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"GREAT IS TRUTH AND IT SHALL PREVAIL"

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## CONGRESS AND THE COMMON MAN THE NEED OF A BALANCED VIEW

Every newspaper in the country has sat in judgment on Congress after the defeat of this party in the South Calcutta by-election and after the Prime Minister's straightforward admission that the defeat was due to the rot that had spread in its ranks. Various opinions have been mouthed on the nature of the rot. Nehru himself seems to think that the Congress is losing its influence because of group-rivalries and office-seeking, expulsion of dissident members instead of winning them over and, most of all, diminution of contact with the masses. The country's newspapers add one more cause: wide-spread corruption.

No doubt, all these are real and grave defects. Everything in Congress's power must be done to remedy them or else the party which did so much for India's freedom will spoil its fair name irretrievably. Under no condition should they be tolerated and, if they persist, Congress has very poor chances of winning the next general election. But certain important and profound issues are involved when we make this dark prognostication. To the certainty of loss of votes by Congress in the future, the common man's reaction is: "That'll serve Congress right!" For, the common man argues merely on the plane of immediate outward happenings: he seldom argues on the plane of fundamental ideas. If Congress, owing to its gross faults, is sure to find little favour at the polling-booths in the winter of 1950, it will suffer a fate which, judged from the plane of fundamental ideas, will be most undeserved. As this is scarcely realised today in the midst of the grudges and grievances the common man bears against his rulers, it is worth while holding the balance straight and seeing where truth lies.

### Can We Afford to Throw Stones?

Although the rot in the Congress ranks is far from negligible and calls for sharp attention from our leaders, it is not something peculiar to the nature of Congress. Congress is not rotten just by being its own self. There is nothing in it specially conducive to the defects which everybody is castigating at present. By this we do not merely mean that there should be a reshuffle of personnel in the government rather than a change of the governing party. We mean that any other party would be no less prone to these defects. For, these defects are born of the all-too-human constitution of us. Whether we be Congressmen, Socialists, Forward-Block-wallahs, Mahasabhaites, there will always be group-rivalry and office-seeking and corruption and a general power-drunkenness. At certain times the rot increases by leaps and bounds, but the increase can take place even if Congress is not at the helm and some other party is. There is hardly any guarantee that the supersession of the existing government will make for less rot. Until the same rot is seen in other parties we are liable to be obsessed with its presence in the party ruling us and to forget the universal mud from which the members of all parties are made. In order to serve their own aims and discredit Congress, quite a hue and cry is raised by the opposing parties over its shortcomings. And the common man, who is never inclined to look beyond his nose and who is extremely susceptible to propaganda, bristles up against the Government and imagines that just a bunch of self-serving ministers stand between him and the millennium.

We would ask him to submit his belief to even so elementary a test as the scanning of faces of the present ministers and those who will replace them if either the Socialists or the Mahasabha or the Forward Bloc takes up the reins of government. Can he discern in non-Congress eyes or mouth or proboscis any inviolableness of character? The same poor human stuff is also here. Given similar circumstances, similar defects will crop up.

If the common man himself gets into the shoes of the Congress officials it is doubtful whether he will not soil them as much by walking in foul ways. Are his character and conduct above suspicion? A correspondent to one of the city-papers has pertinently asked: "How many of us resist the temptation of cheating and deceiving the Income-tax office, the Railways, the Port Trust, the Customs office, the P.W.D. and a host of other Government and municipal concerns?" Maybe Congress has so dirtied itself because it has not been used to power. But which of the other parties has had even the little experience that has been Congress's in the practice of government? Nobody should gloss over Congress's thousand and three mistakes and mischiefs: the exposure of them, however, should not blind us to the immense mistake of seeing haloes round the heads of Congress's enemies and the immense mischief that can be caused by letting India's future be planned out by heads buzzing with un-Indian ideas.

### Can the Socialists Make for India's Fulfilment?

The Forward Bloc gave the Congress a beating in a part of Calcutta, the Socialists did so in a part of Bombay. Suppose the victory of one or the other were repeated all over India. What would be the ideas according to which we would be ruled? Take first the Socialists. The majority of them believe that complete nationalisation of all industries is the key to prosperity. This will mean the abolition of private enterprise and a complete shifting of stress from the individual to the State. Once such a shifting occurs, will there be any real chance of political as distinguished from economic democracy? The Socialists are sometimes found drawing a line between themselves and the Communists by saying that Communism implies economic equality without political liberty whereas Socialism combines both. But the truth is that if in actual practice Socialism has anywhere achieved the combination, it is in spite of its basic ideas and because of certain strong elements in a country's tradition and culture which prevented Socialism from de-individualising society. The moment you emphasise the State at the expense of the individual's importance and initiative, you sow the seed of political servitude. Even if complete totalitarianism does not set in, there will be a fading of that fine flexible many-shaded creative spirit which comes into play only where the uniqueness of the individual is recognised, the spirit which has given us all that is best in human history so far. Often this best has existed side by side with black spots, such as the system of helots in ancient Greece and of wage-slaves in nineteenth-century Europe; but these scoriae are not indispensable to the recognition of the individual's uniqueness, they are its accidental accompaniments at certain stages of history and are the result of factors having nothing essentially to do with it. If the individual's uniqueness is obscured, civilisation cannot fully flower, for there is in the individual a soul, a spark of the Divine, through which alone evolution is intended to reach its climax, a climax which does not annul the collective reality but can produce a harmonious collective being by bringing to light the one Godhead which is multifariously present in the individuals. And when the individual's importance is sought to be denied, there is bound to be ultimately a denial of the soul in which that importance is founded. Actually, the Socialists as a body do declare that no such thing as a spark of the Divine exists and that neither does the Divine have existence to support the possibility of individuals being His sparks. Whole-hearted Socialism is bound to be materialistic and atheistic. Can it, then, ever make for the fulfilment of a country like India where soul and God are the prime meaning of life?

Congress, too, has a socialistic tendency and has exhibited a secular

# CONGRESS AND THE COMMON MAN

*Continued from page 1*

temper which puts no premium on religion. But so far—except for occasional aberrations—its Socialism and secularity are merely strong checks on capitalistic greed and the intolerance, the obscurantist narrowness of the sectarian and communal mind. It has never sought to make the State the chief factor in the country's economy: even its error of centralisation is born of a fear lest the country should be ill-united rather than of an actual desire to reduce provincial government to a cipher. And the religious consciousness goes on unhindered, in its private capacity; Congress does not even declare, as the hundred per cent Socialists do, that religion is a childish affair which, though not to be forcibly suppressed, must be undermined by constant propaganda against it. Un-Indian ideas are, no doubt, a danger to which Congress is prone if it allows its socialistic and secular propensities to run away with it, but the state of mind of most of its members indicates that these propensities have play in only a negative form and that the negative form itself is mainly an official policy and not at all a line of personal conduct. In short, Congress on the whole puts no insuperable barrier, such as the Socialists in the long run would, in the way of the genuine Indian genius.

## Can the Forward Bloc Help us in the Present World-Crisis?

What about the Forward Bloc? It is in several respects in tune with Congress's own ideology. Deriving its inspiration from the late Subash Bose and from the admirable unity of all Indian elements which he achieved in his I.N.A., it stands for a healthy secularity and for a sense of human equality which can scarcely make for lopsided capitalistic economy. In two major matters, however, it differs from Congress. It makes no fetish of Gandhian doctrines: ahimsa and khaddar-spinning are not to it a panacea for all evils. Also, it has a strong anti-British animus. True to the temper of Subash Bose, it is militant in its attitude and convinced that England is a die-hard imperialistic power with which India, so long a subject-nation, should have no dealings. In this hostility to England, the Forward Bloc is in agreement with the Socialists who, too, vehemently protest against Congress's policy of keeping India within the Commonwealth in spite of her republican status. Unquestionably, the doctrines of ahimsa and khaddar-spinning need to be saved from becoming extremist: ahimsa is certainly a virtue, but to apotheosise one virtue above all others and to thrust it in everywhere is to over-simplify the many-aspected ethical problem facing the human conscience, while to see some special soul-saving quality in the act of turning the charka and to make even education revolve round one primitive handicraft is dangerous naiveté in a complex moving world. Congress must certainly outgrow its fads, but on the other hand the Forward Bloc is inclined to stress too much the role of violence and, owing to the I.N.A. memories, be militarist in its methods. Again, over against Congress's fads we have to set the wisdom of its association of India with the Commonwealth, its clear-sighted sympathy with the Western democracies without jeopardising its freedom from all treaty-commitments to the Western bloc. The neutrality which Congress upholds is not as between two evils of equal magnitude: it is as between an ideology which, as things stand in the concrete, seems to be utterly deleterious to the mind of man and an ideology which, though bright with promise of genuine progress, is yet haunted by a past of imperialism and sullied to some extent by colour-consciousness. Naturally, such a neutrality is keenly alive to the difference between deepening black and disappearing grey, even if it can wholly throw in its lot with neither. The Forward Bloc, no less than the Socialists, is unable to advance with the times, and harbours against England and her Commonwealth the hatred which was legitimate during the days of India's subjection. The new *Zeitgeist* developing in the Western world finds no response. In the Forward Bloc there is still active the misconception which in the war-period clouded to a considerable degree the vision of Congress as well—namely, that the Western powers are at heart blood-brothers to Hitlerite Fascism. When civilisation today is grimly menaced by what is real Fascism under a different and deluding name, when the hammer and sickle of totalitarian Godlessness are lifted over half Europe and sweeping across half Asia, such a misconception is little short of deadly. Both the Forward Bloc and the Socialists—the former because of its lost battle with the Britishers in the jungles of Burma and the latter because of their own anti-religious State-idolising penchant—would seriously weaken the world-front against the savagery of Stalinism and expose the large-minded, many-faceted, deeply spiritual culture of India to its dreadful opposite. The Forward Bloc is, no doubt, patriotic and would never take any aggression lying down. But patriotism, as Edith Cavell said in another context, is not enough: there must be insight into the fundamentals of civilisation and a preparation for the future by means of an overall view of the crisis through which mankind is passing.

