriage would not touch seventy percent of the Indian women, and all such questions only reach the higher castes of Indian people who are educated, mark you, at the expense of the masses. Every effort has been spent in cleaning their own houses. But that is no reformation.³⁵

Our mission is for the destitute, the poor, and the illiterate peasantry and labouring classes, and if, after everything has been done for them first, there is spare time, then only for the gentry. Those peasants and labouring people will be won over by love. . . . "One must

raise oneself by one's own exertions"—this holds good in all spheres. We help them to help themselves. . . . The moment they will come to understand their own condition and feel the necessity of help and improvement, know that your work is taking effect and is in the right direction. . . . The peasants and labouring classes are in a moribund condition, so what is needed is that the moneyed people will only help them to regain their vitality, and nothing more. Then leave the peasants and labourers to look to their own problem, to grapple with and solve it.³⁶

It takes time, quite a long time, to make a healthy, strong, public opinion which will solve its own problems; and in the interim we shall have to wait. The whole problem of social reform, therefore resolves itself into this: where are those who want reform? Make them first. Where are the people? The tyranny of a minority is the worst tyranny that the world ever sees. A few men who think that certain things are evil will not make a nation move. Why does not the nation move? First educate the nation, create your legislative body, and then the law will be forthcoming. First create the power, the sanction from which the law will spring. The kings are gone; where is the new sanction, the new power of the people? Bring it up. Therefore, even for social reform, the first duty is to educate the people, and you will have to wait till that time comes.³⁷

All the wealth of the world cannot help one little Indian village if the people are not taught to help themselves. Our work should be mainly *educational*, both moral and intellectual.³⁸ Education is not the amount of information that is put into your brain and runs riot there, undigested, all your life. We must have life-building, man-making, character-making assimilation of ideas. If you have assimilated five ideas and made them your life and character, you have more education than any man who has got by heart a whole library. . . . The ideal, therefore, is that we must have the whole education of our country, spiritual and secular, in our own hands, and it must be on national lines, through national methods as far as practical.³⁹

It was . . . said that if the masses were educated, the whole world would come to ruin.⁴⁰ In India, especially, we meet with old fogies all over the land. They want to keep everything secret from the masses. These people come to very satisfying conclusion that they are the *crème de la crème* of this universe.⁴¹ Do they say this for the good of the society or blinded by their selfishness? . . . For the luxury of a handful of the rich, let millions of men and women remain submerged in the hell of want and abysmal depth of ignorance, for if they get wealth and education, society will be upset! Who constitute society? The millions—or you, I, and a few others of the upper classes?⁴² A nation is advanced in proportion as education

and intelligence spread among the masses. . . . If we are to rise again, we shall have to do it . . . by spreading education among the masses.⁴³ Educate and raise the masses, and thus alone a nation is possible. Our reformers do not see where the wound is.⁴⁴

Education, education, education alone! Travelling through many cities of Europe and observing in them the comforts and education of even the poor people, there was brought to my mind the state of our own poor people, and I used to shed tears. What made the difference? Education was the answer I got.⁴⁵

The only service to be done for our lower classes is to give them education, *to develop their lost individuality*. . . . They are to be given ideas; their eyes are to be opened to what is going on in the world around them; and then they will work out their own salvation. Every nation, every man, and every woman must work out their own salvation. Give them ideas—that is the only help they require, and then the rest must follow as the effect. Ours is to put the chemicals together, the crystallisation comes in the law of nature. Our duty is put ideas into their heads, they will do the rest. This is what is to be done in India.⁴⁶

My plans are . . . to reach these masses of India.⁴⁷ We have to follow the plan laid down by our ancestors, that is, to bring all the ideals slowly down among the masses. Raise them slowly up, raise them to equality. Impart even secular knowledge through religion.⁴⁸

Suppose you start schools all over India for the poor, still you cannot educate them. How can you? The boy of four years would better go to the plough or to work, than to your school. . . . But if the mountain does not go to Mohammed, then Mohammed can come to the mountain. Why should not education go from door to door, say I. If a ploughman's boy cannot come to education, why not meet him at the plough, at the factory, just wherever he is? Go along with him like his shadow.⁴⁹

The greater part of the education to the poor should be given orally, time is not yet ripe for schools.⁵⁰ Try to get up a fund, buy some magic lanterns, maps, globes, etc., and some chemicals. Get every evening a crowd of the poor and low, even the Pariahs, and lecture to them about religion first, and then teach them through the magic-lantern and other things, astronomy, geography, etc., in the dialect of the people.⁵¹

