

The Sunlit Path



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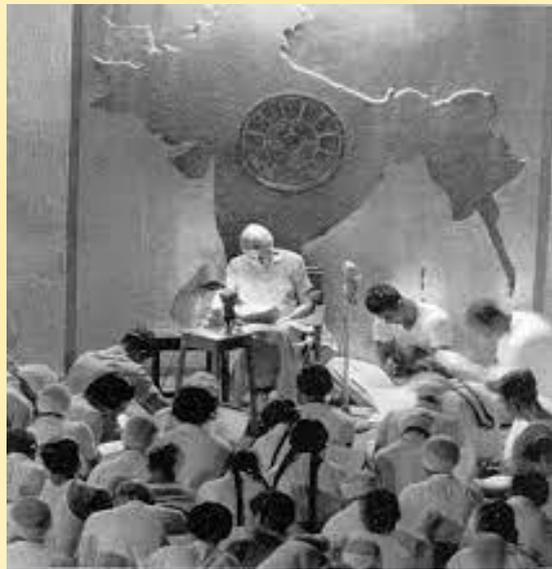
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Sri Anubindo

Prayer for the New Year

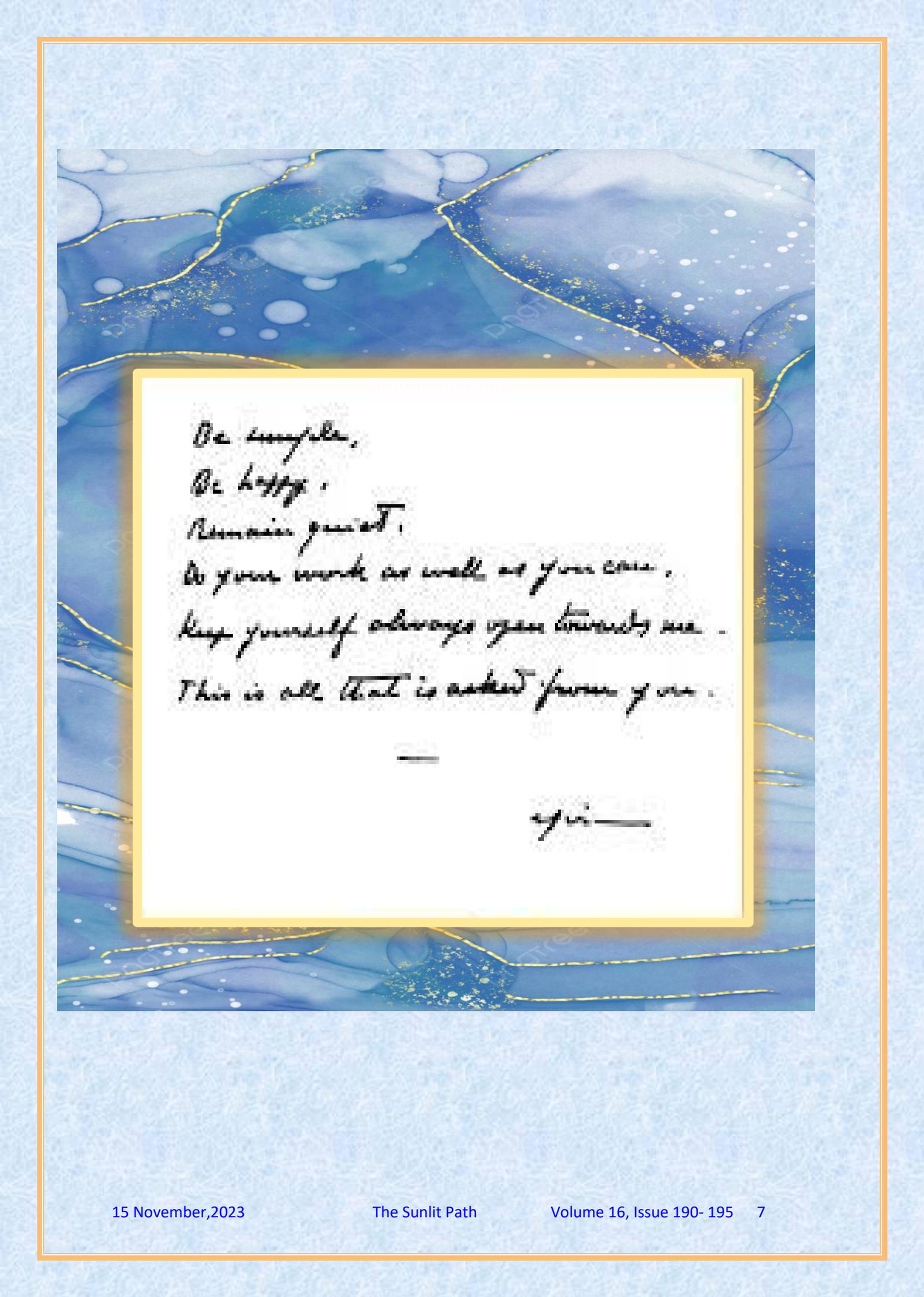
In the night as in the day be always
with me.

In sleep as in waking let me feel in me
always the reality of your presence.

Let it sustain and make to grow in me
Truth, consciousness and bliss constantly and
at all times.

In Aurobindo





Be simple,
Be happy,
Remain quiet,
Do your work as well as you can,
Keep yourself always open towards me.
This is all that is asked from you.

—
you



OM, Supreme Lord

Take possession of these cells

Take possession of this brain

Take possession of these nerves

Take possession of this body

Take possession of this matter

Take possession of these atoms

OM, Supreme Lord

Manifest Your Splendor.

The Mother

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Editorial

Dear friends,

Gratitude to The Mother and Sri Aurobindo on the commencement of the New Year!

Wishing you Happy Diwali and New Year !

I am happy to bring to you the third of four special compilations of The Sunlit Path.

This specially compiled issue contains two prayers and messages given by Sri Aurobindo and The Mother to Champaklal and an invocation to The Divine. There are several beautiful stories told by The Mother. They are taken from Collected Works of The Mother, volume 2. The stories are soul-stirring, provide perfect content for true aim of 'Life-enriching' education. While reading these stories, a reader cannot remain without experiencing as if they are being narrated by The Mother Now.

That is the Delight, and the perfect Gift for the Diwali and the New Year!

The present issue has been numbered 190-195 in view of enormity of contents.

I am sure that everyone will find very, very uplifting reading resource in these compilations.

Sincere Regards,

Dr Bhalendu Vaishnav

The Virtues (A tale for young and old)

The Mother

ONCE UPON a time there was a splendid palace, in the heart of which lay a secret sanctuary, whose threshold no being had ever crossed. Furthermore, even its outermost galleries were almost inaccessible to mortals, for the palace stood on a very high cloud, and very few, in any age, could find the way to it.

It was the palace of Truth.

One day a festival was held there, not for men but for very different beings, gods and goddesses great and small, who on earth are honoured by the name of Virtues.

The vestibule of the palace was a great hall, where the walls, the floor, the ceiling, luminous in themselves, were resplendent with a myriad glittering fires.

It was the Hall of Intelligence. Near to the ground, the light was very soft and had a beautiful deep sapphire hue, but it became gradually clearer towards the ceiling, from which girandoles of diamonds hung like chandeliers, their myriad facets shooting dazzling rays.

The Virtues came separately, but soon formed congenial groups, full of joy to find themselves for once at least together, for they are usually so widely scattered throughout the world and the worlds, so isolated amid so many alien beings.

Sincerity reigned over the festival. She was dressed in a transparent robe, like clear water, and held in her hand a cube of purest crystal, through which things can be seen as they really are, far different from what they usually seem, for there their image is reflected without distortion.

Near to her, like two faithful guardians, stood Humility, respectful and proud, and Courage, lofty-browed, clear-eyed, his lips firm and smiling, with a calm and resolute air.

Close beside Courage, her hand in his, stood a woman, completely veiled,

of whom nothing could be seen but her searching eyes, shining through her veils. It was Prudence.

Among them all, coming and going from one to another and yet seeming always to remain near to each one, Charity, at once vigilant and calm, active and yet discrete, left behind her as she passed through the groups a trail of soft white light. The light that she spreads and softens comes to her, through a radiance so subtle that it is invisible to most eyes, from her closest friend, her inseparable companion, her twin sister, Justice.

And around Charity thronged a shining escort, Kindness, Patience, Gentleness, Solitude, and many others.

All of them are there, or so at least they think.

But then suddenly, at the golden threshold, a newcomer appears.

With great reluctance the guards, set to watch the gates, have agreed to admit her. Never before had they seen her, and there was nothing in her appearance to impress them.

She was indeed very young and slight, and the white dress which she wore was very simple, almost poor. She takes a few steps forward with a shy, embarrassed air. Then, apparently ill at ease to find herself in such a large and brilliant company, she pauses, not knowing towards whom she should go.

After a brief exchange with her companions, Prudence steps forward at their request and goes towards the stranger. Then, after clearing her throat, as people do when they are embarrassed, to give herself a moment to reflect, she turns to her and says:

“We who are gathered here and who all know each other by our names

and our merits are surprised at your coming, for you appear to be a stranger to us, or at least we do not seem to have ever seen you before. Would you be so kind as to tell us who you are?"

Then the newcomer replied with a sigh:

"Alas! I am not surprised that I appear to be a stranger in this palace, for I am so rarely invited anywhere.

"My name is Gratitude."



Gratitude

It is you who open all the closed doors and allow the saving Grace to enter.

The Mother

Self-Control The Mother

A WILD horse can be tamed but one never puts a bridle on a tiger. Why is that? Because in the tiger there is a wicked, cruel and incorrigible force, so that we cannot expect anything good from him and have to destroy him to prevent him from doing harm.

But the wild horse, on the other hand, however unmanageable and skittish he may be to begin with, can be controlled with a little effort and patience. In time he learns to obey and even to love us, and in the end he will of his own accord offer his mouth to the bit that is given to him. In men too there are rebellious and unmanageable desires and impulses, but these things are rarely uncontrollable like the tiger. They are more often like the wild horse: to be broken in they need a bridle; and the best bridle is the one you put on them yourself, the one called self-control.

* *

Hussein was the grandson of the Prophet Mohammed. His home was beautiful and his purse well filled. Whoever offended him offended a rich man, and heavy is the anger of the rich.

One day a slave carrying a bowl of boiling hot water was passing by Hussein as he dined. By misfortune a little water fell upon the grandson of the Prophet who let out a cry of rage.

Falling to his knees, the slave had the presence of mind to recall an appropriate verse of the Koran: "Paradise is for those who bridle their anger," he said. "I am not angry," broke in Hussein, touched by these words. "... and for those who forgive men," continued the slave.

"I forgive you," said Hussein. "... for Allah loves the merciful," the servant added.

In the course of this exchange, all Hussein's anger had vanished. Now wholly at peace with himself he made the slave rise and said: "From now

on you are free. Here, take these four hundred pieces of silver.”

In this way Hussein learnt how to bridle his temper which was as generous as it was hasty. Since his noble character was neither wicked nor cruel, it was worthy of being controlled.

* *

So if your parents or your teacher sometimes urge you to control your nature, it is not because they think that your faults, whether great or small, are incorrigible; but, on the contrary, it is because they know that your quick and fiery spirit is like a young thoroughbred which must be held in check.

If you were offered the choice of living in a sordid hut or in a palace, which would you choose? The palace, most likely.

We are told that when Lord Mohammed visited Paradise, he saw great palaces built on a height overlooking the entire countryside.

“O Gabriel,” said Mohammed to the angel who was showing him all these things, “for whom are these palaces?” The angel replied:

“For those who control their anger and know how to forgive offences.”

Well, a mind at peace and free from rancour is indeed like a palace, but not so a vindictive and turbulent mind. Our thought is a dwelling-place that we can, if we choose, make clean, sweet and serene, full of harmonious notes; but we can also make it into a dark and dreadful lair filled with mournful sounds and discordant cries.