Bengal in especial needs to open her eyes and see the danger of being completely possessed by the mentality of the Forward Bloc. In Bengal, feeling runs high for Subash Bose. He is looked upon as her most notable representative among the fighters for India's freedom. Against Gandhiji, Nehru, Vallabhbhai Patel, Rajendra Prasad, Rajagopolachariar and Abul Kalam Azad, Bengal of the immediate past has only Subash Bose to show. Naturally his name fires the Bengali heart and all that he stood for evokes an intense echo in it. Since Congress had expelled Subash and since, in spite of putting up a grand defence of the I.N.A. accused and absorbing most of the I.N.A. personnel in various departments, it has for some reason or other by-passed them in military service and since its follies and fads and favouritisms are glaring, we presume the Forward

Bloc finds it extremely easy to turn the Subash-dazzled Bengalis anti-Congress and forgetful not only of the feet of clay the Forward Bloc, like all other parties, stands on, but also of the misjudgment which was made by Subash himself of the forces at work in the last war and which is still persisted in by those who challenge Congress in his name. Our reading is that the South Calcutta by-election was won by Subash's brother Sarat with such consummate ease mainly because Congress has come to be pictured as a group of ingrates who belittle the labour of liberation attempted by Subash and who fail to acknowledge that it was Subash's banner of revolt which from far away inspired the underground movement of 1942 and subsequently drove all India to such a point of inflammableness that after the I.N.A. trials the British were apprehensive of their position and thought it best to withdraw. We surely cannot deny the revolutionary mood induced by Subash Bose's remarkable undertaking, but neither can we deny the wrong-headedness of both that undertaking and the underground movement which tried to hamstring the British war-effort in India against Fascist Japan. A passion greater than patriotism was required in that terrible period when the fate of civilisation hung by a hair. Further, England's gesture of giving India independence was not wholly caused by fear. There was a new mind gathering form, the first sign of which was the mission of Sir Stafford Cripps. With the fall of Churchill's Government this mind could more easily assert itself and, while we may grant that perhaps without the inflammableness everywhere present in India as an after-effect of Subash' adventure India would not have got her independence in 1947, we must realise that this independence was something inevitable in the post-war world-context, especially when such souls as Gandhiji and Nehru and Vallabhbhai Patel were still knocking at its gates and, behind all yet more potent than all, was Sri Aurobindo with his Yogic light preparing to make India the leader of humanity towards the greatest of freedoms, the liberation into the vast inmost Self of divine knowledge and peace, love and force. And who knows but that, if independence had come a little more slowly, India might have escaped partition? In any case, to attribute independence exclusively to the working of the enthusiasm that was Subash is an exaggeration. If the common man is led away by such propaganda and by insistence on Congress's incompatibleness with several aspects of this enthusiasm, then he will subordinate to either dubious or secondary issues the most significant and pressing issue today—the salvaging of civilisation.

## What Congress Must Learn and the Common Man Should Do

Congress, besides requiring to get rid of the rot in its ranks, has many things to learn from the parties which are trying to oust it. Perhaps, among the major parties, the Hindu Mahasabha, despite a trace of the communal tinge in it, has the most vital lesson to give by the stress this body lays on the value of India's ancient scriptures. Congress has also to understand that the Constitution it has framed is an imitation of Western parliamentarism which is ill-suited to the Indian genius: the small Unity Party of Bengal is on this point the best guide. And beyond all political parties it must look for illumination from directly spiritual sources: India's past greatness was fashioned not by politicians but by her rishis, her yogis, her masters of mystical vision and experience, and if she is to be great again there must be at the very centre of power the bearers of the Light Eternal. When Congress looks for this illumination it will see the true meaning of the secularity to which it has pledged itself. Our present secularity, setting at a discount the sectarian and narrowly religious tendency which underlines communal differences, is only a negative achievement. The positive achievement would be the cultivation of the wide synthetical spiritual mind developing from the basis of our ancient scriptures which say that the genuinely spiritual man goes beyond creed and community no less than personal ego and desire into a living touch with the one yet multiple Divinity whose self-expression on earth is the aim of life. Yes, there is ample room left for Congress to improve and to get enlightened and, if it does not, it will seal its own death-warrant and imperil the future of India. But, on the plane of fundamental ideas, it has greater possibilities than any other party of comparable dimensions. Should the common man be allowed to blink this fact, a ghastly mistake would be committed.

Possibly, with the rising tide of indignation against Congress, a totally non-national organisation like the Communists which knows best how to exploit the common man's discontents and throw dust into his none-too-far-seeing eyes will be swung into the high seats of government. Although no by-elections have been won by it, Communism is no imaginary bogey: its specious appeal to the hungry belly and the empty head is notorious and only stomachs overfed by black-marketing and heads stuffed with complacent platitudes will underrate its strength or ignore the influence it exerts from beyond India's borders especially now that Russia has millions of henchman in Burma, Viet Nam, Malaya and China. Even if the extreme Left does not sweep the polls, the menace of it will not cease. For, both the Socialist party and the Forward Bloc are Leftists and a switch-over from their rule to Communism will be far easier than from Congress rule. Perhaps a switch-over will be unavoidable, since the Communist movement has not only the fiery force of fanaticism but also mightier resources at its back and, with the bulwark of Congress removed, it is likely to swamp all who do not take a definite stand on the side of the Western democracies. In preparation of their D-Day the Communists will infiltrate the ranks of the party in power and pose as its members as many of them actually did in the Calcutta by-election: they can scarcely do this with Congress. From every

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# THE DEATH PENALTY

## IS IT IN KEEPING WITH LIFE'S TRUE GOAL ?

BY "CHANAKYA"

That was a moment of real inspiration when the other day Dr. Ambedkar, the Law Member of the Government of India, suggested casually in the Constituent Assembly that the death penalty should be abolished altogether. Why does he not bring a Bill to implement this? Now is the right hour. There cannot be a greater memorial to the apostle of non-violence than the abolition of the death penalty in time to save his murderers from the gallows. He will certainly smile from Heaven if India takes such a decision.

### The Right View of the Human Individual

It is time mankind changed its dealings with criminals. A really better order of society, based on spirituality, "would treat in its sociology the individual, from the saint to the criminal, not as units of a social problem to be passed through some skilfully devised machinery and either flattened into the social mould or crushed out of it, but as souls suffering and entangled in a net and to be saved, souls growing and to be encouraged to grow, souls grown and from whom help and power can be drawn." (*The Psychology of Social Development* by Sri Aurobindo.)

Already more than a score of countries have abolished the death penalty; even in India, some of the States have done so; now that India is free and these States are merged in the Indian Union, will they have to re-erect the gallows?

In spite of appearances, humanity is advancing. About a century and half ago, there were 220 crimes for which people were hanged in Britain, and people thought that civilisation would collapse if the death sentence were curtailed. It is the religion of humanity born in Europe in the 18th century that has brought about a change of outlook. "Humanitarianism has been its most prominent emotional result. Philanthropy, social service and other kindred activities have been its outward expression of good works. Democracy, socialism, pacifism are to a great extent its by-products or at least owe much of their vigour to its inner presence. The fundamental idea is that mankind is the godhead to be worshipped and served by man and that the respect, the service, the progress of the human being and human life are the chief duty and chief aim of the human spirit... War, capital punishment, the taking of human life, cruelty of all kinds whether committed by the individual, the State or society, not only physical cruelty, but moral cruelty, the degradation of any human being or any class of human beings under whatever specious plea or in whatever interest, the oppression and exploitation of man by man, of race by race, of class by class, of nation by nation and all those habits of life and institutions of society of a similar kind which religion and ethics formerly tolerated or even favoured in practice, whatever they might do in their ideal rule or creed, are crimes against the religion of humanity, abominable to its ethical mind, forbidden by its primary tenets, to be fought against always, in no degree to be tolerated. Man must be sacred to man regardless of distinctions of race, creed, colour, nationality, status, political or social advancement. The body of man is to be respected, made immune from violence..." (*The Ideal of Human Unity* by Sri Aurobindo.)

In spite of its great achievements, this religion of humanity has not been able to accomplish all its aims as it cannot entirely prevail against its own principal enemy, the enemy of all real religion, "human egoism, the egoism of the individual, the egoism of class and nation." To conquer this universal enemy the religion of humanity must cease, as Sri Aurobindo points out, to be merely intellectual and sentimental and find its deep roots in spirituality. We have to worship not man as God but God in man, we must regard all human beings as vessels for the manifestation of the Divine, and find our unity with all men through our unity with the Divine. That vision would bring about a change of soul in humanity, and it is for India to show the actual way and the discipline. Let her first proclaim her faith in the divinity of man by abolishing the death penalty altogether.