Your duty at present is to go from one part of the country to another, from village to village, and make the people understand that mere sitting idly won't do any more. Make them understand their real condition and say, "O ye brothers, arise! Awake! How much longer would you remain asleep!" Go and advise them how to improve their own condition, and make them comprehend the sublime truths of the Shastras [scriptures], by presenting them in a lucid and popular way. . . . Impress upon their minds that they have the same right to religion as

the Brahmins. Initiate all, even down to the Chandalas, in these fiery Mantras. Also instruct them, in simple words, about the necessities of life, and in trade, commerce, agriculture, etc.⁵²

It would be better if the people got a little technical education, so that they might find work and earn their bread, instead of dawdling about and crying for service.⁵³ The education which does not help the common mass of people to equip themselves for the struggle for life, which does not bring out strength of character, a spirit of philanthropy, and the courage of a lion—is it worth the name?⁵⁴ We want that education by which character is formed, strength of mind is increased, the intellect is expanded, and by which one can stand on one's own feet.⁵⁵

It is very difficult to understand why in this country so much difference is made between men and women, whereas the Vedanta declares that one and the same conscious Self is present in all beings. You always criticise the women, but say what have you done for their uplift?⁵⁶

All nations have attained greatness by paying proper respect to women. That country and that nation which do not respect women have never become great, nor will ever be in future.⁵⁷ If you do not raise the women, who are the living embodiment of the Divine Mother, don't think that you have any other way to rise.⁵⁸

They have many and grave problems, but none that

are not to be solved by that magic word "education."⁵⁹ Educate your women first and leave them to themselves; then they will tell you what reforms are necessary for them.⁶⁰ Women must be put in a position to solve their own problems in their own way.⁶¹ Who are you to solve women's problems? Are you the Lord God ...? Hands off!⁶²

Female education is to be spread with religion as its centre. All other training should be secondary to religion. Religious training, the formation of character and the observance of the vow of celibacy—these should be attended to.⁶³

The women of India must grow and develop in the footprints of Sita, and that is the only way.⁶⁴ Any attempt to modernise our women, if it tries to take our women away from that ideal of Sita, is immediately a failure, as we see every day.⁶⁵

Our Hindu women easily understand what chastity means, because it is their heritage. Now, first of all, intensify that ideal within them above everything else, so that they may develop a strong character by the force of which, in every stage of their life, whether married, or single if they prefer to remain so, they will not be in the least afraid even to give up their lives rather than flinch an inch from their chastity. ... Along with that they should be taught sciences and other things which would be of benefit, not only to them but to others as well.⁶⁶

If the life of the women of this country be moulded in such fashion, then only will there be the reappearance of such ideal characters as Sita, Savitri, and Gargi.⁶⁷

If the women are raised, then their children will by their noble actions glorify the name of the country—then will culture, knowledge, power, and devotion awaken in the land.⁶⁸

"Do not destroy." Iconoclastic reformers do no good to the world. Break not, pull not anything down, but build. Help, if you can; if you cannot, fold your hands and stand by and see things go on. Do not injure, if you cannot render help. ... Take man where he stands, and from there give him a lift. ... What can you and I do? Do you think you can teach even a child? You cannot. The child teaches himself. Your duty is to afford opportunities and to remove obstacles.⁶⁹

My whole ambition in life is to set in motion a machinery which will bring noble ideas to the door of everybody, and then let men and women settle their own fate.⁷⁰

"Liberty of thought and action is the only condition of life, of growth and well-being." Where it does not exist, the man, the race, the nation must go down.⁷¹ Just as man must have liberty to think and speak, so he must have liberty in food, dress, and marriage, and in every other thing, so long as he does not injure others.⁷²

Let me tell you, strength, strength is what we want.⁷³

The remedy for weakness is not brooding over weakness, but thinking of strength.⁷⁴ What our country now wants are muscles of iron and nerves of steel, gigantic wills which nothing can resist, which can penetrate into the mysteries and the secrets of the universe, and will accomplish their purpose in any fashion even if it meant going down to the bottom of the ocean and meeting death face to face. That is what we want.⁷⁵ And the first step in getting strength is to uphold the Upanishads, and believe—"I am the soul."⁷⁶ Therein lies strength enough to invigorate the whole world.⁷⁷ For centuries people have been taught theories of degradation. . . . Let them hear of the Atman—that even the lowest of the low have the Atman within, which never dies and never is born.⁷⁸