* *

In a town in the North of France I once knew a boy who was frank by nature but impetuous and always liable to lose his temper. I said to him one day: “Which do you think is more difficult for a strong boy like you, to give blow for blow and to let fly your fist in the face of a friend who insults you or at that moment to keep your fist in your pocket?”

“To keep it in my pocket,” he replied.

“And which do you think is more worthy of a brave boy like you, to do the easier or the more difficult thing?” “The more difficult thing,” he said after a moment’s hesitation.

“Well then, try to do it the next time you get an opportunity.” Some time

later, the young boy came to tell me, not without legitimate pride, that he had been able to do “the more difficult thing”.

He said: “One of my work-mates, who is known for his bad temper, struck me in a moment of anger. Since he knows that normally I am not one to forgive and that I have a strong arm, he was preparing to defend himself when I remembered what you had told me. It was harder for me than I thought, but I put my fist in my pocket. And as soon as I did that, I felt no more anger in me, I only felt sorry for my friend. So I held out my hand to him. That surprised him so much that he stood looking at me for a moment, open-mouthed, without speaking. Then he seized my hand, shook it vigorously and said with emotion: “Now you can do what you like with me, I am your friend for ever.”

This boy had controlled his anger as Caliph Hussein had done. But there are many other things that also need to be bridled.

* *

The Arabian poet, Al Kosai, lived in the desert. One day he came across a fine Naba tree and from its branches he made a bow and some arrows. At nightfall he set out to hunt wild asses. Soon he heard the hoof-beats of a moving herd. So he shot his first arrow. But he had bent the bow with such strength that the arrow, passing right through the body of one of the animals, dashed against a nearby rock. When he heard the sound of wood on stone Al Kosai thought he had missed his mark. So then he shot his second arrow and once more the arrow passed through an ass and struck the rock. Again Al Kosai thought he had missed his mark. In the same way he shot a third arrow, and a fourth, and a fifth, and each time he heard the same sound. When it happened for the fifth time, he broke his bow in rage.

At dawn he saw five asses in front of the rock.

If he had been more patient and waited until daybreak, he would have kept his peace of mind and his bow as well.

**

It should not be thought, however, that we have a high regard for a training which weakens the character by depriving it of all its drive and

vigour. When we put a bridle on a wild horse, we do not want the bit to tear his mouth and break his teeth. And if we want him to do his work well, we must tighten the reins to guide him, but we must not pull on them so hard that he can no longer move forward.

Unfortunately there are only too many weak characters who can, like sheep, be driven by a mere bark.

There are slavish and insensitive natures, lacking in spirit and more forbearing than they should be.

Abu Otman al-Hiri was known for his excessive patience.

One day he was invited to a feast. When he arrived, the host told him: "You must excuse me, I cannot receive you. So please go back home, and may Allah have mercy on you."

Abu Otman went back home. No sooner was he there than his friend appeared and invited him once more. Abu Otman followed his friend as far as his doorstep, but there the friend stopped and again asked to be excused. Abu Otman went away without a murmur.

A third time and a fourth the same scene was repeated, but in the end his friend received him and said to him before the whole company: "Abu Otman, I behaved in this way in order to test your good temper. I admire your patience and forbearance."

"Do not praise me," replied Abu Otman, "for dogs practise the same virtue: they come when they are called and go when they are sent away."

Abu Otman was a man and not a dog. And it could do no one any good that he should thus, of his own accord, without dignity or good cause, submit to the mockery of his friends.

Did then this man who was so meek have nothing in him to control? Oh, yes he did! It was the most difficult thing of all to control — the weakness of his character. And it was because he did not know how to control himself that everyone controlled him as they pleased.

* *

A young Brahmacharin was clever and knew it. He wished to add to his talents more and more so that everyone would admire him. So he travelled from land to land.

With an arrow-maker he learned to make arrows. Further on he learnt how to build and sail ships. In another place he learnt how to build houses. And in other places he acquired various other skills. In this way he visited sixteen different countries. Then he returned home and proudly declared, "What man on earth is as skilful as I?" The Lord Buddha saw him and wanted to teach

him a nobler art than any he had learnt before. Assuming the appearance of an old Shramana he presented himself before the young man with a begging bowl in his hand.

"Who are you?" asked the Brahmacharin.

"I am a man who is able to control his own body."

"What do you mean?"

"The archer can aim his arrows," the Buddha replied. "The pilot guides the ship, the architect supervises the construction of buildings, but the wise man controls himself."

"In what way?"

"If he is praised his mind remains unmoved, if he is blamed his mind remains equally unmoved. He loves to follow the Right Law and he lives in peace."

Children of goodwill, you too should learn to control yourselves, and if a tough bridle is needed to control your nature, do not complain.

A spirited young horse which will gradually become wellbehaved is of much more value than a placid wooden horse which will always remain placid whatever you may do, and on which you put a bridle only for the fun of it.

Courage

The Mother

YOU FALL into the water. You are not daunted by the great watery mass. You make good use of your arms and legs, grateful to the teacher who taught you how to swim. You grapple with the waves and you escape. You have been brave.

You are asleep. "Fire!" The cry of alarm has awakened you. You leap from your bed and see the red glare of the blaze. You are not stricken with mortal fear. You run through the smoke, the sparks, the flames, to safety. This is courage.

Some time ago I visited an infant school in England. The little school-children were between three and seven years old. There were both boys and girls, who were busy knitting, drawing, listening to stories, singing. The teacher told me, "We are going to try the fire-alarm. Of course there is no fire, but they have been taught to get up and go out promptly at the alarm-signal."

He blew his whistle. Instantly the children left their books, pencils and knitting-needles, and stood up. On a second signal they filed out into the open air. In a few moments the classroom was empty. These little children had learned to face the danger of fire and to be brave.

For whose sake did you swim? For your own.

For whose sake did you run through the flames? For your own.

For whose sake would the children resist the fear of fire?

For their own.

The courage shown in each case was for the sake of self.

Was this wrong? Certainly not. It is right to take care of your life and to defend it bravely. But there is a greater courage, the courage which is shown for the sake of others.

* *

Let me tell you the story of Madhava as it was recorded by Bhavabhuti. He is kneeling outside a temple and hears a cry of distress. He finds a way to

enter and looks into the sanctuary of the goddess Chamunda.

A victim is about to be slain in honour of this terrible goddess. It is poor Malati. The girl has been carried away in her sleep. She is all alone with the priest and priestess, and the priest raises his knife just as Malati is thinking of Madhava whom she loves:

O Madhava! Lord of my heart,
Oh, may I after death live in thy memory.

They do not die whom love embalms in long and fond remembrance. With a shout, brave Madhava leaps into the chamber of sacrifice and engages the priest in mortal combat. Malati is saved. For whom did Madhava show courage? Was he fighting for himself? Yes — but that was not the only reason for his courage. He was fighting also for the sake of another. He had heard a cry of distress and it had touched the brave heart in his breast.

* *

If you give it some thought, you will recall having seen similar deeds. You have surely seen a man, woman or child helped by another human being who came running in response to the cry of alarm.

You must also have read in the newspapers or in history about similar acts of bravery. You have heard about firemen who rescue people from blazing houses; of miners who go down into deep shafts to bring out their companions imperilled by flood, fire or poisonous gas; of men who venture into houses shaken by earthquake and who in spite of the danger from crumbling walls, pick up and carry out the helpless people who would otherwise die beneath the ruins; and of citizens who for the sake of their town or their country confront the enemy and undergo hunger, thirst, wounds or death.

So we have seen what is courage to help oneself and what is courage to help others.

* *

I shall tell you the story of Vibhishan the hero. He braved a danger that was greater than the danger of death: he braved the fury of a king and gave him the wise advice that others dared not voice.

The demon-king of Lanka was Ravana of the Ten Heads. Ravana had stolen lady Sita away from her husband and carried her off in his chariot to his palace on the island of Lanka.

Sumptuous was the palace and delightful the garden in which he imprisoned the princess Sita. Yet she was unhappy and every day she would shed tears, not knowing whether she would ever see her Lord Rama again.

Glorious Rama learnt from Hanuman the monkey-king where his wife Sita was held captive. He set out with noble Lakshman, his brother, and a great army of heroes to the rescue of the prisoner. When the demon Ravana learnt of the arrival of Rama, he trembled with fear.

The advice he received was of two kinds. A crowd of courtiers thronged around his throne saying:

“All is well; have no fear, O Ravana. Gods and demons you have conquered: you will have no difficulty in conquering Rama and his companions, the monkeys of Hanuman.”

When these noisy counsellors had left the king, his brother Vibhishan entered, knelt and kissed his feet. Then he rose and sat at the right hand of the throne.

“O my brother,” he said, “if you wish to live happily and keep the throne of this beautiful island of Lanka, give back the lovely Sita, for she is the wife of another. Go to Rama and ask his forgiveness, and he will not turn away his face. Be not arrogant and foolhardy.”

A wise man, Malyavan, heard these words and was glad. He exclaimed to the king of demons:

“Take your brother’s words to heart, for he has spoken the truth.”

“Both of you have evil designs,” replied the king, “for you take the side of my foes.”

And the eyes of his ten heads flashed with such fury that Malyavan fled from the room in terror. But Vibhishan, in the bravery of his soul, remained.

“Sire,” he said, “in the heart of each man there is both wisdom and foolishness. If wisdom dwells in his breast, life goes well with him; if it is

foolishness, all goes ill. I fear that you harbour foolishness in your breast, O my brother, for you give ear to those who give bad advice. They are not your true friends.”

He fell silent and kissed the feet of the king. “Wretch!” cried Ravana. “You too are one of my enemies. Speak no more senseless words to me. Talk to the hermits in the woods but not to one who has been victorious over all the enemies he has fought.”

And as he shouted he kicked his brave brother Vibhishan.

So, with a heavy heart, his brother rose and left the king’s house.

Knowing no fear, he had spoken frankly to Ravana; and since the ten-headed one would not listen, Vibhishan had no choice but to leave.

Vibhishan’s act was one of physical courage, for he did not fear his brother’s blows; but it was also an act of mental courage, for he did not hesitate to utter words that the other courtiers, physically as brave as he, would not have let fall from their lips.

This courage of the mind is known as moral courage.

* *

Such was the courage of Moses, the leader of Israel, who demanded from the Pharaoh of Egypt the freedom of the oppressed Jewish people.

Such was the courage of Mohammed, the Prophet, who imparted his religious thought to the Arabs, and who refused to be silenced even though they threatened him with death.

Such was the courage of Siddhartha, the Blessed One, who taught the people of India a new and noble path, and was not terrified by the evil spirits who assailed him under the Bo-tree.

Such was the courage of Christ, who preached to the people: “Love one another,” and was not intimidated by the pontiffs of Jerusalem who forbade him to teach, nor by the Romans who crucified him.

So we have noted three kinds, three degrees of courage:

Physical courage for oneself.

Courage for the near one, the friend, the neighbour in distress, the threatened motherland.

Finally, the moral courage that enables one to stand up to unjust men,

however powerful they may be, and to make them listen to the voice of right and truth.

* *

The Rajah of Almora, in order to repel some invaders who had raided his mountain country, enrolled a number of men in a new regiment and provided each one with a good sword.

“Forward, march!” commanded the Rajah.

Instantly the men unsheathed their swords with a great clang and flourished them with loud cries.

“What is this?” demanded the Rajah.

“Sire,” they replied, “we want to be ready so that the enemy does not take us by surprise.”

“You can be of no use to me, you nervous and excitable men,” he told them. “Go home, all of you.”

You will notice that the Rajah was not impressed by all this noise and waving of swords. He knew that true bravery needs no clamour and clash.

* *

In the following story, on the other hand, you will observe how calmly the people behaved and yet how brave they were in face of mortal peril at sea.

Towards the end of March 1910, a Scottish vessel was carrying passengers from Australia to the Cape of Good Hope. There was no trace of a cloud in the sky and the sea was calm and blue.