Apart from the violent ending, the suffering that the condemned man has to undergo for weeks far exceeds what he inflicted on his victim. An experienced chaplain said: "No one can leave the slaughter-shed without a deep sense of humiliation, horror and shame." The innocent relatives of the hanged man suffer anguish and shame for a life-time, seared not by his crime, but by his punishment. And then there is the chance that all this suffering may be inflicted on an innocent man and his relatives, for no one will claim that human justice is infallible. Many persons have been found to be innocent after they had been hanged.

### True Defence Against the Murderer

The community demands that its citizens should be defended against the murderer. But the true defence consists in bringing about a change in human nature. As long as man is subject to passions, no amount of punishment can prevent people from committing crimes, for the simple reason that man becomes helpless when moved by passions.\* Arjuna said in the Gita: "What is this in us that drives a man to sin as if by force, even

against his own struggling will?" The Blessed Lord said: "This is desire and its companion wrath, children of rajas, all-devouring, all-polluting, know this as man's great enemy (which has to be slain)." Instead of hanging the murderer, we have to find means to save him from this domination by passions. And it is often not even the passions of men, but super-natural beings who finding an entrance through these passions use men as instruments for fulfilling their nefarious designs. "There are forces, and subliminal experience seems to show that there are supraphysical beings embodying those forces, that are attached in their root-nature to ignorance, to darkness of consciousness, to misuse of force, to perversity of delight, to all the causes and consequences of things that we call evil. These powers, beings or forces are active to impose their adverse instructions upon terrestrial creatures, eager to maintain their reign in the manifestation, they oppose the increase of light and truth and good and, still more, are antagonistic to the progress of the soul towards a divine consciousness and divine existence." (*The Life Divine*, by Sri Aurobindo.) If we accept this truth which is perfectly rational and verifiable by inner experience, we shall not be eager to inflict punishment on criminals in order to protect the community, but shall turn our attention to the means by which we can effectively deal with these forces who are the source of all evils in the world.

### Is Capital Punishment a Deterrent?

British judges strongly held the belief that death is the strongest deterrent necessary to save innocent lives from armed burglars and desperate criminals. The murders of Antiquis and P. C. Edgar are quoted. But Edgar was killed when the hanging of the young man who shot Antiquis was fresh in men's minds. Such murders were continued in spite of the death penalty. Capital punishment may incite the ruffian to shoot his way out when cornered and to add the murder of witnesses to that of the first victim. But we need not depend on supposition. The facts from abolitionist countries of many races and types of civilization prove that the murder rate is unaffected by abolition. Sweden, Holland, New Zealand with sparse rural population, Belgium with its dense industrial concentration (not to mention a score of others) have one factor in common; *not one has experienced any rise in the murder rate in the years following abolition.* William Temple said: "I believe that the example of the State taking life does more to lower the value of human life in the minds of its citizens than the deterrent influence of the penalty can do to protect the lives of the citizens."

## Congress And The Common Man

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view-point, the defeat of Congress will be a setback for our country.

But Congress as it is at the moment—internally torn, power-grabbing, bribery-infested, addicted to fanciful nostrums, out of touch with the misery of the masses, full of petty dictators, teeming with ministers who go holidaying abroad at public expense, crowded with officials whose utmost qualification for their posts is their having gone to jail in the past and whose usual qualification is their having shouted "Mahatmaji ki jai" or worn khadi caps—Congress with all these blots upon it today and with insufficient hold on its own great principles of constitution and policy and with its frequent mistaking of a certain type of rigid ethico-social faddism for the broad and subtle and profound spiritual inspiration that is native to the Indian genius—such a Congress will hardly impress the common man with the sterling achievements that stand to its credit, achievements like the bloodless integration of the States, the successful fight against the poison of Communalism, the wise steering of the country through the troubled waters of international politics, the grappling of the huge "refugee" problem, the brilliant conduct of the military campaign in Kashmir, the swift knock-out to Razakar Hyderabad—such a Congress will not easily convince the common man that, as a leading paper has pointed out, many of its difficulties are not of its own making, that the administrative machine came to it creaking and groaning from a war-burdened past, that dollar scarcity and obstacles in the path of procuring machinery have partly retarded industrial production, that agriculture has suffered from a shortage of capital, a steep rise in wages and other costs of production and a grave deficiency of manure and implements. Until the time some party with more possibilities of fundamental good arises with as nation-wide an organisation, it is the duty of Congress to reinstate itself in the common man's esteem by checking the demoralisation of its members, revitalising its contact with the people and turning more and more to a political and economic programme founded in a true sense of Indian spirituality. The common man, on his side, must do his best to keep his balance, discount exaggerations, view the complex situation steadily and view it whole and, while persisting in legitimate criticism, give Congress a fair chance to do the country the great service it alone can render in the present hour of danger within and without.

\*From 1939-1945, 442 persons were tried for murder in Britain, 82 were executed, 56 reprieved and 209 were found insane.



# THE WORLD CRISIS AND INDIA BY "Synergist"

## IX. VALUES AND SANCTIONS

### (c) ATHEISM\*

*"The fool hath said in his heart: there is no God."*

In the essay "The Failure of the Religion of Humanity", we saw how a theo-centric world-view gave place to an ego-centric one—how a God-centred philosophy of life was abandoned in favour of a man-centred one when Comte declared, "The whole effect of Positivist worship will be to make men feel clearly how far superior in every respect is the synthesis founded on the Love of Humanity to that founded on the Love of God." God was eliminated from man's life as something extraneous to his being, an unknowable Entity, that had nothing to do with his existence on earth. Philosophers were asked by Comte to give up speculating about the nature of the Ultimate Reality, and religionists not to seek God but to serve humanity. When Positivism triumphed, material progress became the goal of civilisation, which now definitely took a rationalistic-utilitarian-hedonistic turn. The worship of the Collective Man and of material ends became the New Gospel of the West.

#### Karl Marx

But this New Gospel was still not placed upon a firm foundation; it was not an entirely man-centred Gospel; an Unknowable was still hovering in the background—man-worship had not yet turned into God-denial, agnosticism had not yet become downright atheism. It was left to Marx to finish what the Agnostics had begun. Harnessing Hegel's Dialectic and Feuerbach's Materialism to his own "Economic Interpretation of History", he stated that "production" was the chief element in man's struggle for existence, and therefore the economic factor was the basic one in the life of a people, and that it was "production" which governed its culture—its intellectual, religious, aesthetic and social life. J. G. Crowther a keen follower of Marx, very succinctly explains the Marxist position in *Soviet Science*: "Out of the struggle of the animal world man arose. After he had been able to snatch sufficient food to keep him alive he began to have the opportunity to think; thus the first concern of man is production, the production of food. The achievement of production provides the opportunity for thought, thus the mode of production of the goods to satisfy human needs comes to condition thought. Marx therefore said that the general character of the thought of any historical period, the nature of its art, science and laws, is a reflection of the mode of production that exists at that epoch."

For Marx, economic struggle was the main factor which governed the cultural process and determined the character of the philosophy and religion and the ethical and spiritual ideals of a people. If this is granted, the philosophy of a Shankara or a Plotinus, the teachings of a Krishna or a Christ, a Mahomet or a Zoroaster, the divinely inspired and revelatory writings of the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Gita do not reveal any ultimate truths of existence but are merely reflections of the mode of production that existed at a particular epoch; and the conceptions of good and evil, right and wrong, justice and injustice based upon these teachings are naturally dictated by the interests of the prevailing economic situation and are determined by social convenience. Besides, all the teachings move round a central "Divine Reality", which according to the Marxist world-view does not exist; it declares Matter to be the fundamental Reality. However absurd these conclusions may seem to us, it must be clearly understood that these are the only conclusions which a materialistic world-view based on Economics, instead of a Spiritual Metaphysic and Psychology, can lead to. It is not within the scope of this essay to examine all the philosophical issues involved in Marxism as our inquiry is only concerned with values and their sanction. In any case a detailed examination of these issues is not necessary, for the very fundamentals of Marxism deny spiritual values and do not give rise to an ethic.

Then Marx states, "It is not the consciousness of mankind that determines its existence, but on the contrary its social existence determines its consciousness." But what is man and what is the nature of his consciousness? These are the questions which must always be asked before any world-view is accepted. A true and complete philosophy of life must answer the eternal questions—it must make a definite statement about the nature of the Ultimate Reality and man's relation to it, about the nature of the Universe and man's place in it, and the purpose of existence. According to Marxism, man is not a soul-being who uses mind, life and body as his instruments of self-expression and seeks spiritual fulfilment upon earth, not a being who is an emanation of the Divine, but a physical being—an economic-social unit, a food-getting animal. Regarding the nature of the Ultimate Reality and the purpose of existence, Marxism states that Matter is the fundamental Reality and that

the evolutionary process is blind—it has no design or purpose in it, but man can have before him the goal of producing a "classless society."