Wherever there is evil and wherever there is ignorance and want of knowledge, I have found out by experience that all evil comes, as our scriptures say, relying upon differences, and that all good comes from faith in equality, in the underlying sameness and oneness of things. This is the great Vedantic ideal.⁷⁹ These conceptions of the Vedanta must come out, must remain not only in the forest, not only in the cave, but they must come out to work at the bar and the bench, in the pulpit, and in the cottage of the poor man, with the fishermen that are catching fish, and with the students that are studying. They call to every man, woman, and child whatever be

their occupation, wherever they may be.⁸⁰ Take them up, live up to them, and the salvation of India will be at hand.⁸¹

If there is inequality in nature, still there must be equal chance for all—or if greater for some and for some less—the weaker should be given more chance than the strong. In other words, a Brahmin is not so much in need of education as a Chandala. If the son of a Brahmin needs one teacher, that of a Chandala needs ten. For greater help must be given to him whom nature has not endowed with an acute intellect from birth.⁸²

These men have to be uplifted; words of hope and faith have to be proclaimed to them. We have to tell them, "You are also men like us, and you have all the rights that we have."⁸³

The solution is not by bringing down the higher, but by raising the lower up to the level of the higher. . . . The ideal at one end is the Brahmin and the ideal at the other end is the Chandala, and the whole work is to raise the Chandala up to the Brahmin.⁸⁴ The only way to bring about the levelling of caste is to appropriate the culture, the education which is the strength of the higher castes.⁸⁵

You must take care not to set up class-strife between the poor peasants, the labouring people, and wealthy classes.⁸⁶

The idea of privilege is the bane of human life. . . .

Whenever privilege is broken down, more and more light and progress come to a race. . . . Absolutely no privilege for anyone.⁸⁷

That some people, through natural aptitude, should be able to accumulate more wealth than others, is natural; but that on account of this power to acquire wealth they should tyrannise and ride roughshod over those who cannot acquire so much wealth, is not a part of the law, and the fight has been against that. The enjoyment of advantage over another is privilege, and throughout [the] ages, the aim of morality has been its destruction. This is the work which tends towards sameness, towards unity, without destroying variety.⁸⁸ Thus, trampling on every privilege and everything in us that works for privilege, let us work for that knowledge which will bring the feeling of sameness towards all mankind.⁸⁹

One of the great causes of India's misery and downfall has been that she narrowed herself, went into her shell as the oyster does, and refused to give her jewels and her treasures to the other races of mankind.⁹⁰

Give and take is the law, and if India wants to raise herself once more, it is absolutely necessary that she brings out her treasures and throws them broadcast among the nations of the earth, and in return be ready to receive what others have to give her. Expansion is life, contraction is death. Love is life, and hatred is death.⁹¹

What we want are Western science coupled with Vedanta, Brahmacharya as the guiding motto, and also Shraddhā and faith in one's own self.⁹² Can you become an occidental of occidentals in your spirit of equality, freedom, work, and energy, and at the same time a Hindu to the very backbone in religious culture and instincts?⁹³ It is absolutely necessary for you, instead of frittering away your energy and often talking of idle nonsense, to learn from the Englishman the idea of prompt obedience to leaders, the absence of jealousy, the indomitable perseverance and the undying faith in himself. . . . Everyone should learn to obey before he can command. . . . Until this absence of jealousy and obedience to leaders are learnt by the Hindu, there will be no power of organisation. . . . India has to learn from Europe the conquest of external nature, and Europe has to learn from India the conquest of internal nature. . . . We have developed one phase of humanity, and they another. It is the union of the two that is wanted.⁹⁴

Three things are necessary to make every man great, every nation great:

1. Conviction of the powers of goodness.
2. Absence of jealousy and suspicion.
3. Helping all who are trying to be and do good.⁹⁵

Let us wipe off first . . . the stain of jealousy. Be jealous of none. Be ready to lend a hand to every worker of good. Send a good thought for every being in the three

worlds.⁹⁶ To become broad, to go out, to amalgamate, to universalise, is the end of our aims.⁹⁷ Nothing else is necessary but these—*love, sincerity, and patience*.⁹⁸

Now is wanted . . . intense Karma-Yoga, the unbounded courage and indomitable strength in the heart.⁹⁹