Suddenly the ship struck a reef six miles off the west coast of Australia. Immediately the whole crew was on the move, each man hurrying as whistles were blown. But this noise was not the result of confusion and panic.

An order rang out: “Man the boats!”

The passengers put on their life-belts.

A blind man led by his servant walked across the deck.

Everyone made way for him. He was helpless and all wanted him to be the first to be saved.

A short time later the ship had been evacuated, and soon it sank. On one of the life-boats a woman began to sing. And in spite of the sound of the waves which at times drowned her voice, the oarsmen could hear the refrain which put strength into their arms:
Pull for the shore, sailors, Pull for the shore. The shipwrecked people reached the shore at last and were taken in by some good fishing folk. Not one passenger had been lost. In this way four hundred and fifty people had saved themselves by their quiet courage.

* *

Let me tell you more about this calm courage that accomplishes useful and noble things without show or flourish. A deep river ran past an Indian village of five hundred houses.

The people of this village had not yet heard the teachings of Lord Siddhartha, and the Blessed One decided to go to them and speak to them of the Noble Path.

He sat beneath a great tree which spread its branches over the riverside, and the villagers gathered on the opposite bank. Then he began to speak and preached his message of love and purity. And his words were carried over the flowing waters as if by miracle. Yet the people of the village refused to believe in what he taught them, and murmured against him. Only one of them wanted to know more and wished to come closer to the Blessed One.

There was neither bridge nor ferry. And the old legend tells that, strong in his courage, the man began to walk upon the deep water of the river. And so he reached the Master, greeted him and listened to his words with great joy.

Did this man really cross the river, as we are told? We do not know. But in any case he had the courage to take the path that leads towards progress. And the people of his village, touched by his example, then paid heed to the teachings of the Buddha; and their minds were opened to nobler thoughts.

* *

There is a courage which can make you cross rivers and another that

enables you to take the right path; but even more courage is needed to stay on the right path than to enter it.

Listen to the parable of the hen and her chicks:

Siddhartha, the Blessed One, used to instruct his disciples to do their best and then to trust that the best would bear its fruit. "Just as," he said, "a hen lays eggs and broods on them and never thinks of fretting: 'Will my little chicks be able to break out of their shells with their beaks and see the light of day?' you too should have no fear: if you are persistent in the Noble Path, you also will come to the light."

And this is true courage: to walk the straight path, to brave storm, darkness and suffering and to persevere, moving ever forward, in spite of everything, towards the light.

* *

Long, long ago, when Brahmadata ruled in Benares, one of his enemies, king of another land, trained an elephant to wage war on him. War was declared. The splendid elephant bore the king his master up to the walls of Benares. From the top of the walls, the people of the besieged city hurled down boiling hot liquids and shot stones with their slings.

At first the elephant retreated before this terrifying rain.

But the man who had trained him ran towards him crying:

"O elephant, you are a hero! Act like a hero and pull the gates to the ground!"

Encouraged by these words, the great creature charged and burst through the gates, leading his king to victory.

This is how courage triumphs over obstacles and difficulties and opens the gates to victory.

* *

And see how an encouraging word can give help to man and animal alike. A good Muslim book gives us an example of this in the story of Abu Sa'id, the poet with a brave heart.

His friends, who had learnt that he lay sick with fever, came one day to ask for news of his health. His son received them at the door of the house, a smile on his lips, for the patient was feeling better. They came

in and sat down in the sick man's room and were surprised to hear him chatting with his usual good humour.

Then, as it was a hot day, he fell asleep, and so did all the others. Towards evening, they all awoke. Abu Sa'id ordered refreshments to be served to his guests and incense to be lit so that the room might be filled with fragrance. Abu Sa'id prayed for a while, then he rose and recited a little poem of his own composition:

Despair not in your grief, for a joyous hour will come and take it all away;
The burning simoon may blow, and yet change into a gentle breeze;
A dark cloud may rise, but it passes away and brings no flood; A fire may
kindle and yet be smothered, leaving chest and casket untouched;
Pain comes but also goes. Therefore be patient when troubles come, for
Time is the father of wonders; And from the peace of God hope for many
blessings to come. They all returned to their homes delighted and
strengthened by this beautiful poem of hope. And so it was that a sick
man helped his friends in good health. Whosoever is courageous can give
courage to others, just as the flame of one candle can light another.
Brave boys and girls who read this story, learn how to encourage others,
and be courageous yourselves.



Courage
Bold, it faces all dangers.
The Mother

Cheerfulness

The Mother

ONE AFTERNOON, in a large town in a rainy country, I saw seven or eight vehicles full of children. That morning, they had been taken into the country to play in the fields, but the bad weather had made them return home early in the rain.

And yet they were singing, laughing and waving merrily to the passers-by.

They had kept their cheerfulness in this gloomy weather. If one of them had felt sad, the songs of the others would have cheered him. And for the people hurrying by, who heard the children's laughter, it seemed that the sky had brightened for a moment.

* *

Amir was a prince of Khorasan, and he lived in a grand style. When he set out to war, three hundred camels would carry the pots and pans and plates for his kitchen.

One day he was taken prisoner by the Caliph Isma'il. But misfortune does not exempt a man from hunger. So when Amir saw his chief cook nearby, he asked the good man to prepare him a meal.

The cook had one piece of meat left which he put in a pot on the fire. Then he went to find some vegetables to give a little taste to the stew.

A passing dog sniffed at the meat and put his nose in the pot. Then, feeling the heat of the fire, he drew back sharply. But he was so clumsy that the pot stuck on his head and he ran off in a panic, unable to get rid of it.

Amir burst out laughing at the sight.

Why," demanded the officer on guard, "are you laughing when you have every reason to be sad?"

But Amir showed him the dog streaking away from the camp and said, "I am laughing at the thought that this very morning it took three hundred camels to transport my kitchen and now one dog is enough to carry it all

away!”

Amir took pleasure in being cheerful though he took no trouble to bring cheerfulness to others. However, we should give him credit for his light-heartedness. If he was able to joke in the midst of such serious difficulties, is it not in our power to smile in the face of lesser worries?

* *

In Persia, there was a woman who used to sell honey. She had a very pleasant manner, and customers thronged around her stall. And the poet who tells her story declares that even if she had sold poison, people would still have bought it from her as if it were honey.

A sour-tempered man saw what a great profit she made from her sweet wares and decided to take up the same trade.

So he set up a stall, but behind the rows of honey-pots his face was like vinegar. All those who came near were sullenly treated. And so everyone passed by, leaving him his wares. “Not even a fly ventured on his honey,” says the poet. By evening he had still earned nothing. A woman noticed him and said to her husband, “A bitter face makes bitter honey.”

Did the woman who sold honey smile only to attract customers? Let us rather hope that her cheerfulness came from her good nature. We are not in this world only to buy or sell; we should be here as comrades one to another. The good woman’s customers felt that she was something more than a honey-seller: she was a cheerful citizen of the world.

* *

On the next story I shall tell you, the joyous spirit bubbles up like water from a beautiful spring. The person it tells of had nothing to do with the desire for custom or gain: he was the famed and glorious Rama.

Rama slew Ravana the ten-headed and twenty-armed demon-king. I have already told you the beginning of the story. It had been the most terrible of all battles. Thousands of monkeys and bears had been killed in the service of Rama, and the corpses of their demon enemies were piled one upon another. Their king lay lifeless on the ground. But how hard it had been to fell him! Time and again Rama had cut off his ten heads and his twenty arms, but they all grew back immediately so that

he had to cut them off many times over; they were so numerous that at last it seemed as if the sky was raining down arms and heads.

When the terrible war was ended the monkeys and bears who had been slain were brought back to life, and all stood like a great army awaiting orders.

Glorious Rama whose manner remained simple and calm after the victory, looked kindly upon his faithful friends.

Then Vibhishan, who was to succeed Ravana on the throne, had a chariot-load of jewels and rich robes brought for the warriors who had fought so valiantly.

“Listen, friend Vibhishan,” said Rama, “rise high in the air and scatter your gifts before the army.” The king did as he was told, and from his chariot in midair strewed glittering jewels and brightly coloured robes.

The monkeys and bears tumbled over one another as they rushed to seize the falling treasures. It was a merry scuffle. And Rama laughed heartily and his wife, the lady Sita, and his brother Lakshman laughed with him. For those who are courageous know how to laugh like this. There is nothing more cordial than a good and hearty cheerfulness. And the word ‘cordial’ has the same origin as the word ‘courage’. In difficult moments, the cheerfulness that comes from a cordial spirit is truly a kind of courage.

Surely it is not necessary to be always laughing; but liveliness, serenity, good humour are never out of place. And how helpful they are! With them the mother makes the home happy for her children; the nurse hastens the recovery of her patient; the master lightens the task of his servants; the workman inspires the goodwill of his comrades; the traveller helps his companions on their hard journey; the citizen fosters hope in the hearts of his countrymen.

And you, happy boys and girls, is there anything your cheerfulness cannot accomplish?

Self-Reliance

The Mother

HATIM Tai had a great reputation among the Arabs of old for the lavishness of his gifts and alms.

“Have you ever met anyone more excellent than yourself?” his friends once asked him.

“Yes,” replied Hatim Tai.

“Who was he?”

“One day I had forty camels sacrificed and I offered a feast to whoever would like to come and share in it. Then I set out with several chiefs to invite guests from far and wide. On the way we came across a woodcutter who had just cut a bundle of thorns. This was the way he earned his livelihood. Seeing that he was poor, I asked him why he did not go to the many feasts given by Hatim Tai. ‘Those who earn their living,’ he answered me, ‘have no need of the bounty of Hatim Tai.’ ”

Why then did Hatim Tai declare that the woodcutter was a better man than himself?

It was because he thought it nobler to work and to provide for oneself than to give others gifts which cost no effort or sacrifice and which, moreover, discourage them from being self-reliant.

Of course it is quite natural that friends should give presents to their friends; it is good that strong arms should come to the help of the poor and the needy; but an able-bodied man should work with his hands, not hold them out for alms. Of course this implies no reflection on those who consecrate themselves entirely to the contemplative life and the search for wisdom.

* *

Though the woodcutter’s conduct was noble, yet it was less so than that of the Persian prince whose story I shall tell you. He was a prince of ancient times and his name was Gushtasp. He was much annoyed that his father did not treat him as heir to the throne, so he left his native land and wandered to the West. Alone and hungry, he realised that from then

on he would have to work for his living. So he went to the sovereign of the land and said to him:

“I am a skilled writer and I should be happy to be employed as a scribe.” He was told to wait for a few days, for no scribes were needed at the moment. But he was too hungry to wait, so he went to the camel-drivers to ask for work. They did not need any new helper; however, seeing his dire need, they gave him something to eat.

A little further on, Gushtasp stopped at the door of a forge and offered his services to the smith.

“Here,” said the man to him, “you can help me to hammer this piece of iron.” And he placed a hammer in Gushtasp’s hands. The prince had tremendous strength. He lifted the heavy hammer, brought it down on the anvil and smashed it at the first stroke. The smith was furious and immediately turned him out.

And so Gushtasp started wandering once more in great distress.

Whichever way he turned, there was no way in which he could show his usefulness.

At last he met a farmer working in a cornfield, who took pity on him and gave him food and shelter.

One day there came the news that the daughter of the king of Rum was of an age to marry and that all young men of princely family were invited to the royal banquet. Gushtasp decided to go there and sat at table among all the others. Princess Kitaban saw him, loved him and gave him a bunch of roses as a token of her favour.

The king took a violent dislike for Gushtasp in his poverty. He dared not forbid his daughter to marry him, but as soon as they were married he drove them out of his palace. So they went to live in the heart of the forest and built their hut not far from a river.

Gushtasp was a great hunter. Each day he would cross the river by boat, catch an elk or a wild ass, give half to the boatman and take the rest home to his wife. One day the boatman brought a young man named Mabrin to see Gushtasp.