Then Marxist psychology affirms that consciousness is not the fundamental fact of a man's personality. According to it, consciousness or mind is a by-product of matter—mental processes are caused by a prior cerebral activity, which in its turn is the result of the action of bodily processes. The effect of the philosophical implications of such a physical and physiological determinism on man's seeking for higher values as well as on his conduct in the world are not difficult to understand. As we saw in the essay "The Rise of Materialism"—"If a mental act is determined by a cerebral action, which is determined by bodily processes, or by the reaction of the physical and nervous system to the action of external stimuli, then a man's mental processes are physically and physiologically determined, and conditioned by environmental impacts. If this is affirmed as true, then his intellectual acts like his conceptions of good and evil, and right and wrong, or his volitional acts like choosing the good and rejecting the evil are not within his control but are physiologically determined, and if that is the case, then his belief in higher values or his pursuits of ethical or spiritual aims and ideals are chimeras".

Then in Essays I and VII, we saw that man's consciousness is not determined by the economic and social conditions in which he lives, on the contrary, it is his consciousness that determines them.

Man's knowledge of himself and the world is determined by the type, level and range of his consciousness. He creates the super-structure of his civilization on a foundation of this knowledge. This means that his philosophy and religion, art and literature, sociology and politics bear the stamp and reflect the nature of his consciousness. Man at present possesses a particular type of consciousness, a mentally developed but a spiritually unenlightened one, and creates a culture whose character is determined by it; if he were to evolve further into a higher type of being and possess a spiritual consciousness he would be sure to create a greater and more enlightened culture; not a rationalistic-utilitarian culture but a culture that is spiritual.

#### The Inner and the Outer

We have all along stressed the fact that the inner determines the outer, and not the outer the inner; but this does not necessarily mean that the outer has no effect upon the inner—they both inter-act with each other. The outer serves to stimulate the inner and to bring out its potentialities, and aids it first to grow and then to formulate itself outwardly in life. Whilst in his inner reality man is a soul-being and creates his external conditions, he is outwardly a nature-organism and a social being who is affected by his natural and social environment. But though as a nature-organism and a social being he is affected by his environment, as a soul-being, he is capable of recreating it and remoulding it; that is, as long as he remains in his outer consciousness and knows himself as only a "natural being", he is subdued by the conditions around him, but if he were to contact his inner soul and grow into a wider and more luminous spiritual consciousness, he would possess greater knowledge and greater power and would be consequently in a position to remould his environment. Man does not live alone as a separate self-existing entity—but at the same time his being is not wholly influenced by the action of outer circumstances. There is in every individual a double-action, a power of self-development from within, and the receiving of impacts of an external world which it adjusts to its own individuality and turns into material for its own development; it then projects itself outward and recreates and remoulds its environment in consonance with its own inner truth. As an individual ascends the ladder of Being, his capacity for self-determination increases and his mastery over outer circumstances becomes greater. As long as *purusha*, soul, is enmeshed in the workings of *prakriti*, nature, he is subject to its action—but as he detaches himself from it and learns to control its working through spiritual growth he gradually becomes its master.

If man wants to create perfect social, political and economic systems, he must first develop into a greater being; the present rational animal groping about in half-light and half-darkness is incapable of producing them. The condition of the world proves this.

Since we admit that outer conditions affect the lives of men, we grant that the economic factor is an important one, and consequently one which cannot be by any means neglected; but to state that it is the basic factor which determines the consciousness of men, and that philosophy, religion,

*Continued on page 5*

\* This essay should be read in conjunction with the two previous ones: "The Rise of Materialism" and "The Failure of the Religion of Humanity."

## VALUES AND SANCTIONS

Continued from page 4

art, literature and science are only reflections "of the mode of production that exists at that epoch" and that their character is determined by economic struggle is a gross exaggeration. Such preposterous statements cannot be held valid by the philosophic reason of men—they do not correspond to the full facts of human existence. The idea of promoting the so-called "health, wealth and happiness of mankind" and creating the kingdom of heaven upon earth by economic and social adjustment is one which today can only be entertained by minds that have no insight into the nature of the forces that govern the destinies of men.

## The New Gospel

With men's ethical values regulated by economic and social utility and therefore having no ultimate sanction, with the revival of the infra-ethical formula "the end justifies the means", and with spiritual values utterly ignored, because the existence of Soul, Spirit or God was denied, the New Gospel was now complete. The Positivists had declared:\*

What profiteth a man if he save his soul  
And lose the whole World?  
So, seek ye first the kingdom of worldly goods,  
And the kingdom of the Spirit will be added unto you—  
If it exists.

Marx added to this:

In the beginning was the Word,  
And the Word was with the Proletariat,  
And the Word was Economic Production.

It is the Stomach that quickeneth,  
The Spirit profiteth nothing,  
For it doth not exist.  
The words I say unto you,  
They are bread and they are life;  
For is it not writ:  
Man lives by bread alone?

This was the New Gospel—its John the Baptist was the Positivist, and its prophet was Karl Marx. Like Positivism, the advent of Marxism was also inevitable. Marxism had to come for two reasons; at least at one place in the world, a new economico-social experiment had to be made—and Russia proved to be the ideal place for it—in which the domination of the rich over the poor had to be completely broken, and the humble and the lowly of birth had to be given their right to stand on an equal footing with their more fortunate fellow-men. It had to be shown that the mere fact that a man exists, apart from all other considerations, entitles him to the basic human rights—the right to have proper food and clothing, and a roof over his head. No doubt, a system of social relationships which ignores this fact cannot have the sympathy of any right thinking man. But all this could have been achieved without supporting a Materialistic conception of the Universe, without God-denial, and without the utter immolation of the Individual in the interests of the Collectivity, represented by a Party. Marx was a well-meaning man, but unfortunately, he did not know that there were more things in heaven and earth than were dreamt of in his economic philosophy.

If religion was the opium of the people, then its distorted outer forms should have been discarded, and only God-worship with spiritual union with Him as its culmination should have been kept. Instead, God was denied, but religion was kept, a new kind of religion, a religion without a God—a super-opium. Though Marx should have allowed God-worship a place in his world-view, it was not possible for him to do so, for an acceptance by him of the reality of God or Spirit would have been detrimental to his Economic Interpretation of History, which could have only stood on a materialistic foundation. That is the reason why, though he took from Hegel his "Dialectic", he rejected his Absolute, and accepted the Materialism of Feuerbach.

## Atheism

True religion, that is, a religion based on God-realisation, and which makes spiritual union with God its aim, is not the opium of the people, but atheism or God-denial is most assuredly the parent vice, the master falsehood out of which arise most of the other vices and falsehoods. Man's religion is the expression of his soul's seeking to attain constant union with its source and sustaining power, the Supreme Being, and its aspiration to lead a divine existence upon earth. True religion draws man Godwards and helps him to evolve into a greater being. Atheism on the contrary proves to be a barrier in the evolutionary march of humanity, because a belief in it does not encourage man to ascend the ladder of Being and attain higher state of consciousness; on the contrary it binds him to his lower animal nature. Often a firm belief in it tends to corrupt a man's

being, for it creates in his mind a false sense of values according to which he acts in the world. Atheism, under whatever guise it may masquerade and behind whatever "ism" it may take cover, is a disease which contaminates human life, and strikes at the very root of all spiritual endeavours of the human race. Even an apostle of the reason like Francis Bacon writes, "It is true that a little philosophy inclineth man's mind to atheism; but depth in philosophy bringeth men's mind to religion. . . . They that deny a God destroy man's nobility, for certainly man is of kin to the beasts by his body; and if he be not of kin to God by his spirit, he is a base and ignoble creature." And one may ask, "Is not a materialistic man-centred world-view a 'little philosophy'? And is not one based on Economics, and which denies the reality of the Transcendent and Immanent Divine Being an even shallower philosophy?"

The other reason why the advent of Marxism was inevitable was because Marxism was Materialism driven to its last consequence—because it was the next logical step after Positivism and the acceptance of a man-centred philosophy of life. Grant Materialism and the absolute supremacy of the economic-social ultimate, and the Marxist world-view follows in its wake, with Logical Positivism, Instrumentalism and Rationalistic Utilitarianism and Hedonism bringing up the rear. In their philosophical convictions regarding ends, there is very little difference between the Marxists and the supporters of these other Schools of thought which differ from it only on the social, political and economic level. They all firmly believe in the ideal of materially well-provided social beings existing in a perfect economic society. The only really important point on which they entirely differ is the position of the individual in society. Whilst Marxism emphasises the importance of the Collectivity and denies that of the Individual, the rival ideologies, without denying the importance of the Collectivity, leave the individual free to develop himself. In the first system man's chance to develop spiritually is denied him—he has to move with the Collectivity; in the other systems, he is free to do so if he believes in a spiritual ideal, even though the ideologies themselves do not inculcate such an ideal.

## Glorification or Degradation?

The final result of the materialistic world-view was, that God was dethroned and man was put in His place; but for this glorification a price had to be paid—man's spiritual nature and his divine destiny had to be denied, he had to be branded a rational animal, an economico-social unit. His right to attain union with the Supreme Being and to realise that he was an emanation of this Being, was denied him; as a consequence of this denial, he had to forego his right to attain Supreme Knowledge, Power, Bliss, Freedom and Immortality which really belong to his highest Self, and which it was possible for him to attain only through an inner spiritual growth. Surely a high price to pay for such a glorification, a glorification which was actually a degradation, especially when we view it in the light of present events and see where it has brought us.