If you have any respect for my words . . . I will advise you. . . to throw open all the doors and windows of your room! In your quarter there are lots of poor people sunk in degradation and misery. You will have to go to them and serve them with all your zeal and enthusiasm. Arrange to distribute medicines to those who are sick, and nurse them with all care, supply food to him who is starving, teach with as much as lies in you the ignorant.¹⁰⁰ A hundred thousand men and women, fired with the zeal of holiness, fortified with eternal faith in the Lord, and nerved to lion's courage by their sympathy for the poor and the fallen and the downtrodden, will go over the length and breadth of the land, preaching the gospel of salvation, the gospel of help, the gospel of social raising-up—the gospel of equality.¹⁰¹

Then only will India awake, when hundreds of large-hearted men and women, giving up all desires of enjoying the luxuries of life, will long and exert themselves to their utmost for the well-being of the millions of their countrymen who are gradually sinking lower and lower in the vortex of destitution and ignorance.¹⁰²

CHAPTER IV

Onward For Ever

YE ARE THE children of God, the sharers of immortal bliss, holy and perfect beings.¹ You must not say that you are weak.² Stand up, be bold, be strong. Take the whole responsibility on your own shoulders, and know that you are the creator of your own destiny. All the strength and succour you want is within yourselves.³

To the non-Brahmin castes I say, wait, be not in a hurry. Do not seize every opportunity of fighting the Brahmin, because . . . you are suffering from your own fault. . . . Instead of wasting your energies in vain discussions and quarrels in the newspapers, instead of fighting and quarrelling in your own homes—which is sinful—use all your energies in acquiring the culture which the Brahmin has, and the thing is done.⁴

You, the upper classes of India, do you think you are alive? You are but mummies ten thousand years old. It is among those whom your ancestors despised as “walking carrion” that the little of vitality there is still in India

is to be found; and it is you who are the real "walking corpses". . . . Ay, on your bony fingers are some priceless rings of jewel, treasured up by your ancestors, and within the embrace of your stinking corpses are preserved a good many ancient treasure-chests. . . . Pass them on to your heirs, ay, do it as quickly as you can. You merge yourselves in the void and disappear, and let New India arise in your place.⁵

When the masses will wake up, they will come to understand your oppression of them, and by a puff of their mouth you will be entirely blown away! It is they who have introduced civilisation amongst you; and it is they who will then pull it down. . . . Therefore I say, try to rouse these lower classes from slumber by imparting learning and culture to them. When they will awaken—and awaken one day they must—they also will not forget your good services to them and will remain grateful to you.⁶

The duty of every aristocracy is to dig its own grave, and the sooner it does so, the better. The more it delays, the more it will fester and the worse death it will die. It is the duty of the Brahmin, therefore, to work for the salvation of the rest of mankind in India.⁷

So long as the millions live in hunger and ignorance, I hold every man a traitor who, having been educated at their expense, pays not the least heed to them! I call those men who strut about in their finery, having got all

their money by grinding the poor, wretches, so long as they do not do anything for those two hundred millions who are now no better than hungry savages!⁸

Must the teaching, "आत्मवत् सर्वभूतेषु—Looking upon all beings as your own self"—be confined to books alone? How will they grant salvation who cannot feed a hungry mouth with a crumb of bread? How will those who become impure at the mere breath of others purify others? Don't touchism is a form of mental disease.⁹

Arise and show your manhood. . . not in the spirit of a master—not with the rotten canker of egotism crawling with superstitions and the charlatanry of East and West—but in the spirit of a servant.¹⁰

All the members of a society ought to have the same opportunity for obtaining wealth, education, or knowledge.¹¹ Freedom in all matters, i.e. advance towards Mukti, is the worthiest gain of man. . . . Those social rules which stand in the way of the unfoldment of this freedom are injurious, and steps should be taken to destroy them speedily. Those institutions should be encouraged by which men advance in the path of freedom.¹²

The first of everything should go to the poor; we have only a right to what remains.¹³ The first of all worship is the worship of the Virat—of those all around us. Worship It. Worship is the exact equivalent of the Sanskrit word, and no other English word will do. These are all our gods—men and animals; and the first gods we have

to worship are our countrymen.¹⁴ This is the only god that is awake, our own race—"everywhere his hands, everywhere his feet, everywhere his ears, he covers everything." All other gods are sleeping. What vain gods shall we go after and yet cannot worship the god that we see all round us, the Virat?¹⁵