“My Lord,” said Mabrin, “I wish to marry the second daughter of the king,

your wife's sister, but I cannot unless I kill the wolf who is ravaging the king's lands. And I do not know how to do it."

"I will do it for you," said Gushtasp the hunter.

He went out into the desert and when he found the monster, he shot it down with two arrows and then cut off its head with his hunting knife.

The king came to see the dead beast, and in his joy gave his second daughter to Mabrin.

Some time later, the boatman brought another young man named Ahrun to see Gushtasp. Ahrun wished to marry the third daughter of the king, but first he had to kill a dragon. Gushtasp promised that he would accomplish this new feat.

He took some knives and made them into a ball bristling with sharp points. Then he set out on his quest and found the dragon with fiery breath. He shot many arrows at the body of the monster, leaping from side to side to avoid its claws. Then he fastened the ball of knives to the end of a pike and thrust it

down the dragon's throat. The dragon closed its jaws and fell.

Then the prince dispatched it with his sword.

Thus Ahrun married the third daughter of the king.

You will not be surprised to hear that in the course of time such a valiant prince became the king of Persia in succession to his father. It was during the reign of Gushtasp that the holy prophet Zerdusht, or Zoroaster, taught the Persians faith in Ormazd, Lord of light and sun and fire and of righteousness and justice.

* *

However, you can see that Gushtasp did not immediately find his place and work in the world. He tried many things without success, and even at first incurred the enmity of many men, for example that of the good smith.

At last, however, he gained his true station in life and was able to help others until the time came for him to govern them wisely. And it was precisely in helping others that he was better than the woodcutter of whom we have just spoken; for, according to the story, the woodcutter

was content to work for himself. Gushtasp was also better than the generous Hatim Tai, for instead of giving from the excess of his wealth, the Persian prince gave the strength of his arm and even risked his life for the sake of others.

None is more worthy of respect than one who, relying on himself, is able by his own effort not only to provide for all his needs, but to increase the well-being and the prosperity of those around him.

Respect the father, engineer or woodcutter, writer or labourer, tradesman, smith or explorer, who by his work, whatever it may be, earns a good living and increases the well-being of his family.

Respect the worker who, in order to serve both his own interests and those of his comrades, joins with them to organise co-operative stores or workshops, or trade-unions which enable each one to assert his rights by raising the powerful voice of the many instead of the weak and pleading voice of an isolated individual.

These workers' associations teach workmen to rely on their own strength and to help one another. And you too, school-children, learn to enrich your intelligence by concentrating on the task your master gives you. And, while you mount the steps of knowledge as best you can, learn also to help, when need arises, the friend who is less alert and skilful than yourself. In fairy-tales, one has only to utter a word or rub a lamp or wave a wand for genies to appear and carry people through the air, build palaces in the twinkling of an eye and cause armies of elephants and horsemen to spring from the ground.

But personal effort brings about still greater marvels: it covers the soil with rich harvests, tames wild beasts, tunnels through mountains, erects dykes and bridges, builds cities, launches ships on the ocean and flying machines in the air; in short it gives more well-being and security to all.

By personal effort man becomes more noble, more just, more kind: this is the true progress.

Patience and Perseverance

The Mother

THE PEOPLE of the Punjab have a song which goes like this:

The bulbul does not always sing in the garden,

And the garden is not always in bloom;

Happiness does not always reign,

And friends are not always together.

The conclusion to be drawn from this song is that we cannot expect to be always happy, and that to know how to be patient is most useful. For there are few days in our lives which do not give us the opportunity to learn greater patience.

You want to see a very busy man to ask him something. You go to his house. Already many visitors are there and he keeps you waiting a very long time before seeing you. You stay there quietly, perhaps for several hours. You are patient.

Another time, the person you wish to see is not at home when you arrive. You return again the next day, but his door is still closed. You go back a third time, but he is sick and cannot see you. You let a few days go by and then return once more. And if something new again prevents you from meeting him, nevertheless you are not discouraged, but renew the attempt until at last you see him. This kind of patience is called perseverance.

Perseverance is an active patience, a patience that marches on.

* *

The famous Genoese sailor Columbus set sail from Spain to cross the unknown seas of the West.

For days and weeks on end, in spite of the murmurs of his companions, he persisted in his will to reach a new land; in spite of delays and difficulties, he would not give up until he had reached the first American islands. Thus he discovered the New World.

What did he ask of his companions? He asked them only to have

patience, for they had simply to rely on him and quietly allow him to lead them. But what did he himself need to reach his goal? He needed the sustained energy and the unremitting will that we call perseverance.

* *

The celebrated potter, Bernard Palissy, wanted to recover the lost secret of beautiful old glazed china enamelled in rich colours. For months and years on end, he untiringly pursued his experiments. His attempts to find the glaze remained fruitless for a long time. He devoted all he had to his search; and for days and nights together he watched over the kiln he had built, endlessly trying out new processes for preparing and firing his pottery.

And not only did no one give him any help or encouragement, but his friends and his neighbours called him a madman, and even his wife reproached him for what he was doing.

Several times he had to suspend his experiments for lack of resources, but as soon as he could, he would take them up again with renewed courage. Finally one day he did not even have the wood he needed to stoke his kiln; so, disregarding the cries and threats of his household, he threw his own furniture, to the very last stick, into the fire. And when everything was burnt, he opened the kiln and found it full of the brightly glazed pottery which made him famous and which he had sacrificed so many years to discover.

What was it that his wife and friends lacked that they could not wait for his hour of success to come, without harassing him and making his task more difficult? Simply patience. And what was the only thing he himself never lacked, the only thing that never failed him and which enabled him in the end to triumph over all difficulty and scorn? It was precisely perseverance, that is to say, the mightiest force of all.

For nothing in the world can prevail against perseverance. And even the greatest things are always an accumulation of small and untiring efforts. Enormous boulders have been completely destroyed, worn by raindrops falling one after another on the same spot.

A grain of sand is nothing very powerful, but when many come together,

they form a dune and check the ocean.

And when you learn about natural history, you will hear how mountains have been formed under the sea by little animalcules piled one upon another, who by their persistent efforts have made magnificent islands and archipelagos rise above the waves.

Don't you think that your small, repeated efforts could also achieve great things?

* *

The famous sage Shankara whose name brought glory to the land of Malabar, and who lived about 1200 years ago, had resolved from childhood to become a Sannyasi.

For a long time his mother, although she appreciated the nobility of his wish, did not allow him to devote himself to that way of life.

One day mother and child went to bathe in a river. Shankara dived in and felt his foot suddenly seized by a crocodile. Death seemed close at hand. But even at that dreadful moment the brave child thought only of his great project and cried out to his mother, "I am lost! A crocodile is dragging me down. But let me at least die a Sannyasi!"

"Yes, yes, my son," his mother sobbed in despair.

Shankara felt such joy that he found the strength to free his foot and throw himself ashore.

From that moment he grew in learning as in years. He became a guru, and remained true to his great work of teaching philosophy to the very end of his wonderful life.

* *

All who love India know the beautiful poem of the Mahabharata.

It was written in Sanskrit many hundreds of years ago. Until recent times, no European could read it unless he knew Sanskrit, and that was rare. A translation into one of the European languages was needed.

Babu Pratap Chandra Rai decided to devote himself to this work. In his own land he was able to find a learned friend, Kishori Mohan Ganguly, who could translate the Sanskrit book into English, and its hundred parts were published one by one.

For twelve years Pratap Chandra Rai went on with the task he had set himself. He devoted all his resources to the publication of the book. And when he had nothing left he travelled all over India to ask help from all who were willing to give. He received help from princes and peasants, from scholars and simple folk, from friends in Europe and America.

In the course of one of his journeys he caught the pernicious fever from which he died. During his sickness all his thoughts were turned towards the completion of his work. And even when it became painful for him to speak, he would still say to his wife:

“The book must be finished. Don’t spend money on my funeral rites if it is needed for the printing. Live as simply as you can so as to save money for the Mahabharata.”

He died full of love for India and her great poem.

His widow, Sundari Bala Rai, faithfully carried out his great wish. One year later the translator completed his work, and the eleven volumes of the Mahabharata were presented to the European public who could now know and admire the eighteen Parvas of the splendid epic poem. And reading it, they would learn to respect the great skill and wisdom of the profound thinkers who were the poets of ancient India.

Such are the fruits borne by the efforts of all those who, like Pratap Chandra Rai and so many other useful men, know how to persevere.

And you, brave children, will you not join the great army of men and women who never tire of doing good and never abandon their task until they have completed it?

In this wide world, there is no lack of noble work to be accomplished, nor is there any lack of good people to undertake it; but what is very often lacking is the perseverance which alone can carry it through to the end.

The Simple Life The Mother

THE PROPHET Mohammed, who devoted his life to teaching the Arab people, cared not for ease or riches.

One night he slept on a hard mat, and when he awoke his skin bore the marks of the knots and fibres of his bed.

A friend said to him, "O Messenger of Allah! This bed was too hard for you, and if you had asked me I would joyfully have prepared a softer one, so that your rest might have been better."

The Prophet replied, "A soft bed is not for me. I have a work to do in the world. When my body needs rest, I give it rest, but only as a horseman who ties his horse for a little while under the shade of a tree, to spare him from the heat of the sun, and soon sets off once more."

"I have a work to do in the world," said the Prophet. That is why his noble life was a simple one. Believing in his mission, he wanted to instruct the whole of Arabia. He did not care for luxuries: his heart was set on loftier thoughts.

* *

The following story from Arabia shows that to a healthy soul the simple life offers more happiness than any other.

Maisun was a daughter of the tribe of Kalb; she had spent her early years in tents in the desert.

One day, she was married to Caliph Muawiyah, but although he was rich and had many slaves, she was not happy with him; and in spite of all the luxury around her, she could find no peace of mind. Often when she was alone, she would sing softly to herself verses she had composed in Arabic: Brown garments of camel's hair are fairer in my eyes than the robes of a queen.

The desert tent is lovelier to dwell in than the grand chambers of a palace. The young colts that run about the Arab camp are lovelier than the mules weighed down by their rich trappings.

The voice of the watch-dog who barks at an approaching stranger sounds sweeter than the ivory horn of the palace-guard.

Her song was heard by the Caliph and he banished her from his court. So the poetess returned to her tribe, happy to see no more of the rich dwelling that made her sad.

* *

In all countries, many people are beginning to understand that a simple life is more desirable than a life of extravagance, vanity and show.

There are more and more men and women who though they can afford to buy costly things for themselves, feel that their money can be put to a better use. They take a healthy diet instead of rich foods, and prefer to decorate their homes with furniture that is simple, strong and in good taste, rather than with cumbersome, ornate and useless articles meant only for display.

In every age, the best and most energetic servitors of earth's progress have known how to lead a quiet and frugal life, which keeps the body in good health and enables man to take a more active part in working for the common good. Their example will always put to shame all those who pile up useless treasures and become slaves to their vast quantities of servants, clothes and furniture.

You cannot make a heap without making a hole; and too often the luxury of some represents the poverty of many others.

There are too many beautiful, great and useful things to be done in the world for those who are not wholly devoid of intelligence to be allowed to waste their time, money and thought in futile pastimes.

* *

Saint Francis was an apostle of the Good Life. He did not teach in order to earn money. His life was simple and his greatest joy was to instruct the people by his example and his preaching.

And he was content with whatever food he was given.

One day, as he and his companion, Brother Masseo, were passing through a town, Masseo went down one street while Francis took another. Masseo was tall and handsome, whereas the saint was short

and plain-looking. People gave generously to Masseo, but Francis collected only very little.

When they met outside the gates of the town, they sat by a large stone on the bank of a clear stream that ran nearby, and put together the alms they had received.

“O Brother Masseo,” cried Saint Francis with a joyful face, “we are not worthy of so great a feast.”

“Indeed,” replied Masseo, “but what is there to call a feast in these few pieces of bread? We have no knife, no dishes, no cloth, no servant.”