If we examine the main trends in Western thought today, we find that we either have a world-view based upon Economics, or a world-view which denies metaphysical values and supports a down-right thorough-going Utilitarianism, or we have one with an *ersatz* metaphysic, which instead of explaining the nature of the Ultimate Reality, man's relation with it and the purpose of existence, only provides a frame-work for the findings of science; then, we have an ethic that has no ultimate sanction, but becomes only a convention regulated by social utility; a psychology, which is more a sexology than a science that investigates into the nature of mind, consciousness and soul, or a psychology that instead of being a science in its own right has become almost a branch of physiology. Perhaps it is the perception of this very truth that has made R. G. Collingwood remark that psychology today is the fashionable scientific fraud of the age. Though this remark is rather severe, it does express a certain truth: it is directed not against Psychology but against the exaggerated applications given to some limited truths of man's life by certain Schools of Psychology. And lastly we have a religion which instead of teaching men to love God and attain union with Him, concerns itself with externals or with mundane ends. Fortunately there are other trends also which point towards a spiritual interpretation of existence and which are sure to help thinkers in definitely discarding once and for all the materialistic world-view.

If the present non-finalistic non-teleological, materialistic man-centred world-view is not discarded in favour of a theo-centric one based upon a spiritual metaphysic, which can show the purpose of existence and the goal of life, and which alone can sanction a true ethic, a dharama, a law of right action, our civilisation will not cease to descend the downward path it has taken and may soon give way to the worst kind of barbarism—a barbarism fully equipped with the discoveries of science, and with a developed reason serving the ends of the unsublimated lower animal nature of man.

\* Refer to Essay IX, (b). "The Failure of the Religion of Humanity".

# LIGHTS ON LIFE-PROBLEMS

(II)

One of our chief aims will be to provide authentic guidance in regard to the many perplexing questions with which the common man is faced in his daily life. This cannot be better done than by considering these questions in the light of Sri Aurobindo's writings, because Sri Aurobindo is not merely a Master of Yoga in possession of the Eternal Spiritual Truths, but also a Guide and Helper of mankind in the many trying situations that arise in the course of its day-to-day existence. To bring home the light of this guidance and to make it directly applicable to the concrete problems of life, a series of questions of common interest along with precise answers based on Sri Aurobindo's writings will regularly appear in these columns.

**Q. 1.:** The hedonistic theory of ethics judges virtue from the standard of pleasure or satisfaction which it considers to be the goal of all human activity and man's supreme good. How far can this be admitted as the true aim of our ethical endeavour?

**A.:** Neither the pursuit of pleasure nor self-satisfaction of any kind, however subtle or even spiritual, can be the law of nature of the ethical being. It is true that the highest good is both in its nature and inner effect the highest bliss. Ananda, delight of being is the spring of all existence and that to which it tends and for which it seeks openly or covertly in all its activities. It is true too that in virtue growing, in good accomplished, there is great pleasure and that the seeking for it may well be always there as a sub-conscious motive to the pursuit of virtue. But for practical purposes this is a side aspect of the matter; it does not constitute pleasure into a test or standard of virtue. On the contrary, virtue comes to the natural man by a struggle with his pleasure-seeking nature and is often a deliberate embracing of pain, an edification of strength by suffering. We do not embrace that pain and struggle for the pleasure of the pain and the pleasure of the struggle; for that higher strenuous delight, though it is felt by the secret spirit in us, is not usually or not at first conscious in the conscient normal part of our being which is the field of the struggle. The action of the ethical man is not motivated by even an inner pleasure, but by a call of his being, the necessity of an ideal, the figure of an absolute standard, a law of the Divine.

**Q. 2.:** But the history of the human race shows that the origin of man's morality and the determining cause of its evolution is not his inner necessity for an ideal but the social need of adjusting his personal claims and desires to those of others in his society. Is not this social need the true origin of morality?

**A.:** It is true that this social need is the obscure matrix of morality and of man's ethical impulse and that in the outward history, the evolution of man in society may seem to be the determining cause of his ethical evolution. For ethics only begins by the demand upon him of something other than his personal preference, vital pleasure or material self-interest; and this demand seems at first to work on him through the necessity of his relations with others, by the demands of his social existence. But that this is not the core of the matter, is shown by the fact that the ethical demand does not always square with the social demand, nor the ethical standard always coincide with the social standard. On the contrary the ethical man is often called upon to reject and do battle with the social demand, to break, move away from, reverse the social standard. His relations with others and his relations with himself are both of them the occasions of his ethical growth, but that which determines his ethical being is his relations with God, the urge of the Divine upon him whether concealed in his nature or conscious in his higher self. He obeys an inner ideal, not an outer standard, a divine law in his being, not a social claim or collective necessity.

**Q. 3.:** What are the progressive stages of the growth of man's moral nature?

**A.:** Our ethical impulses and activities begin like all the rest in the infra-rational and take their rise from the subconscious. They arise as an instinct of right, an instinct of obedience to an understood law, an instinct of self-giving in labour, an instinct of sacrifice and self-sacrifice, an instinct of love, of self-subordination and of solidarity with others. Man obeys the law at first without inquiring the why and the wherefore, without seeking for it a sanction in the reason. His first thought is that it is a law created by higher powers than himself and his race and he says with the ancient poet that he knows not whence these laws sprang, but only that they are and endure and cannot with impunity be violated. What the instincts and impulses seek after, the reason labours to make us understand, so that the will may come to use the ethical impulses intelligently and turn the instincts into ethical ideas. It corrects the crude and often erring ethical instincts, separates and purifies their confused associations, shows them as best it can

their relations, tries to arbitrate and compromise between their conflicting claims, arranges a system and many-sided rule of ethical action. And all this is well, a necessary stage of our advance; but in the end these very ethical ideas and this intelligent ethical will which it has tried to train to its control, escape from its hold and soar up beyond its province. Always, even when enduring its rein and curb, they have that inborn tendency.

**Q. 4.:** Why does the developing ethical impulse in man finally refuse to follow the dictates of his reason?

**A.:** The ethical being of man like the rest is a growth and a seeking towards the absolute, the divine which can only be attained securely in the supra-rational. It seeks after an absolute purity, an absolute right, an absolute truth, an absolute strength, an absolute love and self-giving, and it is most satisfied when it can get them in absolute measure, without limit, curb or compromise, divinely, infinitely, in a sort of godhead and transfiguration of the ethical being. The reason is chiefly concerned with what it best understands, the apparent process, the machinery, the outward act, its result and effect, its circumstance, occasion and motive; by these it judges the morality of the action and the morality of the doer. But the developed ethical being knows instinctively that it is an inner something which it seeks and the outward act is only a means of bringing out and manifesting within ourselves by its psychological effects that inner absolute and eternal entity.

**Q. 5.:** By what standard does the developed ethical being measure the value of his actions?

**A.:** To the developed ethical being the value of our actions is not so much in their apparent nature and outward result as in their help towards the growth of the Divine within us. It is difficult, even impossible to justify upon outward grounds the absolute-justice, absolute right, absolute purity, love or selflessness of an action or course of action; for action is always relative, it is mixed and uncertain in its results, perplexed in its occasions. But it is possible to relate the inner being to the eternal and absolute good, to make our sense and will full of it so as to act out of its impulsion or its intuitions and inspirations. That is what the ethical being labours towards and the higher ethical man increasingly attains to in his inner efforts.

**Q. 6.:** What is the true essence of ethics and how is it fulfilled?

**A.:** Ethics is not in its essence a calculation of good and evil in the action or a laboured effort to be blameless according to the standards of the world,—those are only crude appearances,—it is an attempt to grow into the divine nature. Its parts of purity are an aspiration towards the inalienable purity of God's being; its parts of truth and right are a seeking after conscious unity with the law of the divine knowledge and will; its parts of sympathy and charity are a movement towards the infinity and universality of the divine love; its parts of strength and manhood are a striving for the perfect surety of the divine strength. That is the heart of its meaning. And its high fulfilment comes when the being of the man undergoes this transfiguration; then it is not his actions that standardise his nature but his nature that gives value to his actions; then he is no longer laboriously virtuous, but naturally divine. Actively, too, he is fulfilled and consummated when he is not led or moved either by the infra-rational impulses or the rational intelligence and will, but inspired and piloted by the divine knowledge and will made conscious in his nature; and that can only be done, first by communication through the intuitive mind as it purifies itself progressively from the invasion of egoism, self-interest, desire, passion and all kinds of self-will, finally through the supra-rational light and power, no longer communicated but present and in possession of his being. Such was the supreme aim of the ancient sages who had the wisdom which rational man and rational society have rejected because it was too high a truth for the comprehension of the reason and for the powers of the normal limited human will too bold and immense, too infinite an effort.



# SRI AUROBINDO AND HIS ASHRAM

BY DILIP KUMAR ROY

In our last issue we published "Synergist"'s refutation of the charges made in an article in the local weekly "INDIA" against Sri Aurobindo's Ashram. The same ill-conceived article was circulated by the National Press Syndicate to other papers and it appeared in "SWATANTRA" under the pseudonym "Sumitra". It was there that Dilip Kumar Roy, famous Bengali musician, poet, novelist, author of the widely read book of interviews "AMONG THE GREAT", and disciple of Sri Aurobindo, saw it. He has sent us a rejoinder which is excellent for its finely expressed inside-knowledge of the workings of the great Pondicherry Ashram. We hope it will bring the light of truth into all misguided minds.