Look upon every man, woman, and every one as God.¹⁶ After so much austerity, I have understood this as the real truth—God is present in every Jiva; there is no other God besides that. "Who serves Jiva, serves God indeed."¹⁷ If you cannot worship your brother man, the manifested God, how can you worship a God who is unmanifested?¹⁸ You may build a temple in which to worship God, and that may be good, but a better one, a much higher one, already exists, the human body.¹⁹

You must give your body, mind, and speech to "the welfare of the world." You have read—"मातृदेवो भव, पितृदेवो भव—Look upon your mother as God, look upon your father as God"—but I say "दरिद्रदेवो भव, मूर्खदेवो भव—The poor, the illiterate, the ignorant, the afflicted—let these be your God." Know that service to these alone is the highest religion.²⁰

I know for certain that India requires the sacrifice of her highest and best.²¹ The earth's bravest and best will have to sacrifice themselves for the good of many, for the welfare of all. Buddhas by the hundred are necessary with eternal love and pity.²²

Men, men, these are wanted: everything else will be ready, but strong, vigorous, believing young men, sincere to the backbone, are wanted. A hundred such and the world becomes revolutionised.²³ We should first form their lives and then some real work can be expected.²⁴

Work among those young men who can devote heart and soul to this one duty—the duty of raising the masses of India. Awaken them, unite them, and inspire them with this spirit of renunciation; it depends wholly on the young people of India.²⁵

I am born to organise these young men; nay, hundreds more in every city are ready to join me; and I want to send them rolling like irresistible waves over India, bringing comfort, morality, religion, education to the doors of the meanest and the most downtrodden. And this I will do or die.²⁶

Awake, awake, great ones! The world is burning with misery. Can you sleep? Let us call and call till the sleeping gods awake, till the god within answers to the call. What more is in life?²⁷

Behold, how men are already in the jaws of the shark of infatuation! Oh, listen to their piteous heart-rending wails. Advance, forward, O ye brave souls, to set free those that are in fetters, to lessen the burden of woe of the miserable, and to illumine the abysmal darkness of ignorant hearts!²⁸ Do not care for the heartless intellectual writers, and their cold-blooded newspaper articles.²⁹

We are poor, my brothers, we are nobodies, but such have been always the instruments of the Most High.³⁰ The poor did all the great and gigantic work of the world.³¹ Trust not to the so-called rich, they are more dead than alive. The hope lies in you—in the meek, the lowly, but the faithful.³²

Onward for ever! Sympathy for the poor, the down-trodden, even unto death—this is our motto. Onward, brave lads!³³ Have faith in the Lord; no policy, it is nothing. Feel for the miserable and look up for help—it *shall come*. . . . I bequeath to you, young men, this sympathy, this struggle for the poor, the ignorant, the oppressed. . . . Vow, then, to devote your whole lives to the cause of the redemption of these three hundred millions, going down and down every day.³⁴ If you are really my children, you will fear nothing, stop at nothing. You will be like lions. We must rouse India and the whole world.³⁵

Go from village to village, do good to humanity and to the world at large. Go to hell yourself to buy salvation for others.³⁶ My boy, when death is inevitable, is it not better to die like heroes than as stocks and stones? . . . It is better to wear out than to rust out—specially for the sake of doing the least good to others.³⁷

Put yourself to work, and you will find such tremendous power coming to you that you will feel it hard to bear. Even the least work done for others awakens the power within; even thinking the least good of others

gradually instils into the heart the strength of a lion. I love you all ever so much, but I wish you all to die working for others—I should rather be glad to see you do that.³⁸

He works best who works without any motive, neither for money, nor for fame, nor anything else; and when a man can do that, he will be a Buddha, and out of him will come the power to work in such a manner as will transform the world.³⁹

Love shall win the victory. Do you love your fellow men? Where should you go to seek for God—are not all the poor, the miserable, the weak, Gods? Why not worship them first? Why go to dig a well on the shores of the Ganga? Believe in the omnipotent power of love.⁴⁰

Blessed are we that we are given the privilege of working for Him, not of helping Him. Cut out this word “help” from your mind. You cannot help; it is blaspheming.⁴¹ Do it only as a worship. I should see God in the poor, and it is for my salvation that I go and worship them. The poor and the miserable are for our salvation, so that we may serve the Lord, coming in the shape of the diseased, coming in the shape of the lunatic, the leper, and the sinner!⁴²