“Is it not a feast,” replied the saint, “to have good bread on a good table when one is hungry, and fresh water from a limpid spring to drink when one is thirsty?”

This does not mean to say that poor people should always be resigned to their miserable fare. But in any case it shows how the contentment that comes from a noble life and the cheerfulness native to beautiful souls can make up for the absence of material possessions and outer riches.

* *

One thing is certain, that a simple life has never harmed anyone, while the same cannot be said for luxury and over-abundance. Most often, the things which are of no use to men are also those which cause them harm. In the reign of the famous Akbar, there lived at Agra a Jain saint named Banarasi Das. The Emperor summoned the saint to his palace and told him:

“Ask of me what you will, and because of your holy life, your wish shall be satisfied.”

“Parabrahman has given me more than I could wish for,” replied the saint. “But ask all the same,” Akbar insisted. “Then, Sire, I would ask that you do not call me again to your palace, for I want to devote my time to the divine work.”

“Let it be so,” said Akbar. “But I in my turn have a favour to ask you.”

“Speak, Sire.”

“Give me some good counsel that I may bear in mind and act upon.”

Banarasi Das thought for a moment and said:

“See that your food is pure and clean, and take good care, especially at night, over your meat and drink.”

“I will not forget your advice,” said the Emperor.

In truth the advice was good, for healthy food and drink make a healthy body, fit to be the temple of a pure mind and life.

But it so happened that the very day on which the saint visited the Emperor was a fast-day. And therefore Akbar would only have his meal several hours after midnight. The palace cooks had prepared the dishes in the evening and had placed them in plates of gold and silver, until the time of fasting should be over.

It was still dark when Akbar had them brought before him. Despite his haste to take some nourishment, he suddenly remembered the words of Banarasi Das: “Take care over your meat and drink.” So he examined the plate before him carefully and found that the food was covered with brown ants. In spite of all precautions, these ants had crept in and spoiled the Emperor’s meal.

Akbar had to send away the dishes, and this incident strongly impressed on his mind the useful advice he had received.

For you will understand that Banarasi Das had not intended to warn Akbar merely against brown ants, but against anything in his diet that might not be good for the health of his body or mind.

Many diseases come from an unhealthy diet.

One who knowingly sells unwholesome products is in fact making an attack on the lives of his fellow-citizens. And unwholesome products are not only those that are adulterated or spoilt but all those that may be in any way harmful to eat.

* *

The story does not tell us that Akbar found brown ants in his cup as well, and yet Banarasi Das advised him to be careful about his drink. For there are indeed cups which look bright to the eye and which seem to contain a pleasant and cheering drink but which are nevertheless full of danger for men. Foremost among them are those which contain alcohol.

The Prophet Mohammed taught that there was sin in wine and gambling;

and therefore all who respect the words of the Koran abstain from wine and gambling to their profit.

But on the other hand there are many good people all over the world who find it right to take spirits. We respect their opinions. But these same people cannot assert that it is wrong not to take alcohol.

If, then, there are people who think that it is wrong to take fermented drinks, and others, on the contrary, who think that it is good, yet there is no one to maintain that it is wrong not to take any. It is also debatable whether or not it is useful to drink, but no one would dream of claiming that it is harmful not to do so. And everyone would agree that in any case it is cheaper.

In every country there are societies for temperance or even total abstinence, whose members undertake not to touch spirits.

And in certain towns it is even forbidden to sell them.

But in other places, the use of alcohol, formerly unknown, is spreading. In India, for example, where abstinence had reigned for so many centuries, alcohol has been introduced, more terrible than any demon in the ancient legends. For the terrible Rakshasas of which they speak could be harmful only to the body, whereas alcohol has even the power to kill thought and destroy character. So first of all it hurts the body. It hurts the children of parents who drink to excess. It hurts the intelligence of man and enslaves those who should be the servitors of humanity.

For every one of us should be a servant of humanity; and if by our food or our drink we weaken our minds or bodies, we are then only bad servants unable to perform their task.

What happens to the soldier when his weapon is broken, to the sailor when his ship has lost its masts, to the horseman when his horse is lamed? And what can a man do if he loses possession of his most precious faculties?

He no longer even has the worth of a good animal, for the animal at least avoids eating and drinking things that may harm it.

The Roman poet Virgil liked to live in the countryside. He admired the

powerful bullock that draws the plough and cuts the furrow where the next harvest will spring up. Strong is his body, powerful his muscles and hard is his labour year in and year out.

And Virgil adds: "Wine and too much feasting are unknown to him. He feeds on grass, quenches his thirst from running rivers and crystal streams; and no care disturbs his peaceful slumber."

Be temperate to be strong.

You would be offended if someone were to tell you, "Be weak."

Moderation increases the strength of the strong and preserves the strength of the weak.

Remember the advice of Banarasi Das:

Take good care over the dish.

Take good care over the glass.

Prudence The Mother

“GOOD shot!” The cry rang out as the young Indian let fly his arrow and hit his mark.

“Yes,” someone said, “but it is broad daylight. The archer can see his target. He is not so skilled as Dasaratha.”

“And what does Dasaratha do?”

“He is Sabdabhedhi.”

“What is that?”

“He shoots by sound.”

“What do you mean?”

“Well, he can shoot in the dark. At night he goes out into the jungle and listens, and when he has judged, from the sound of wings or footsteps, what kind of game he has encountered he lets fly his arrow and hits it as surely as if he had shot by day.”

Thus the reputation of Dasaratha, prince of the city of Ayodhya, was noised abroad.

He was proud of his skill as Sabdabhedhi, and pleased with the praise of the people. At dusk he would go out alone in his chariot to lie in wait in the heart of the forest. Now he would hear the tread of a buffalo or an elephant coming to drink at the river, now the light-footed deer or the stealthy approach of a tiger.

One night as he lay among the bushes, listening for the sound of leaves or water, he suddenly heard something moving on the shore of the lake. He could see nothing in the darkness, but was not Dasaratha a Sabdabhedhi? The sound was enough for him: it was most certainly an elephant. He shot an arrow.

Immediately a cry rang out which made him leap up. “Help! Help! Someone has shot me!”

The bow fell from Dasaratha’s hands; he suddenly felt dizzy with horror.

What had he done? Wounded a human being instead of a wild beast? He rushed through the jungle towards the lake. On the bank a young man was lying in his own blood, all dishevelled, holding in his hand a pitcher which he had just been filling.

“O sir,” he groaned, “was it you who shot the fatal arrow? What harm have I done you that you should treat me so? I am a hermit’s son. My aged parents are blind; I look after them and provide for their needs. I came to draw water for them, and now I shall no longer be able to serve them! Follow this path to their hut and tell them what has happened. But first pull out this shaft from my breast, for it gives me great pain.”

Dasaratha removed the arrow from the wound. The young man breathed a last sigh and died.

Then the prince filled the pitcher with water and followed the path the dying youth had shown him. As he came near, the father called out:

“My son, why have you taken so long? Was it to swim in the lake? We feared that some harm had befallen you. But why do you not answer?”

With a trembling voice Dasaratha said:

“I am not your son, O holy hermit. I am a Kshatriya, and until now I was proud of my skill with a bow. This night as I lay in wait I thought I heard an elephant drinking at the water’s edge. I shot my arrow. Alas! It was your son I struck. Oh, tell me how to atone for my fault.”

Then the old couple cried out and wept. They bade the prince lead them to the spot where their son lay, their only son. They recited sacred hymns over his body and sprinkled the water of the funeral rites. Then the hermit said:

“Listen, Dasaratha! Through your fault we shed tears over our dear son. One day, you also shall weep over a beloved son. Before that many years will pass; but the punishment shall surely come.”

They made a pyre to burn the dead body, then threw themselves into the

flames and perished also.

Time passed. Dasaratha became king of Ayodhya and married the lady Kausalya. And his son was the glorious Rama.

Rama was loved by all in the city, except Queen Kaikeyi, the king's second wife, and her maid. These two women plotted the downfall of noble Rama, and because of them he was sent to me into exile for fourteen years.

Then Dasaratha mourned his son, as the aged parents had mourned in the jungle for the young man who had died at midnight by the lakeside. Dasaratha had once been so proud of his skill that he had lacked prudence and given no thought to the risk of wounding someone in the darkness. It would have been better for him only to draw his bow in full daylight than to trust so rashly in his skill as Sabdabhedhi. He meant no harm, but he lacked foresight.

*

A merchant of the city of Benares once took pity on two old vultures who were poor and miserable. He took them to a dry place, lit a fire and fed them with pieces of meat from the pyre where people burnt dead cattle. When the rainy season came, the vultures, now strong and well, flew away towards the mountains.

But in their gratitude to the merchant of Benares, they decided to pick up all the clothes they could find lying about so as to give them to their kindly friend. They flew from house

to house, from village to village, snatched up all the garments drying out in the open and took them to the merchant's house.

He appreciated their good intentions, but he neither used nor sold the stolen clothes; he simply put them away carefully. However, traps had been set everywhere for the two vultures, and one of them was caught. He was brought before the king, who asked him:

"Why are you robbing my subjects?"

"One day a merchant saved the lives of my brother and myself; in order to repay our debt, we have collected these clothes for him," the bird replied.

The merchant was summoned before the king and questioned in his turn. "Sire," he said, "the vultures did indeed bring me many clothes, but I have kept them all safely and I am ready to give them back to their owners."

The king pardoned the vultures, for they had acted out of gratitude, though without discernment; and thanks to his prudence, the merchant too was spared.

* *

The Japanese have a picturesque way of expressing their idea of prudence.

They have in one of their temples an image of a meditating Buddha seated on a lotus-blossom. In front of him are three little monkeys, one with its hands over its eyes, another over its ears, and the third covering its mouth. What do these three monkeys signify? By its gesture the first one says:

"I do not see evil and folly."

The second one says:

"I do not hear them."

And the third:

"I do not speak them."

In the same way, the wise man is prudent in what he looks at, in what he listens to, and in what he says.

He considers the consequences, thinks of the morrow, and if he does not know his way, he asks.

Sincerity The Mother

ALION, a wolf and a fox went out hunting together. They killed an ass, a gazelle and a hare. Seeing this catch, the lion said to the wolf: “Kindly tell me, friend wolf, how we should divide this game.”

“There is no need,” replied the wolf, “to cut up the three animals. You take the ass, let the fox take the hare, and for my part I shall be content with the gazelle.”

The lion’s only answer was a roar of fury, and with a single blow, as reward for his advice, he crushed the wolf’s head with his claw. Then the lion turned to the fox and said:

“And, my dear friend, what do you suggest?”

“Oh, Sire,” the fox replied with a deep bow, “it is a very simple matter. You should have the ass for your breakfast, the gazelle for your evening meal, and eat the hare as a light snack in between.”

“Very well,” said the lion, pleased to have all the game for himself. “And who taught you to speak with such wisdom and justice?”

“The wolf,” the fox replied slyly.

Why did the fox speak in this way? Was it to say what he really thought? Oh, certainly not! Was it then a sincere wish to please the lion? Certainly not that either. He spoke like that because he was afraid, and we can surely make allowances for him. But nevertheless we must admit that his words were not

truthful — merely artful. And if the lion approved of them, it was because he loved meat, not truth.

* *

Muslim writer, Abu Abbas, tells us of the glory of King Solomon, who reigned in Jerusalem, the holy city of the Hebrews.

In his throne room there were six hundred seats, half of which were occupied by sages, the other half by Jinns or genies who assisted

Solomon by their magic power.

Throughout the sittings of the Council, a multitude of great birds would appear at a word from the king and spread their wings to shade the people in the six hundred seats. And at his command, each morning and evening, a powerful wind would arise, lifting up the whole palace and instantaneously transporting it a month's journey away. In this way, the king was at hand to govern the distant lands that belonged to him.

Besides, Solomon made the most marvellous throne one could ever dream of. And this throne was designed in such a way that no one would dare to utter an untruth in the presence of the king.