Sri Aurobindo wrote to me once in a light vein that he never believed in advertisement except for books, etc., and in propaganda except for politics and patent medicines. "But for serious work," he wrote, "it is poison." Yet sometimes, he added, one might have to register a contradiction or tolerate writing about oneself to have a sufficient counter-weight in that amorphous chaos, the public mind, to balance the hostility that is always aroused by the presence of a new dynamic Truth in this world of ignorance. That this hostility exists against Sri Aurobindo and his great life-work is proved once again by the well planned systematic propaganda that has come to the fore through the agency of the National Press Syndicate with the result that a good deal of publicity has been given to an article written under a *nom de plume*, "Sumitra".

## Black Clouds and Starlit Sky

It is to be regretted that such an article against a saint and a seer of the eminence of Sri Aurobindo (whom Mahatma Gandhi hailed, in his well known prayer-meeting address before me on 29-10-47, as a Rishi and whose Ashram he praised as carrying on a great spiritual non-sectarian work) should have been sponsored by some persons who presumably wield a certain influence in the Press. For they are not only injuring themselves, by launching out into mischievous propagation of falsehood, but also cutting the branch on which they sit. For to want to belittle Sri Aurobindo as a pseudo-seer or an un-Indian prophet is to belittle India which alone could have produced him. Tagore once told me with a sigh: "We are addicts of suicide as a race, Dilip. For no other race loves so much to disparage their great men, the men who have raised their prestige all over the world." At that time he was being pursued with similar vindictive propaganda in our country. I assured him that he need hardly take all this to heart as, to quote from his own poem (translated from his Bengali),

Black clouds invade the starlit sky  
And vaunt: 'Behold, we win!  
Anon, the clouds are gone—and gleam  
The eternal stars serene!

"Yes", he returned, in his inimitable vein. "But so long as the sky is overcast, the enemies of stars can well boost up the clouds and so undermine in some their faith in stars."

This can hardly be questioned; and that is precisely why such false propaganda has sometimes to be countered by the lovers of Truth. The present writer does not propose to refute all the charges that "Sumitra" has laboriously piled up against the Ashram of Sri Aurobindo, not only because it is unnecessary (some of his charges being so pointless and full of venom as to defeat themselves: e.g. his charge that the Ashram buys all the houses it can!) but because one must not heed falsehood too much by treating its mouthpiece as worthy of being taken too seriously. Yet the fact, alas, remains (as Tagore so cogently pointed out) that the black clouds' followers can do a certain amount of mischief and so at times should be exposed to the light. So I will only deal with three of "Sumitra"'s cloud-charges against the starry wisdom of Sri Aurobindo.

## The Master's Work

First, that no other apostle has put forward categorical claims about his own spirituality. This is demonstrably untrue. Christ said: "I and my father are one . . . I am the Light of the world, etc." Krishna said: "Take refuge in me and I will absolve thee from sin." Sri Gouranga in his trance state claimed he was one with Narayana. Even Sri Ramkrishna (whom "Sumitra" has misquoted deliberately) claimed: "He who was Ram and Krishna is now in this body Ramkrishna." Also, he never asked his disciple Vivekananda to go on alleviating human misery. On the contrary he said again and again that one could not effectively ameliorate world-conditions unless and until one had the 'chaprās' which means the badge, the sanction, the authority. It is reminiscent of the well-known mystic dictum that those who have not understood the Divine reality can hardly understand anything of the human. All that Sri Aurobindo has publicly claimed is that he stands for spiritual values and a spiritual consciousness. About his own special work and sadhana he has as yet made no public claim to recognition and prefers to work in silence doing good to tens of thousands who receive not only help but guidance from him in their daily lives. But, if one's basic position is that of a sceptic, how to prove the concrete efficacy of this help—since the faithful's position

has to be that of faith? All that the sceptic can legitimately say is that he cannot believe. But then who wants him to believe? Let him enjoy his bankruptcy of faithlessness, but the faithful has surely as much rational right to enjoy and invest his own capital of faith accumulated from his day-to-day personal experience.

Secondly, "Sumitra" has gone out of his way to asseverate that Sri Aurobindo is for the continuation of the French domination in Pondicherry. Here the unwary calumniator has made a great *faux pas*. For Sri Aurobindo has always been for a one and united India (he was firmly opposed even to Pakistan, as everybody knows who reads his messages, etc.). And then, to clinch the matter as it were, his disclaimer regarding French rule has been published in no uncertain terms of late and even broadcast. It has, besides, been commented upon favourably in an editorial of *The Hindu* a fortnight ago. This may serve, however, one purpose for Truth-seekers in that it may open their eyes to the fact that the propaganda was intended not to serve truth but carefully fostered malice. So no more need be said.

## True Mother of Our Souls

One last point. The prosecutor's chief aim is to condemn the Mother—a very high-souled creator of a unique Ashram. He has taken great pains to prove that She is a dictator and a martinet. It sickens one who has learned to revere her as one's Guru and who has experienced what her deep love is for every suffering creature, even to repeat the charges against such a luminous inspirer of purity, love and truth. But one charge must still be refuted: the charge of dictatorship. For this is absurd. The present writer has many friends who know something about Ashram disciplines all over India. They have all admired her great love of individual freedom, catholicity of spirit and incredible tolerance, to say nothing of her non-interference in the lives of even the children whom she profoundly respects (as their teachers have told me so many times). It is indeed true that *Guruvad* in India has never been a modern democratic institution with its paraphernalia of trustees and deputies and registrars, etc., but "Sumitra" has not made the mistake here of falling foul of *Guruvad* as such. For then he would have to condemn out of hand Vivekananda, who was what he was because he had accepted Sri Ramkrishna as his Guru (not to mention Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru who accepts Gandhiji still as his one monitor and Guru of gurus). No, what he does has a superficial cleverness of a sort, since he pays a tribute to the upkeep of the Ashram and its able management and yet tries to prove that it is not right first because the Ashram is run on totalitarian lines and secondly because the activities in the Ashram are not consonant with the spiritual traditions of India. I have answered the first charge against the Mother's dictatorship by the testimony of others to her catholicity and tolerance (not to mention forgiveness) but I have to add here that we obey her not through fear but out of love, and that as soon as the motive of love comes into the picture the whole perspective must totally change, since one of the deepest aspirations of love is to obey and worship. The inmates of the Ashram obey the Mother voluntarily because they feel in her their Mother through her pure convincingness as a Mother who loves her children and does not want to spare herself when her children's welfare is concerned. Lastly, she keeps her children in reasonable comfort because neither she nor Sri Aurobindo believes in the holiness of poverty or in the incompatibility of cleanliness, order and discipline with inner spiritual growth. In fact Sri Aurobindo once wrote to me in a long letter stressing that one of the main causes of the dwindling of India's material power was her past neglect of discipline and order in the organisation of her social and political life.

Then there are their spiritual ideals which cannot be expounded here; nor the inner discipline they have attained, suffice it to say that theirs is a vision born of a life-long seeking and since they call none and are here only for those who of themselves feel the call and come to them for guidance and accept their gospel, it would be unseemly and irrational, to say the least, to slander them for sticking to their vision of truth in an institution which they have created out of love. Those who do not agree with this vision can very safely stay away. But if they come on their own initiative as they do and from all parts of the world, and find here a faith and a happiness which they cannot find anywhere else, surely the least they could do to repay their debt would be to stay loyal to their Gurus but for whose sleepless vigilance and loving solicitude such a peaceful refuge of the heart's deepest aspirations would be absent in this restless, unhappy, and derelict world.

# GOETHE—THE SUFI UNFULFILLED

By "LIBRA"

The celebration, in Europe and America, of the bi-centenary of Goethe's birth began on June 27 and will continue up to July 11. A notable contribution to the large amount of Goethean literature seeing the light during this festival is the following specially written article which draws attention to an aspect of the great German poet not often emphasised.

Goethe and Shelley were by far the most gifted poets of their age. Nor does their similarity end with the high excellence of their poetic gifts. Although different in various respects owing to outward circumstances as well as to Goethe's being much more complex and versatile, they had a remarkable kinship in the power of what may be termed "mysticism of artistic love." In Shelley this power can be seen by all; in Goethe it had to be discerned from amidst a multitude of qualities—the balanced Greek intellectuality, the humanism of the Renaissance temper, the Modern Man's Faustian rebelliousness and curiosity—but it is the central power of the poet in him, and to overlook it is to miss the intensest point in his psychology and the deepest tone in his self-expression.

