

# THE ILLUSIONS OF NEW INDIA

BY

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## PREFACE

MOTHER India is usually regarded by us, her Western-educated sons, as an invalid; and it is considered to be a point of patriotism with the great majority of us to try to restore her to health by the assiduous application of various foreign remedies. The fact that notwithstanding such application her condition has been deteriorating, instead of improving, during the last half century set me sometime ago to watch and observe her closely. The results of this observation are:—

*First.* That I have not noticed anything seriously wrong with her.

*Secondly.* That it is true, as I have just said she has latterly been getting worse, and been exhibiting symptoms of an alarming character. This is, no doubt, due, in part, to the operation of a complication of causes. But, I firmly believe, that it is also, in part, attributable to the injudicious application of unsuitable remedies.

But for these, mother India, would, I expect, be still as hale and hearty a dame as any might be expected to be at her age and the circumstances in which she is placed. She has, no doubt, long since passed the bloom, alertness and activity of her youth, but with them also the numerous snares and pitfalls to which youth is subject; and the best proof of her vitality and recuperative capacity is the fact, that she has successfully withstood the ravages of time for untold centuries. She does not make such a brave show as several of her proud and powerful young sisters of the West. Nevertheless, in all her native simplicity she appears to me to be radiant with an ethereal beauty, and a calm, healthy, benignant expression which it would take the latter long to attain, if, indeed, they live long enough to attain it at all.

This is my humble answer to one of the charges which some of my Neo-Indian brethren who have the patience to go through this book will probably bring against me—the charge of pessimism. I am certainly pessimistic about the outlandish remedies our Mother is plied with;

and the purpose of this work is to expose their injurious tendencies. But I am pessimistic about the remedies, because I am optimistic about the condition of the patient, because I am fully convinced that they are not suited to her constitution, and that they are aggravating rather than alleviating the insalutary effects of unavoidable causes of an adverse character, and are, on the whole, doing her more harm than good. Treated as an invalid, she is gradually becoming one, and losing confidence in her own recuperative power. She undoubtedly has her ailments. But for them such drastic treatment in accordance with the methods and principles of an immature civilization as is resorted to by my Neo-Indian friends is quite uncalled for and is decidedly harmful.

From the conversations I have had with friends in regard to the views expressed in this work, I may anticipate another criticism of an adverse character—that I am destructive and have but little to offer by way of construction. On this point I have to observe:—

*First.* In reality, it is my Neo-Indian compatriots who have been destructive.

Consciously or unconsciously, with the best of motives, no doubt, they have been doing their utmost to demolish an old structure with a safe and strong foundation which has hitherto afforded as happy a home as any nation may reasonably aspire to have, and to raise a new structure after the Western pattern. I have in this work endeavoured to show how very insecure the foundation of this new structure is, and how very illusory is the prospect of its affording a nappier home than the one we are deserting. Thus, in one sense, the tendency of this work is destructive, but destructive of what I conceive to be an unsubstantial, though imposing "castle in the air" on the erection of which a good deal of energy is being wasted. In another sense, it is preservative, for in trying to pull down this newly started structure, I am indirectly seeking to preserve the old one.

*Secondly.* I confess I have nothing new to construct. Throughout this work there are

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abundant hints which show my predilection for our modest old home. It certainly needs repairs; and I propose in a future work to state my ideas of the lines on which the reforms should be carried on.

RANCHI, INDIA, }  
*April, 1916.* }

P. N. BOSE.

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