It was made of ivory, inlaid with pearls, emeralds and rubies, and around it stood four golden date-palms on which the dates were also emeralds and rubies. At the top of two of these palms were golden peacocks, and on the two others were golden vultures. On each side of the throne there were also two golden lions between two pillars of emerald. And golden vines bearing ruby grapes twined around the trunks of the trees.

The elders of Israel were seated at Solomon's right hand and their seats were of gold, the genies sat at his left hand and their seats were of silver. When the king held his court of justice the people were allowed into his presence. And each time that a man bore witness on another, if he deviated ever so little from the truth, an amazing thing would happen. At the sight of him, the throne bearing the king, the lions, the palm-trees, the peacocks and the vultures, would instantly turn round on itself. Then the lions would thrust forward their claws, lashing the ground with their tails; the vultures and the peacocks would flap their wings.

And so the witnesses would tremble with terror and would not dare to tell a single lie.

And this was no doubt very convenient, and must have considerably lightened the king's task. But fear is always a wretched thing, which consorts ill with truth.

Even when by chance, as in the story of Abu Abbas, it forces a man to speak the truth, that does not make him truthful; for, at the very next moment, fear may drive him to speak without frankness, as did the fox

in our previous tale. And that is what most often happens. An honest man does not need the marvels of Solomon's throne to learn to speak the truth. The throne of truth dwells within his own heart; the rectitude of his soul cannot but inspire him with words of rectitude. He speaks the truth not because he is afraid of a teacher, a master or a judge, but because truth is the characteristic of an upright man, the stamp of his nature. Love of truth makes him face all fears. He speaks as he should, no matter what happens to him.

*

A rich and mighty king named Vishwamitra, who longed for greater esteem, resolved to practise Tapasya (austerities) in order to rise from his own caste of Kshatriya to the highest of all, that of a Brahmin. He did all that he thought was needed and led a life of the apparent austerity which made everyone say, "The king deserves to be a Brahmin." But the Brahmin Vasishtha did not think so, for he knew that Vishwamitra had acted out of vanity; his renunciation was not sincere. And so he refused to address him as a Brahmin.

In his fury the king had a hundred children of Vasishtha's family put to death. But in spite of all his grief, Vasishtha persisted in his refusal to say what he did not think was true. So the king resolved to kill this truthful man as well. One night he went to Vasishtha's hut to carry out the evil deed. When he came near to the door, he heard the Brahmin talking with his wife, and as his own name was mentioned, he stopped to listen. Saintly and pure, full of forgiveness for him were the words he heard. This touched the king's heart. Full of repentance he threw away his weapon, then went in and bowed at the hermit's feet.

"Brahmarshi," Vasishtha welcomed him affectionately, when seeing the king's present state of mind.

"Why did you not acknowledge my Tapasya before?" Vishwamitra asked humbly.

"Because," replied Vasishtha, "you claimed the title of Brahmin in the name of an arrogant power, but now that you are repentant, you come in the true spirit of a Brahmin."

Vasishtha knew how to speak the truth without fear. And he also spoke it without rancour.

* *

Is it not noble to speak the truth in this way, even when there is some danger in doing it?

Besides, very often, things turn out better for those who brave this danger than it might have seemed at first. The success of falsehood is only short-lived, whereas in most cases, to be sincere is the cleverest thing to do.

One morning, the Emperor of Delhi sat on his throne to confer honours on those he considered worthy. As the ceremony was drawing to a close, he noticed that one of the people he had summoned, a young man named Syed Ahmed, had not yet made his appearance.

The Emperor stepped down from his throne and got into a sedan chair which was used to carry him through his vast palace.

Just at that moment the young man hurried in.

“Your son is late,” said the Emperor to Syed’s father, who was his friend. Why?” asked the Emperor, looking sternly at the young man.

“Sire,” Syed replied frankly, “it is because I overslept.”

The courtiers looked at the young man in amazement. How dare he admit so shamelessly to the Emperor that he had no better excuse? How tactless of him to speak like that!

But the Emperor, after pondering a moment, felt respect for the young man because of his sincerity; and he gave him the necklace of pearls and the jewel of honour to place on his brow.

Such was the reward of Syed Ahmed, who loved the truth and spoke it to all, prince or peasant.

* *

It is quite certain that to be able to tell the truth without difficulty, it is best always to act in such a way that we have no need to conceal anything we do. And for that, in our actions of every moment, we should remember that we are in the presence of the Divine.

For straightforwardness of speech also demands straightforwardness of

actions; and a sincere man is one who shuns all falsehood in what he says and all hypocrisy in what he does.

At Amroha a special kind of pottery is made, known as Kagazi pottery, decorated with silver designs. These pots are very pretty, but they are so light and fragile that they break with the slightest use. Although they look just as serviceable as any other earthenware, they are only good to look at.

Many people are like Kagazi pottery. They have a beautiful appearance; but if you try to put them to any kind of test, you will see that everything about them is ornament. Do not put the slightest trust in them, for this would be too heavy a weight for their fragile nature to bear.

A Brahmin sent his son to Benares to study under the guidance of a Pundit.

Twelve years later the young man returned to his home town, and many people hurried to see him, thinking that he had become a very profound scholar. They placed before him a book written in Sanskrit and said:

“Explain the doctrine to us, honourable Pundit.”

The young man stared at the book. In truth, he did not understand a single word of it. In Benares he had learnt nothing but the alphabet. And even then the letters had been written very large on the blackboard, so that by seeing them every day he might get them little by little into his head.

So he remained silent in front of the book, his eyes brimming with tears. “O Pundit,” said the visitors, “something has touched your heart. Tell us what you have found in the book.”

“The letters,” he said at last, “were big in Benares, but here they are small!”

Was not this Pundit like the Kagazi pots?

* *

A wolf had his den in the rocks on the bank of the river Ganges. When the snows melted, the water began to rise. It rose so high that it surrounded the wolf’s rock on every side. So one day he was unable to go out in search of food.

“Oh well!” he said when he saw that he had nothing left to eat, “today shall be a holy day, in honour of which I proclaim a fast.”

He sat on the edge of the rock and put on a very solemn air to celebrate the holy day and the fast.

But no sooner had he done this than a wild goat came bounding across the water, from rock to rock, and reached the place where the wolf was sitting full of devotion.

“Oho!” he exclaimed when he saw it. “Here is something to eat.”

He pounced on the goat and missed it, he pounced once more and missed it again. Finally the goat escaped by leaping across the stream.

“Oh well!” said the wolf, resuming his saintly pose, “I shall not be so impious as to eat goat’s flesh on a holy day. No, no — no meat for me on a fast day!”

What do you think of the wolf, his devotion and his respect for the holy day? You laugh at his roguery. But how many people there are whose sincerity is like this, who adorn themselves with fine sentiments because it suits their interests, and pose as little saints because they are unable to give free rein to their vices. But in spite of all their cunning, do you think that these tricksters can prevail for very long against one who is right and just?

* *

The monkeys and bears of Hanuman’s army fought for Lord Rama and his brother Lakshman against Ravana the ten-headed demon.

Weakening under the blows of the warriors who were attacking him from every side, Ravana made use of his magic power.

Suddenly, at his side, among the demons, many Ramas and many Lakshmans magically appeared. They were in truth nothing but false and deceptive appearances, but the monkeys and the bears, taking them for real people, halted in confusion: how could they continue the fight and go on throwing trees and rocks against Rama and Lakshman, their beloved leaders? Seeing their dismay, the demon Ravana gave a smile of cruel delight. Rama smiled too: what pleasure he would take in destroying such a falsehood, in exposing the trickery, in gaining victory

for the truth! He fitted an arrow to his mighty bow and shot. The arrow whizzed through the misleading shadows, which immediately dissolved. At last Hanuman's army could see clearly and their courage revived. Similarly, every straight word from a sincere man is like an arrow that can destroy much falsehood and hypocrisy.

* *

There is a legend in South India which tells of a prince, the Jasmine King, whose laugh alone would fill the land for leagues around with the sweet fragrance of jasmine. But for that his laugh must come from the joyful and spontaneous gaiety of his heart. It would have been no use if he had tried to laugh without true merriment. When his spirit was full of joy, his laughter would bubble up like a fragrant spring. The quality of this laughter came wholly from its sincerity. The tables in Duryodhana's palace were laid with an extremely rich display of vessels of gold and silver, ornamented with rubies and emeralds and diamonds sparkling with many colours. Lord Krishna was invited to the feast but did not go. Instead he went that night to the house of a poor Sudra, who had also invited him. The meal was simple, the dishes were plain.

And yet Krishna chose this one in preference to the other, for the feast which the Sudra offered him was full of sincere love, whereas the sumptuous banquet of King Duryodhana had been given only for show. It is also said that the glorious Rama once sat at the table of a very humble woman, whose husband was a Fowler.

All she could put before the famous hero was a few fruits, for she had nothing else. But she gave the best she had with such a good heart that Rama was touched and wished that the memory of this gift from a sincere soul should not be forgotten, and that is why it is still spoken of after so many centuries.

Jalal was a wise and famous teacher. One day two Turks who wished to hear his teachings came to see him with an offering. As they were very poor, their gift was small — only a handful of lentils. Some of the sage's disciples looked at this present with scorn. But Jalal told them:

“Once the Prophet Mohammed needed riches to carry out one of his

undertakings. So he asked his followers to give him what they could spare. Some brought half of their possessions, others a third. Abu Bakar gave all his wealth. In this way Mohammed got a large quantity of animals and weapons. Then came a poor woman who in her turn offered the Prophet three dates and a wheat-cake; and that was all she had. Many smiled at this sight, but the Prophet told them that he had had a dream in which he had seen the angels take a pair of scales and put the gifts of all the people in one of the pans and into the other only the dates and the bread of the poor woman. And the scale stood balanced, for this pan was as heavy as the other.” And Jalal added:

“A small gift offered with a sincere heart has as much value as costly presents.”

On hearing this the two Turks were full of joy and no one dared laugh any more about the handful of lentils.

* *

A poor man of low caste hunted for a whole day to feed his family, but could not catch anything. At nightfall he was still in the forest, alone, hungry and worn out by his vain attempts. In the hope of finding a nest he climbed up a Bel tree, whose three lobed leaves are offered to the great Shiva by his devotees. But he found no nest. He thought of his wife and his little children waiting at home for their father and their food, and wept for them.

Tears of pity, the legend says, are very heavy. They are far more precious than the tears shed by those who are sorry for their own pain.

The hunter’s tears fell upon the leaves of the Bel tree and bore them down towards the stone of offering standing at the foot of the tree in honour of Shiva. At that moment the man was bitten by a snake and died. The spirits immediately carried his soul to the house of the gods and brought it before the great Shiva.

“There is no place here for this man’s soul,” the dwellers in heaven cried out together. “For he was of low caste, he did not know the holy laws, he ate impure food and did not offer the customary gifts to the gods.”

But Shiva said to them:

“He gave me Bel leaves, and above all, he offered me sincere tears. There is no low caste for hearts that are true.” And he received him into his heaven.

* *

All these stories show us that in every age and in every land, both men and gods have given honour to sincerity; they love honesty and truth in all things.

One who lives in falsehood is an enemy of mankind.

All human sciences — philosophy, astronomy, mathematics, chemistry, physics — are seekings for truth. But in the smallest things as in the greatest, truth is necessary.

Little children, do not wait to be grown up before you learn to be truthful: that cannot be done too early; and to remain truthful, it is never too soon to acquire the habit.

Sometimes it is so difficult for men to speak the truth even if they want to, for to do so, it must first of all be known and sought out, and that is not always so easy. There were four young princes of Benares who were brothers. Each one of them said to their father’s charioteer:

“I want to see a Kimsuka tree.”

“I will show you,” said the charioteer, and he invited the eldest to go for a ride.

In the jungle he showed the prince a Kimsuka. It was the time of year when there are neither buds, nor leaves, nor flowers. So the prince saw only a trunk of dark wood. A few weeks later, the second prince was taken for a drive in the chariot and he also saw the Kimsuka tree. He found it covered with leaves.