## Pantheism and the Eternal Feminine

Goethe was a pantheist: he declared that Divinity is not outside of the universe but that a Divine Substance underlies all phenomena and the forms of outward Nature have an inward animating Spirit which is perfect and which in its Wholeness carries all phenomena as phases of its perfection. In that Wholeness it is a tremendous mystery—the Absolute of the philosophers, "the inconceivable, utterly unimaginable highest Being" of which Goethe used to speak in awed accents to Eckermann. But between the Absolute and the relative, the Divine was for him an active Presence ordering from ineffable eternity the universe in time. While Goethe the poet found in the Absolute little matter for thought, the active ordering World-Presence haunted him. Not only did he intellectually live with it. Again and again, like Shelley, he passed through an exaltation which made outward phenomenal Nature so transparent a medium of inward divine Nature that, when Jacobi asserted in view of the obvious imperfection of things that "Nature hid God," he could in truth flash out: "Not from everyone!" The intellect, to him, was merely an instrument to formulate the findings of an intuition born of an emotional and aesthetic response to things. "Man cannot learn to know a thing," wrote Goethe<sup>1</sup>, "unless he loves it, and the deeper and fuller the knowledge is to be, the stronger, the more intense and the more living must be the love, I will even say the passion." His pantheism, therefore, is best summed up in his famous dictum: "The core of Nature is set within man's heart." Its most poetic utterance is the oft-quoted passage where Faust makes his confession of faith to Margaret that Love, Rapture and God are one and the same Omnipresence containing and sustaining all.

According to Goethe, the Love and Rapture that is God is the infinite never-ending union of an Eternal Feminine with an Eternal Masculine. In this union the two cannot be differentiated but on the level of our own existence where man and woman stand apart, Divinity in order to remove all differentiation must come as a Love and Rapture with the face and force of the opposite sex idealised. So, man attains blessedness by following what Goethe apostrophised as "the Woman in woman:" under the aspect of feminine perfection—"Maiden, Mother, Goddess of all life"—the World-Presence attracts and fulfils man, giving at the same time to woman the opportunity to rise morally to the full height of her destiny as the incarnation of Divine Grace—Grace in both its meanings, the Everlasting Mercy as well as the "Beauty of ancient days which is ever new." Hence, like the Sufi and the Tantric, Goethe dwelt in the feeling of a Universal Creatrix who was also a Mediatrix between his soul and the ultimate completion of its existence, and he assimilated into his feeling the impersonal ardour of Platonic idealism seeking the one Perfect Form which the manifold time-process images and the personal passion of Christian Mariolatry.

## Physical Interpretation of Sufism

But he could not keep it on the rare oriental level. What was to the Persian mystics and the Indian Yogis a powerful symbol became for him more real than the Truth itself; for, while they regarded woman as only an earthly simile of the Divine, to be renounced as an object of lust and worshipped only in the spirit for the sake of the Reality behind, Goethe looked upon woman not as a simile but a visible synonym. Though human love thus took on the colour of a sacred rite, the initiation into which he esoterically described as the dying into the Life of life, yet his physical interpretation of Sufism debarred him from directly realising what was the quintessence of his religious perception, the "Mater Gloriosa" concealed behind each Gretchen. "The Woman clothed with the Sun," the Arche-

typal Beauty which made the earth so fair, the highest Idea-Force by which the whole universe, according to him, was harmoniously expressed and which glowed through even the thicket of Jacobi's veils, became lost in the heat and tumult of carnal desire.

He found the immaculate splendour too bright, because he did not know that in order to enter what the ancients called "the gates of the Sun" and pass to "where the Immortal Spirit wastes not nor perishes", one has to gaze inward—a practice which he curiously distrusted as liable to lead to inactivity. The wisdom of the seers who sought in the heart a core deeper than the emotional-aesthetic centre was not fully open to him, though ever and anon he felt a blind affinity to it; and he never did learn to understand that the realisation of the Supreme Spirit by an inward mystical discipline could be used as a fount of inspired action in the world, a stress of God-willed energy overflowing through the transformed individual instrument. Unable to stand the pressure of the profound intuition which he sometimes had, the intense pang of revelatory pleasure which is mysticism, be it only a mysticism of artistic love, his was fated to be the cry of Faust at the hour of dawn when awakened by the song of the elves:

*The sun is here!—Alas, my eyes are blinded!  
I turn away, I cannot bear his radiance.  
Even so it is when all the self is minded  
To force the goal of our own confidence  
And wide are flung the gates of all fulfilment,  
Sudden there bursts from that eternal portal,  
A sea of flame, past mercy, past concealment;  
We thought to light a candle,—fire immortal  
Wraps us, engulfed in unknown glowing seas:  
Is it hate or love that those great gates outpour?  
That ocean full of rapture and of tears?  
Awakened we shrink and turn to earth once more,  
Hiding our faces in our childish fears.<sup>2</sup>*

The ring of the mystical intuition here is no doubt authentic; but like Icarus Goethe sought the empyrean with wings that were not quite genuine. Suffering "the fall precipitant," he was obliged to make it the first article of his credo that man is born to look at lit things, not at light:

*Then be the Sun behind me, not before!  
I turn and gaze, my heart abrim with wonder,  
Where the wild torrent down the torn cliff rushes.  
From ledge to ledge it leaps in joyous thunder,  
Forth in a thousand swirling streams it gushes,  
Bursting in foam, tossing the spray on high.  
Lo, in calm glory from the tumult springing  
The million-coloured bow that cannot die!  
Through change unchanging, now its pure arch flinging  
In full clear lines, now faint where the winds fly,  
While still the coolness and the fragrance hover.  
Torrent and rainbow!—So our efforts seem.  
Follow that thought, that image and discover  
Our life lies in the changing coloured gleam.<sup>3</sup>*

This surely is one of Goethe's marvellous poetic victories; but it is also an expression of his spiritual defeat. Indeed he that has felt the Divine, however passingly, cannot be the same man again. And Goethe, who had a feel and sense of the Sun, went always vaguely thirsting after the Eternal and the Perfect and straining through all phenomenal objects to glimpse the Everlasting Moment of flawless rhythm which is the Time-experience of God, "the calm of His celestial Day," in which the shift and commotion of the world are elevated and transfigured into the divine archetype behind its imperfect course of history. "In the true symbolism," Goethe opines elsewhere, "the particular represents the Universal not as a dream or shadow, but as a living momentary revelation of the Unfathomable,"<sup>4</sup> but by the definite embrace of the Earth in preference to the Sun as his domain, he lost something which mundane Nature really hid and which no amount of poetic philosophy could supply, clutch as it might at love as the phenomenon super-symbolic of the Eternal.

2. Faust: Part II, Scene 1, ll.4708-713. The verse-translations quoted in this article are by Miss F. M. Stawell and G. Lowe Dickinson, to whose admirable book *Goethe and Faust* the present article owes several suggestions.

3. Ibid: ll. 4714-727.

1. Letter to Jacobi, May 10, 1812.



# Goethe—The Sufi Unfulfilled

Continued from page 8

## "The Desire of the Moth for the Star"

This is not to say that Goethe did not feel the transcendental phase of human emotion: in his relation with Charlotte Von Stein he did feel it unmistakably:

*For, all that men within their earth-bound limits  
Learn of high bliss and call by holy names. . . .  
The light that only in their loneliest thoughts  
Burns for the wise, for poets in their dreams,  
Their heavenliest—I too in my best hours  
Found it in her and found it there for me.<sup>5</sup>*

But the concupiscent part of him was too vehement in its demands to bear the strain of Charlotte's idealism. Finding no satisfactory solution to his liaison with her, he fled to Italy where, in Rome, he gave vent to himself in "the sweet flower gardens" of Armida in sensual experiences which formed the undertone of some of the most antinomian of his *Roman Elegies*. But he was not satisfied with this heartless sort of enjoyment, either. He wanted true love, and on returning formed a union with the young and pretty Christiane Vulpius which fully afforded him that, without at the same time starving his passions.

It cannot be denied that he combined with human love a superhuman longing and, even at his most earthly, felt "the desire of the moth for the star." For, men and women he saw as but human fronts and faces of the world-creative Divine Polarity of God the lover and God the beloved, the Eternal Masculine and the Eternal Feminine. All this hectic yearning of the flesh, he therefore held, points to a consummation in which the human lovers lose the cravings of their separate limited egos and fuse into an ecstasy in which Matter falls off like a withered garment and Spirit, with the Divine Polarity ever implicit in it, shines out pure of the aberrations of the earthly Eros. It was to this strange dematerialisation that he gave, in Shelleyan fashion, the name Death: so that Death signified to him not merely the cessation of terrestrial life but the flight to a heavenly consciousness in which "all failure shall grow to achievement." The mere brute fact of death meant only the casting off of one material body for another, a reincarnation of the soul for still further progress:

*Like water it wanders,  
The spirit of man:  
It comes from the sky,  
To the sky it goes.  
Then down once more,  
Drawn down to the earth,  
It changes, it flows.<sup>6</sup>*

In a letter to Weiland Goethe writes with reference to Charlotte Von Stein: "I cannot explain to myself the significance of the power which this woman has over me, unless by metempsychosis. Yes, we were once man and wife." The same idea he expresses in an exquisite poem to Charlotte herself; for, had he not too strong an intuition that nothing could be which did not in one form or another exist before to prepare for its present condition and that if the human soul were an "entelechy"—that is, in Goethe's own words, a piece of eternity which the few years of its connection with the body does not age—it would be absurd to think of it as not having had its own definite soul-nature from the beginning of time, developing its possibilities of manifestation on earth through many births? Death, therefore, was, from the natural point of view, a transition to another plane of being, with a subsequent return to this; but in the high esoteric sense, it stood for the Shelleyan trampling of life into fragments, the trampling of that imperfection which,

*like a dome of many-coloured glass,  
Stains the white radiance of Eternity.*

To make the brute fact at the same time a celestial truth was, in Goethe's eyes, the aim and end of living. His own failure, owing to the downward trend of his passions, to realise the light of the Divine had led him to the conclusion that man is condemned never to dwell in the ideal and perfect Consciousness, the Solar Glory, while alive: striving is all his lot, never achievement. But when the fetters of the body are broken, surmised Goethe, there must be possibility of attainment: the very futility of the effort here towards the Divine implied for him fulfilment elsewhere, in a poise of consciousness in which, to employ Tantric terms, the pure Shakti, the one supreme Creatrix, is in everlasting union with the supreme Ishwara, "the Untellable"—"das Unbeschreibliche." To penetrate into this beatific condition was, in his philosophy, love's crown of Love, and the soul's preparation for this leap into the Infinite with the help of "the unknown Eros" which, in Shelley's phrase, "sustains the world from below and kindles it from above" was the height of wisdom leading to the *grand finale* of human life—the divine death.

