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action. To run away with an isolated original idea, or charmed with its newness and vigour, to ride it into the field of action is to make of ourselves cranks and eccentrics. This world, this society, these nations and their civilisations are not simple existences, but complex & intricate, the result of a great organic growth in many centuries, sometimes in many millenniums. We should not deal with them after snatching at a few hurried generalisations or in the gust and fury of a stiff fanaticism. We must first be sure that our new thought is wide and strong-winged enough, our thoughts large enough, our natures mighty enough to deal with those vastnesses. We must be careful, too, to comprehend what we destroy. And destroy we must not unless we have a greater and more perfect thing to put in the place even of a crumbling and mouldering antiquity. To tear down Hindu society in the spirit of the social reformers or European society in the spirit of the philosophical or unphilosophical Anarchists would be to destroy order and substitute a licentious confusion. If we carefully remember these cautions, there is no harm in original thinking even of the boldest and most merciless novelty. I may, for example, attack unsparingly the prevailing system of justice and punishment as extraordinarily senseless and evil, even if I have no new system ready-made to put in as its successor; but I must have no wish to destroy it, senseless & evil though it be, until our new system is ready. For it fills a place the vacancy of which the Spirit that uplifts & supports our human welfare, would greatly abhor. I may expose, too, the weaknesses and narrownesses of an existing form of religion, even if I have no new & better form to preach of my own, but I must not so rage against those weaknesses as to destroy all religious faith and I should remember before the end of my criticism that even a bad religion is better than no religion, — that it is wiser to worship energy in my surroundings with the African savage than to be dead to all faith and all spirituality like the drunkards of a little knowledge — for even in that animal and unintelligent worship there is a spark of the divine fire which keeps humanity living, while the cultured imperial Roman or the luxurious modern wealth-gatherer and body worshipper drags his kind into a straight

& well built road which is so broad only to lead more easily to a mighty perdition — *na ched ihavedin mahati vinashtih*. Otherwise there is no harm in spreading dissatisfaction with fetish worship or refusing praise to an ancient and cruel folly. We need not be troubled if our thinking is condemned as too radical or even as reckless & revolutionary, — for the success of revolutionary thought always means that Nature has need of one of her cataclysms; even otherwise, she will make of it whatever modified use is best for our present humanity. In thought as in deeds, to the thinking we have a right, the result belongs to the wise & active Power of God that stands over us & in us originating, cherishing, indefatigably dissolving & remoulding man and spirit in the progressive harmonies of His universe. Let us only strive that our light should be clear, diffused & steady, not either darkness or a narrow glare and merely violent lustre. And if we cannot compass that ideal, still it is better to think than to cease from thinking. For even out of darkness the day is born and lightning has its uses!

[Draft opening of another version]

We have had recently in India a great abundance of speculations on the real causes of that gradual decline and final arrest which Indian civilisation no less than European suffered during the Middle Ages. The arrest was neither so sudden as in Europe nor so complete; but its effect on our nation, like the undermining activity of a slow poison, was all the more profoundly destructive, pervasive, hard to remedy, difficult to expel. At a certain period we entered into a decline, splendid at first like a long and gorgeous sunset, afterwards more & more sombre, till the darkness closed in, and if our sky was strewn with stars of a great number & brilliance, it was only a vast decay, confusion and inertia that they lighted and emphasised with their rays. We have, most of us, our chosen explanation of this dolorous phenomenon. The patriot attributes our decline to the ravages