A little later in the season, the third brother saw it in his turn; it was all pink with flowers.

At last the fourth saw it; its fruits were ripe. One day when the four brothers were together, someone asked:

“What does the Kimsuka tree look like?”

The eldest said: “Like a bare trunk.”

The second: “Like a flourishing banana-tree.”

The third: "Like a pink and red bouquet."

And the fourth: "Like an acacia laden with fruit."

Being unable to agree, they went together to their father the king for him to decide between them. When he heard how one after the other the young princes had seen the Kimsuka tree, the king smiled and said: "All four of you are right, but all four of you forget that the tree is not the same in all seasons."

Each one was describing what he had seen and each one was ignorant of what the others knew.

In this way, most often, men know only a fraction of the truth, and their error comes precisely from the fact that they think they know it all.

How much less this error would be if they had learnt at an early age to love truth so much that they would always seek it more and more.

* *

The King of Kumaon, in the region of the Himalaya mountains, was hunting one day on the hill of Almora, which at that time was covered by thick forest.

A hare ran out of the thickets and the king began to chase it. But this hare suddenly changed into a tiger and soon disappeared from his sight. Struck by this strange occurrence, the king assembled the wise men in his palace and asked them what such a thing might mean.

"It means," they replied, "that on the spot where you lost sight of the tiger, you should build a new city. For tigers only flee from places where men come to live in great numbers."

So workmen were engaged to build the new town. A thick iron rod was driven into the earth to test the firmness of the ground. By chance, at that very moment a slight earth-tremor occurred.

"Stop!" cried the wise men. "The point has pierced the body of Seshanaga, the world-serpent. The town must not be built here."

And, indeed, the legend tells that when the iron rod was drawn out of the ground, it was found to be all red with the blood of Seshanaga.

"This is most unfortunate," said the king, "but since we have decided to build the city there, we shall build it all the same."

The wise men were furious and they predicted dire misfortunes for the city, and the early end of the king's race.

The soil was fertile and the water abundant. For six hundred years, the town of Almora has stood on its rock, and the surrounding fields produce rich harvests.

Thus, in spite of their wisdom, the wise men were mistaken in their predictions. Doubtless they were sincere and thought they were speaking the truth, but men are very often mistaken in this way and take for realities what is nothing but superstition.

Little children, the world is full of superstitions, and the best means given to man to discover more of the truth is to remain always sincere and to become always more so in thought, deed and word; for it is when we avoid deceiving others in all things that we also learn to deceive ourselves less and less.

Right Judgment The Mother

CHOOSE a good straight stick and dip it half-way into some water: the stick will appear to be bent in the middle. But that is an illusion, and if you were to think that the stick was actually bent, your judgment would be wrong. Pull out the stick and you will see that in fact it is still straight. On the other hand, it is possible for a stick that is actually bent in the middle to appear straight if it is carefully placed in a particular way in the water.

Well, men are often like sticks. If you look at them from a certain angle, you may not see them as straight as they are, and sometimes too, they may have a deceptive appearance and seem straight when they are crooked. That is why you should trust appearances as little as possible and never judge anyone lightly.

In India, a mendicant monk was going across the country asking for alms. In a meadow he met a ram. The furious animal got ready to rush at him, and to do so, took a few steps back and lowered its head.

“Ah!” said the monk, “here is a good and intelligent animal.

He has recognised that I am a man full of merit, and he is bowing down before me to greet me.”

Just then the ram rushed forward and knocked the virtuous man to the ground with one blow of its head.

So it can happen that one judges too respectfully and trustingly those who least deserve it. For sometimes there are people who are like the wolf that the good La Fontaine speaks of — the wolf whom the sheep took for the shepherd because it had put on his cape; or else like the ass who was taken at first for a dangerous animal because it had put on a lion’s skin.

* *

But if one can make mistakes like this by trusting to appearances, it more often happens, on the contrary, that one is tempted to make hasty and

uncharitable judgments on others.

The Shah of Persia Ismail Sefevi had just conquered the land of Khorasan and was returning to his capital.

As he was passing by the home of the poet Hatifi, he thought he would visit him. He did not have the patience to go as far as the gate of the house, so great was his desire to see the famous man, so, catching sight of the branch of a tree overhanging the wall, he caught hold of it, jumped over the enclosure and into the poet's garden.

What would you have thought if someone had suddenly entered your house like this? You would probably have taken him for a thief and given him a very poor welcome.

Hatifi did well not to judge by appearances or according to the first impression of the moment. He gave a warm welcome to his odd visitor. And later he wrote new poems on the exploits that the Shah had been so eager to tell him.

* *

In general nothing is easier than to see in others what is least to their advantage; each one has his faults, to which his neighbours give more attention than he does. But what we should look for in every man, if we do not want to judge him too unjustly, is what is best in him. "If your friend has but one eye," says the proverb, "look at his good side."

A friend of yours may seem awkward or slow, and yet be the most hardworking student of the class.

And your teacher whom you find strict and severe probably loves you much and desires only your progress.

A friend who sometimes seems so boring or so surly to you, may after all be the best friend you have.

And how many people who are looked upon as wicked and are treated harshly, carry deep in their hearts something which no one has been able to perceive.

A great wolf was causing terror in the woods and fields around the town of Gubbio, so that the people dared not even venture on the roads. The monster was killing men and animals alike.

At last the good Saint Francis decided to face the frightful creature. He went out of the town, followed at a distance by many men and women. As he drew near to the forest, the wolf suddenly sprang at the saint with wide open jaws. But Francis calmly made a sign and the wolf lay down peacefully at his feet like a lamb.

“Brother Wolf,” Saint Francis told him, “you have done much harm in this land, and you deserve a murderer’s death. All men hate you. But I would gladly make peace between you and my friends of Gubbio.”

The wolf bowed his head and wagged his tail.

“Brother Wolf,” Francis went on, “I promise you that if you will keep peace with these people, they will be kind to you and give you food every day. So, will you promise to do no more harm from now on?”

Then the wolf bowed his head very low and put his right paw in the saint’s hand. In this way they made a pact together, in good faith.

Then Francis led the wolf into the marketplace of Gubbio and repeated before the assembled citizens what he had just said to the wolf, and once more the wolf put his paw in the saint’s hand as a pledge of his good behaviour for the future.

The wolf lived in the town for two years and did no harm to anyone. Each day the townsfolk would bring him his food, and they all mourned him when he died. However bad the wolf may have seemed, in truth there was something in him which no one had discovered until the saint had called him his brother. In this legend the wolf no doubt represents some great offender much hated by other men. It is intended to show that even in those who seem lost beyond hope, there still remain some seeds of good that can be awakened with a little love.

All good cabinet-makers know that there is no plank, however rotten, in which one cannot find some sound fibres. The bad workman will throw away the plank in ignorance and contempt,

but the good workman will take it up, remove what is wormeaten and carefully plane the rest. And out of the hardest knots in the wood, the artist can shape the most heart-stirring figures.

* *

In the cheerless land of Guiana, which is so fatal to Europeans, prisons have been established for convicts sentenced to hard labour or transportation. Some years ago, a military warder was taking a working party to Cayenne when by accident he fell into the harbour just as the tide was coming in.

At certain times, at low tide, this harbour is almost completely covered with sand, so that it is impossible to disembark.

On the other hand, at full tide, it is flooded by extremely swift currents, bringing the sharks, which infest the entire coast, in great numbers.

The warder who had fallen into the water was in a very critical situation, for he hardly knew how to swim. Every second that passed increased his danger of being snapped up by one of these voracious creatures. Suddenly one of the convicts, heeding only his nobler feelings, threw himself into the water. He was able to catch hold of the warder and after a great effort, to save him.

This man was a criminal, and normally those who saw him pass by in his convict's uniform, marked with ignominious letters and the number which now took the place of his name, would turn away in contempt, thinking him unworthy of a single glance or word of compassion. And yet their judgment was quite unjust, for in him there was compassion. In spite of all his faults, there was nobility in his heart: he was ready to sacrifice himself for the sake of the very man who was bound by duty never to show him any mercy.

* *

Here is yet another story about convicts that will show you how mistaken one can be if one judges men by appearances. Two released convicts had been hired by a gold-pro prospector from the Upper Maroni. Every year he would entrust them with the gold grains and the nuggets obtained by "placer mining", which they were to take to the nearest gold-market, thirty days' journey by canoe down river.

One day the two ex-convicts decided to escape.

For when convicts have completed their sentence, they are not free to return home, but have to stay in the penal colony, usually for the rest of

their lives. However, as Guiana is a wild and uninhabited country, full of virgin forests and swamps, where the ex-convicts are in continual danger of dying of fever or starvation, most of them try to escape as soon as the opportunity arises.

So, wishing to take advantage of the canoe at their disposal, the two hired convicts decided to make for the Dutch colony on the opposite bank of the river.

But first, they placed the stock of gold belonging to their master in a safe spot, and sent him a letter indicating the place where his property lay.

“You have always been good to us,” they said, “and while we are escaping, we feel some scruples about robbing you of what you entrusted to our care.”

These two convicts had once been sentenced for theft. The gold they were carrying meant quite a small fortune for them, but something in them was honest and straightforward. To everyone who knew their story and judged them according to their past, they were nothing but vile and worthless criminals; but for the sake of the man who was able to trust them, they could, in spite of everything, become trustworthy once more. Little children, let us be prudent and charitable in our thoughts; let us be careful not to judge our fellow-men too hastily; and even let us refrain from judging them at all when we can avoid it.

Order The Mother

MEN IN ancient India had a very poetic idea about the earth and the world — an idea intended to express order.

The land inhabited by men was called Jambu Dvipa and it was surrounded by a sea of salt. Then came a ring of land and then a sea of milk. Another ring of land, and a sea of butter.

More land, and a sea of curds. Land again, and a sea of wine. More land, and after that a sea of sugar. Still more land, and at last, the seventh and final ring of pure water: the sweet, the sweetest of all seas!

If you look at a map of the world like the ones we now use in schools, you will not find the sea of sugar, or the sea of milk, or the others. Nor did the Indians think that these seas really existed, but for them it was an original way of expressing a profound idea.

The ancient legend meant among other things that everything in the world is made to be arranged in an orderly way; that the earth will truly become a place of rest, a reasonable place, and a dwelling fit to live in, only when each thing has found its right place. Indeed, how could one enjoy even the best things, salt, milk, butter, wine, sugar, water, if instead of being kept apart in an orderly way they were to form the frightful mixture you can imagine?

* *

All the religious books of mankind, by means of the most varied images, teach this law of order.

The Hebrew Book of Genesis, in its own way, also tells a story of order. In the beginning there was chaos, that is, disorder and darkness. And the first act of God was to throw light upon this disorder, just as a man shines the light of his lamp into the gloom of the dark and dirty cellar he wants

to enter.

After that the Bible tells how, day by day, things emerged from the chaos in an orderly way until at last the human race appeared. It is the glory of man to create order and to discover it everywhere.

The astronomer looks up towards the stars and makes a map of the heavens; he studies the regular paths of the heavenly bodies and names them, he calculates the motions of the planets around the sun and forecasts the moment when the moon, passing between the earth and the sun, will cause what we call an eclipse. The whole science of astronomy depends on a knowledge of order.

Arithmetic is also a science of order. Even a very small child takes delight in repeating numbers in the right order. He soon discovers that there is no meaning in saying: one, five, three, ten, two, as he counts his fingers or his marbles. He counts: one, two, three, four; and all mathematics comes from that.

And without order, what would become of that lovely thing, music? There are seven notes in the scale: do, re, mi, fa, sol, la, si. If you play these notes one after another, it is all right, but if you strike them all together, and mix their sounds, it will make a frightful noise. They can produce a harmonious sound together only when they are played in a certain order. Do, mi, sol, do, for example, sounded together, form what is known as a "chord". The whole science of music is based on that order. And it could be shown that order is also the basis of every other science and of all the arts that man can invent.