Forget yourselves; this is the first lesson to be learnt, whether you are a theist or an atheist.⁴³

When you would be able to sacrifice all desire for happiness for the sake of society, then you would be the Buddha, then you would be free.⁴⁴

Let us pray, "Lead, Kindly Light"—a beam will come through the dark, and a hand will be stretched forth to lead us. . . . Let each one of us pray day and night for the downtrodden millions in India who are held fast by poverty, priestcraft, and tyranny—pray day and night for them. I care more to preach religion to them than to the high and the rich. I am no metaphysician, no philosopher, nay, no saint. But I am poor, I love the poor. . . . Who feels there for the two hundred millions of men and women sunken for ever in poverty and ignorance? . . . Who feels for them? . . . Let these people be your God—think of them, work for them, pray for them incessantly—the Lord will show you the way. Him I call a Mahatman [great soul] whose heart bleeds for the poor.⁴⁵

Three things are necessary for great achievements. First, feel from the heart. . . . Do you feel? Do you feel that millions and millions of the descendants of gods and of sages have become next-door neighbours to brutes? Do you feel that millions are starving today, and millions have been starving for ages? . . . Does it make you restless? Does it make you sleepless? Has it gone into your blood, coursing through your veins, becoming consonant with your heartbeats? Has it made you almost mad? Are you seized with that one idea of misery of ruin, and have you forgotten all about your name, your fame, your wives, your children, your property, even

your own bodies? Have you done that? That is the first step to become a patriot, the very first step.⁴⁶ Have you found any way out, any practical solution, some help instead of condemnation, some sweet words to soothe their miseries, to bring them out of this living death? Yet that is not all. Have you got the will to surmount mountain-high obstructions? If the whole world stands against you sword in hand, would you still dare to do what you think is right? . . . Would you still pursue it and go on steadily towards your own goal? . . . Have you got that steadfastness? If you have these three things, each one of you will work miracles.⁴⁷

Work, work the idea, the plan, my boys, my brave, noble, good souls—to the wheel, to the wheel put your shoulders! Stop not to look back for name, or fame, or any such nonsense. Throw self overboard and work.⁴⁸

FORWARD! We want infinite energy, infinite zeal, infinite courage, and infinite patience, then only will great things be achieved.⁴⁹

My child, what I want is muscles of iron and nerves of steel, inside which dwells a mind of the same material as that of which the thunderbolt is made. Strength, manhood, Kshatra-Virya plus Brahma-Teja.⁵⁰

Cultivate the virtue of obedience, but you must not sacrifice your own faith. No centralisation is possible unless there is obedience to superiors. No great work can be done without this centralisation of individual forces.⁵¹

Beware of everything that is untrue; stick to truth and we shall succeed, maybe slowly, but surely. . . . Work as if on each of you depended the whole work.⁵²

Be moral. Be brave. Be a heart-whole man. Strictly moral, brave unto desperation. Don't bother your head with religious theories. Cowards only sin, brave men never, no, not even in mind.⁵³

Take care of these two things—love of power and jealousy. Cultivate always "faith in yourself."⁵⁴

Make men first. *Men* we want, and how can men be made unless Shraddhā is there?⁵⁵

Arise, awake; wake up yourselves, and awaken others. Achieve the consummation of human life before you pass off—"Arise, awake, and stop not till the goal is reached."⁵⁶

CHAPTER V

India's Future

SHALL INDIA DIE? Then from the world all spirituality will be extinct, all moral perfection will be extinct, all sweet-souled sympathy for religion will be extinct, all ideality will be extinct; and in its place will reign the duality of lust and luxury as the male and female deities, with money as its priest, fraud, force, and competition its ceremonies, and the human soul its sacrifice. Such a thing can never be.¹

Once more the wheel is turning up, once more vibrations have been set in motion from India, which are destined at no distant day to reach the farthest limits of earth.² Believe, believe, the decree has gone forth, the fiat of the Lord has gone forth—India must rise, the masses and the poor are to be made happy.³

India will be raised, not with the power of the flesh, but with the power of the spirit; not with the flag of destruction, but with the flag of peace and love, the garb

of the Sannyasin; not by the power of wealth, but by the power of the begging bowl.⁴