* *

But is it not equally indispensable in everything?

If you went into a house and found the furniture and ornaments all topsyturvy and scattered about, and covered with a thick layer of dust, you would exclaim, "What dirt and disorder!" For dirt itself is nothing but disorder. There is a place for dust in the world, but not on the furniture. Similarly, the place for ink is in the ink-pot and not on your fingers or on the carpet.

Everything is clean when each thing is in its place. And your books at

school, your clothes and toys at home should each have a place which is really its own and which no other thing can claim. Otherwise, battles will follow and your books will get torn, your clothes stained and your toys lost. Then it will cost you much trouble and patience to find your way in this muddle and put everything right. Whereas it is so convenient when things are kept in order.

The life and work of men, and even the wealth and prosperity of nations, all depend on this same principle of order.

And that is why one of the main occupations of the government of a country is to maintain good order. From the emperor, king or president, down to the ordinary policeman, each one must contribute to this task as best he can. And all the citizens, whatever their occupations may be, should also take part in this work of maintaining order; for in this way each one can contribute to the organisation of a strong and prosperous nation.

Think of the serious consequences that the slightest disorder can sometimes have.

What regularity and precision there must be among the multitude of railwaymen, gate-keepers, engine-drivers and pointsmen so that the numerous trains which run in all countries can leave and arrive on time, at the exact minute calculated to avoid all congestion. And if by accident or negligence this order is disrupted even for a moment, what unfortunate incidents can happen! How many things can be upset by a simple delay: friends miss each other, employees and businessmen arrive late at their offices or for their appointments, passengers miss their boats. And you cannot imagine all the other troubles that will follow.

Think of the sad state things would be in if order and regularity suddenly ceased to exist in the world.

See how the whole routine of the house is disturbed simply when a clock stops giving its charming example of regularity and begins to go slow or else to go madly fast. If it cannot be put right, then the best thing to do is to get rid of it.

* *

In the parlour of an old farmhouse there was an antique grandfather clock which for more than a hundred and fifty years had never ceased ticking faithfully. Every morning at daybreak when the farmer came down, the first thing he would do was to visit the clock to be sure that it was right. Now it happened one morning that as he went into the parlour as usual, the clock began to speak:

“For more than a century and a half,” it said, “I have been working without a stop and keeping perfect time. Now I am tired; don’t I deserve to take a rest and stop ticking?”

“Your complaint is unjustified, my good clock,” the shrewd farmer replied, “for you are forgetting that between each tick you have a second’s rest.”

After a moment’s thought, the clock began to work again as usual.

Children, what does this story show? That in orderly work fatigue and rest balance each other, and that regularity avoids much pain and effort.

* *

How greatly orderliness increases the power in each thing! Are not the most powerful machines the ones in which each part, each cog, each lever fulfils its function with order and precision? And in a machine like that, even the smallest screw, when it keeps to its proper place, can claim to be as useful as the majestic flywheel.

Similarly a little child who carefully carries out his task makes a useful contribution to the order of his school, of his home, of his own small world within the greater world.

At first it may take some pains to acquire order. Nothing can be learnt without an effort; nor is it easy to learn to swim, to row, to do gymnastics; but success comes little by little. In the same way, after a certain time, we can learn to do things in an orderly way without the least difficulty. And more and more, we find disorder painful and disagreeable.

When you first learnt to walk, you often stumbled, you fell, you bumped yourself, you cried. Now you walk without giving it a thought and you run skilfully. Well, the movements of walking and running are a splendid example of the orderly functioning of your nerves, your muscles and all your organs.

Thus order always in the end becomes a habit.

And above all, don't imagine that being orderly, regular, punctual, must prevent you from being happy and smiling. It is not necessary to pull a long face when carrying out a task exactly. And to prove it to you, we shall end this lesson on order with a little laughter.

Listen to this example of punctuality, which should not be copied.

An Arab lady had a servant. She sent him to a neighbour's house to fetch some embers to light her fire.

The servant met a caravan going towards Egypt. He began talking with the men and decided to go with them. And he stayed away a whole year.

On his return, he went into the neighbour's house to fetch the embers. But as he was carrying them, he tripped and fell. The burning coals dropped and went out. Then he cried: "What a nuisance to be in a hurry!"

Building and Destroying The Mother

CHILDREN, you all know what it is to build and to destroy.

Weapon in hand, the warrior goes forth to destroy.

The builder draws up plans, digs foundations, and the toiling hands of men build a farmhouse for the peasant or a palace for a prince.

It is better to build than to destroy, and yet destroying is sometimes necessary.

You, children, who have strong arms and hands, do you only build? Do you never destroy? And if you do, what do you destroy?

Listen to this account of an Indian legend:

A new-born baby lay in a grove. You might think that he was sure to die, for his mother had laid him there and gone away never to return. But it so happened that honey-sweet drops fell from the beautiful flowers of the Illupay tree and nourished the tiny child until a good woman passed on her way to worship great Shiva in the temple near the grove.

At the sight of the infant, her heart was moved with pity; she took him up and carried him to her husband who welcomed him gladly, for he had no son of his own.

The couple adopted the unknown child from the Illupay grove. But very soon the neighbours began to mock them, reproaching them for taking care of a child without caste. So, for fear of displeasing them by looking after the baby themselves, they put him in a hammock hung from the beams of a stable, and entrusted him to an outcaste family. A few years later the boy, strong in body and bright in mind, said farewell to those who had showed him kindness and set out alone to travel. After walking for some time, he sat down to rest at the foot of a palm-tree. And it happened that the tree took care of him and seemed to love him like the woman who had once taken him up in the Illupay grove. For though it

might seem impossible that a tree with such a tall trunk could shelter someone in the shade of its leaves throughout one whole day, the story tells that the shadow did indeed keep still and shield the boy with its coolness for as long as he wished to sleep.

* *

Now why should it have happened like that?

Why was the child saved from his very birth and why did the palm-tree shelter him from the heat of the sun? Because his life was precious: this child was one day to become the noble Tiruvalluvar, the famous Tamil poet and author of the sweet verses of the Kural.

Thus there are things and beings who must be protected, for they bring messages to the world.

Let us be glad to have strong arms so that we can enfold with their strength what is beautiful, good, true, and guard it from evil and death.

And it is to guard these things that we must sometimes fight and destroy.

* *

Tiruvalluvar, who gave golden words to the people, could also fight and kill. He slew the demon of Kaveripakam. In Kaveripakam there lived a farmer who owned a thousand head of cattle and vast fields of corn. But a demon had been terrifying the countryside; he uprooted the crops from the soil, and slew cattle and men. And the hearts of the people of Kaveripakam were distressed.

“I will give house, land and money to the hero who will rid us of this demon,” said the wealthy farmer.

For a long time no hero appeared, and the farmer asked the sages who lived on the mountain what he ought to do.

“Go to Tiruvalluvar,” said the sages of the mountain.

So he went to visit the young poet and asked for his help.

Then Tiruvalluvar took some ashes and spread them on the palm of his hand and on it wrote five sacred letters, uttered some mantras, then threw the ashes into the air. And the power of the letters and the mantras fell upon the demon, so that he died. This filled the people of Kaveripakam with joy.

Later, when Tiruvalluvar came to the town of Madura, many people gathered together to hear him recite lines from his beautiful poem, and they were enchanted by the verses composed by the child from the Illupay grove:

Hard it is to find in this world A greater good than kindness.

But on a bench, beside a pool where lotus flowers floated on the tranquil waters, some very learned poets were sitting in a row. These men on the bench had no intention of making room for a fellow-poet of low birth, but they tried to confound him with their questions and to catch him out in some mistake. At last they said:

“O Pariah, put your poem on this bench, and if it is truly a work of beauty, the bench will hold nothing but the Kural.”

Tiruvalluvar placed his writings next to them, and the legend says that the bench at once shrank until it was just large enough to hold only the poem. So the proud and jealous poets of Madura tumbled into the water of the pool! Yes, the forty-nine envious men fell into the pool amid the lotuses. They came out dripping and ashamed. And from that day, all who speak the Tamil language have a great love for the Kural.

* *

Children, do you find it sad that the demon of Kaveripakam was slain?
And do you think it was a pity that the forty-nine bad poets of Madura fell into the water?

In this world there are both good and evil things; and we should cherish and defend only the good, fight and undermine the evil.

All wise men, like Tiruvalluvar the noble poet, know and are able to do this. And the wiser they are, the better they do it. But even little children who are not yet very wise or very strong can emulate them and thus grow in valour.

This is how Avvai, the sister of Tiruvalluvar, emulated her brother.

One day as she was sitting on the ground in a narrow street of Urayur, three men passed by: one was a king and the other two were poets. As the king approached, she drew up one of her feet as a mark of respect. When the first poet came, out of regard for him, Avvai drew back her

other foot.

But when the second poet came near, however, she suddenly stretched out both her legs, barring his way. This behaviour seemed rude, but Avvai knew very well what she was doing, for the second poet was a pretentious man who claimed talent though he had none.

And since he seemed irritated and asked why she had treated him so, she replied: "Then make me a couplet in which the word 'wit' occurs thrice!" Seeing that people had gathered round, the poet wanted to show his skill, but he was quite unable to make the prescribed word fit into the lines more than twice.

"What have you done then," laughed Avvai, "with the last wit you have left, which cannot find a place in your lines?" And so she put the pretentious man to shame.

Do you think that she took pleasure in being rude? Certainly not. But to her, pretension did not seem worthy of respect. She knew how to distinguish between what should be respected and what should not.

"Good people," she would say, "go towards what is good, just as the swan goes towards the lake where the lotus blooms. But the wicked seek what is bad, just as the vulture, attracted by the smell, swoops down upon its dreadful food."

* *

So, brave children of every land, what are the evil things that you should learn to fight? What are the things that man must master or destroy?

All that threatens his life and is harmful to his progress, all that weakens or degrades him, all that makes him unhappy.

Let him harness the power of the flood by bridging the raging torrents and building dykes along the swelling rivers. Let him build strong ships able to withstand the fury of the wind and waves.

Let him drain and dry the fatal swamps where the demon of fever hides in the damp.

Let him make war on wild beasts wherever they are a danger to him.

Let him train skilful doctors to drive out pain and sickness everywhere.

Let him strive to conquer poverty, the cause of hunger, which makes so

many mothers grieve because their children have no bread.
Let him abolish wickedness, envy, injustice, which make life miserable for all.

* *

And what are the things that man should cherish and defend?
All those that give him life and make him better, stronger and more joyful.

So let him watch over every child that comes into the world, for its life is precious.

Let him protect the friendly trees and grow plants and flowers for his food and his delight.

Let him build dwellings that are strong, clean and spacious.

Let him preserve with care the holy temples, statues, pictures, vases, embroidery, as well as beautiful songs and poems, and all that increases his happiness with its beauty.

But above all, children of India and other lands, let men cherish the heart that loves, the mind that thinks honest thoughts and the hand that accomplishes loyal deeds.



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2. Self-Control” The Mother, Collected Works of The Mother, CWM; 2, 173
3. Courage: The Mother, Collected Works of The Mother, CWM; 2, 179
1. Cheerfulness: The Mother, Collected Works of The Mother, CWM; 2, 189
2. Self-Reliance: The Mother, Collected Works of The Mother, CWM; 2, 193
3. Patience and Perseverance: The Mother, Collected Works of The Mother, CWM; 2, 198
4. The Simple Life: The Mother, Collected Works of The Mother, CWM; 2, 203
5. Prudence: The Mother, Collected Works of The Mother, CWM; 2, 210
6. Sincerity: The Mother, Collected Works of The Mother, CWM; 2, 214
7. Right Judgment: The Mother, Collected Works of The Mother, CWM; 2, 226
8. Order: The Mother, Collected Works of The Mother, CWM; 2, 232
9. Building and Destroying: The Mother, Collected Works of The Mother, CWM; 2, 237

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