On our work depends the coming of the India of the future. She is there ready waiting. She is only sleeping.⁵ Therefore to make a great future India, the whole secret lies in organisation, accumulation of power, co-ordination of wills. Already before my mind rises one of the marvellous verses of the Rig-Veda Samhita which says, "Be thou all of one mind, be thou all of one thought"... Being of one mind is the secret of society... That is the secret—accumulation of will-power, co-ordination, bringing them all, as it were, into one focus.⁶

Let us all work hard, my brethren; this is no time for sleep.⁷ Do not figure out big plans at first, but begin slowly, feel your ground, and proceed.⁸ Up, up, the long night is passing, the day is approaching, the wave has risen, nothing will be able to resist its tidal fury.⁹

I see in my mind's eye the future perfect India rising out of this chaos and strife, glorious and invincible, with Vedanta brain and Islam body.¹⁰ For our own motherland a junction of the two great systems, Hinduism and Islam—Vedanta brain and Islam body—is the only hope.¹¹

I have stated previously that the four castes, Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudra, do, in succession, rule the world.¹² A time will come when there will be the rising of the Shudra class, with their Shudra-hood... A

time will come when the Shudras of every country, with their inborn Shudra nature and habits—not becoming in essence Vaishya or Kshatriya, but remaining as Shudras—will gain absolute supremacy in every society. The first glow of the dawn of this new power has already begun to break slowly upon the Western world, and the thoughtful are at their wits' end to reflect upon the final issue of this fresh phenomenon. Socialism, Anarchism, Nihilism, and other like sects are the vanguard of the social revolution that is to follow.¹³

The longest night seems to be passing away, the sorest trouble seems to be coming to an end at last, the seeming corpse appears to be awaking and a voice is coming to us—away back where history and even tradition fails to peep into the gloom of the past, coming down from there, reflected as it were from peak to peak of the infinite Himalaya of knowledge, and of love, and of work, India, this motherland of ours—a voice is coming unto us, gentle, firm, and unmistakable in its utterances, and is gaining volume as days pass by, and behold, the sleeper is awakening! Like a breeze from the Himalayas, it is bringing life into the almost dead bones and muscles, the lethargy is passing away, and only the blind cannot see, or the perverted will not see, that she is awakening, this motherland of ours, from her deep long sleep. None can resist her any more; never is she going to sleep any more; no outward powers can

hold her back any more; for the infinite giant is rising to her feet.¹⁴

From the very date that he [Sri Ramakrishna] was born, has sprung the Satya Yuga [Golden Age]. Henceforth there is an end of all sorts of distinctions, and everyone down to the Chandala will be a sharer in the Divine Love. The distinction between man and woman, between the rich and the poor, the literate and illiterate, Brahmins and Chandalas—he lived to root out all. And he was the harbinger of Peace—the separation between Hindus and Mohammedans, between Hindus and Christians, all are now things of the past: That fight about distinctions that there was, belonged to another era. In this Satya Yuga the tidal wave of Sri Ramakrishna's Love has unified all.¹⁵ No character was ever so perfect as Ramakrishna's, and that should be the centre round which we ought to rally, at the same time allowing everybody to regard him in his own light, either as God, saviour, teacher, model, or great man, just as he pleases.¹⁶

If it is possible to form a state in which the knowledge of the priest period, the culture of the military, the distributive spirit of the commercial, and the ideal of equality of the last can all be kept intact, minus their evils, it will be an ideal state.¹⁷ I believe that the Satya Yuga will come when there will be one caste, one Veda, and peace and harmony. This idea of Satya Yuga is what would revivify India. Believe it.¹⁸ Up boys, and put yourselves

to the task! . . . Old Hinduism for ever! . . . Up, up, my boys, we are sure to win.¹⁹

Let her [New India] arise—out of the peasants' cottage, grasping the plough; out of the huts of the fisherman, the cobbler, and the sweeper. Let her spring from the grocer's shop, from beside the oven of the fritter-seller. Let her emanate from the factory, from marts, and from markets. Let her emerge from groves and forests, from hills and mountains. . . . Skeletons of the Past, there, before you, are your successors, the India that is to be. Throw those treasure-chests of yours and those jewelled rings among them, as soon as you can; and you vanish into the air, and be seen no more—only keep your ears open. No sooner will you disappear than you will hear the inaugural shout of Renaissance India, ringing with the voice of a million thunders and reverberating throughout the universe, "Wah Guru Ki Fateh"—victory to the Guru!²⁰

Arise and awake and see her seated here on her eternal throne, rejuvenated, more glorious than she ever was—this motherland of ours.²¹