Thus we find him striking in one of his mystical poems a note such as has been sounded with an equal poignancy and richness by only Wagner at the close of *Tristan und Isolde*:

*Tell no man, tell wise man only,  
For the world might count it madness,  
Him I praise who thirsts for fire,  
Thirsts for death and dies in gladness.*

*Thou wast got and thou begattest  
In dewy love-nights long ago;  
Now a stranger love shall seize thee  
When the quiet lamp burns low.*

*Thou art freed and lifted, taken  
From the shadow of our night,  
Thou art drawn by some new passion  
Towards a nobler marriage-rite.*

*Distance cannot weight thee, soaring  
Where the far enchantment calls,  
Till the moth, the star-fire's lover,  
Drinks the light, and burns, and falls.*

*Die and grow! Until thou hearest  
What that word can say,  
The world is dark and thou a wanderer  
Who has lost his way.<sup>7</sup>*

## Tragedy of Spiritual Unfulfilment

But the divine death thus glorified is not achievable, as the spiritual experiences of all ages unanimously show, without transcendence of the temporal symbol of Eros. No shuffling off the mortal coil can kill the roots of desire, nor lead to godlike Bliss until they are killed. As Goethe himself recognised, in order to partake of that Bliss the human entelechy must be made fit for it while still alive. It must die and grow every minute if finally with the physical dissolution it is to die into God. But, it may be remarked, once the fitness for God's Bliss is reached, the very necessity of physically dying for the sake of entering the deific is removed. When the true Yogi dies, he only continues the state of blessedness which was his during life; for "he in whom the knot of the heart-strings has been rent asunder," says the Katha Upanishad, "enjoys the Bliss of Brahman even in this body of clay." Goethe, however, could not snap the cords of human attachment by diving deep into his psyche in constant meditative adoration of the Supreme. Perhaps his most magically Sufi address to Love the Universal Mediatrix is:

*Thou mayst choose a thousand forms to hide thee,  
Yet, All-beloved, I shall know thee there;  
Thou mayst take enchanted veils to shroud thee,  
Yet, thou All-present, I shall feel thee near.*

*In the pure springing of the tall young cypress,  
All-statiest, I know thee well the while,  
In the pure lakelet's limpid, laughing ripple,  
Thou, All-beguiler, I behold thy smile.*

*And when the fountain lifts her jet and opens,  
All-playfullest, I gaze upon thy glee,  
And when the cloud-forms change their changing fashion,  
All-myriad-natured, I am sure of thee.*

*Gay in the meadow's flower-embroidered raiment,  
All-starry-brightness, I can see thy face;  
Where the light-handed ivy climbs and clusters,  
All-clamberer, I catch thy eager grace.*

*When the new morning flames upon the mountains,  
All-gladdener, gladly I welcome thee,  
And when the pure sky arches out above us,  
All-heart-enlarger, I know it breathes of thee.*

*If aught I learn by outward sense or inward,  
All-learned teacher, I learn it all through thee,  
And when I name the hundred names of Allah,  
There echoes with each one a name for thee.<sup>8</sup>*

But this most inspired address of his to the Eternal Feminine is tragically typical of the spiritual unfulfilment of his whole life, because it was after all an apotheosis of his attachment to Marianne Von Willemar! The only other tragedy equally typical and regrettable is Shelley's passionate confusion of the Divine Beauty which so urgently beckoned to his soul, with the human all-too-human Emilia Viviani.

4. Maxims and Reflections: 314.

5. The Secrets.

6. Gesang der geister über den Wassen, Oct, 1779.

7. The Divan of East and West: The Singer's Boon—"Sacred Longing."

8. The Divan of East and West: Book of Zuleika—last poem.

# NEW TRENDS IN WESTERN THOUGHT

## THE MYSTERY OF MAN'S MIND HAS BIOLOGY BEEN ABLE TO SHED LIGHT ?

By HAMILTON FYFE

*John O'London's Weekly*

WHAT separates Man from all the other creatures that live and move and have their being on our planet? How was the separation effected? By what means did Man become self-conscious, aware of his personality, able to look before and after, to alter his environment, to use intellect and imagination?

We know a great deal about our physical development from the time, millions of years ago, when our earliest ancestors were tiny animated pieces of jelly swimming in sea-water. Since Darwin summed up and set in order the evidence which shows the stages Man passed through, Evolution has become a commonplace. But from Darwin onwards all the writers on Evolution have left unsolved the mystery of the unique difference between Man and all other forms of animal life.

### Man's Unique Difference From Animals

What is this unique difference? Is it that human beings are self-conscious and that non-human animals are without that faculty? Animals can think, can remember, can reason. Here is a proof. When I worked in London, my wife and I used to go down every Friday evening to a cottage in Kent. Our dog was always sitting by the door waiting for us to arrive. Why? Because he saw the table being laid for our supper, remembered that this happened only when we were expected, thought about us with affection, and reasoned that he was going to see us soon. Everyone has observed (if they observe anything) such instances of the working of animal minds. But no one has ever observed that animals are capable of thinking in the abstract, of indulging in what Jullian Huxley calls "conceptual thought" which he regards as "the essential character of Man as a dominant organism".

No animal says "I am I", or can stand, as it were, outside itself and criticize or commend, justify or regret its actions and impulses. No animal wishes to know whence it came or whither it goes, or what is the purpose of its existence; or ponders, as Spengler put it in *THE DECLINE OF THE WEST*, in a "theorizing, penetrating, subtilizing fashion". All such mental activities result from self-awareness, of which Man is the only possessor.

### No Explanation from Evolutionists

From the earliest times the origin of this quality, from which all other distinctions between human beings and animals spring, has aroused curiosity, caused speculation, given rise to endless legends and theories. Yet from all the literature of Evolution we can get no help towards understanding how and why this immeasurable distance separates us from all other species.

The numberless writers on the subject can tell us, within a few hundred thousand years, when it did so. They can trace the formation of our hands and feet. About the physical nature of the brain we know a little also, and something, though not much, about the method of its working. But about our most important faculty, the intellect, we learn nothing. We are ignorant of

what made Man become aware of himself, able to exercise imagination, to think abstract thoughts.

That Man did so is the most striking fact in history. It made possible his victories over Nature, his dominant attitude towards animals, the position he holds as "Master of his fate." Most of us never tire of dwelling on the marvellous works of Man, the excellence of his attainments, his godlike gift of reason. But the source of these wonders remains mysterious. The evolutionists have not merely left the problem unsolved; they have, it would seem, deliberately avoided it.

### From Darwin to Our Day

Darwin stated bluntly in *THE ORIGIN OF SPECIES*; "I have nothing to do with the origin of the primary mental powers any more than I have with the origin of life itself." Later in *THE DESCENT OF MAN*, he admitted that "the high standard of our intellectual powers and moral dispositions is the greatest difficulty which presents itself when we consider the origin of mankind". He did not, however, probe into this difficulty. Intellect, he said, had been "most important to Man; it made him the most dominant of all living creatures". But how intellect came into the make-up of mankind he did not attempt to explain.

Alfred Russell Wallace, the ablest after Darwin of all evolutionist writers, was so baffled by the impossibility of finding an explanation that he fell back on the theory of special creation. Self-conscious Man was, he saw, not allied to any species showing the faintest trace of self-consciousness. Whence could this divine attribute have come? "Only from a divine Being," Wallace answered. Only supernatural intervention could account for the soul of Man. The higher qualities of the human mind were not evolved, but grafted suddenly by the Almighty Creator on the mind of an ape. Wallace's fellow-scientists signed and tapped their foreheads. When he died, his theory died with him. We remember him gratefully as a man of science. His odd lapse into fundamentalist theology is almost forgotten.

Another famous nineteenth century biologist, Professor G. J. Romanes, pondered long over "the intrinsic nature of the mind of Man" and gave it up at last as an insoluble mystery. Almost all later writers on Evolution have left it alone or dismissed it as Joseph McCabe did in *PRE-HISTORIC MAN* with the remark that "possibly Man's intelligence developed through his having been forced to leave the trees and assume the upright position and use his forearms as hands". Which would not, in any case, account for his becoming aware of himself.

Haeckel, in *THE RIDDLE OF THE UNIVERSE*, was no more helpful. He thought we might conclude that intellect was a gradual development, but we were "not in a position to enter more deeply into the question." Another eminent writer on the subject. Du Bois-Reymond, told the world: "We shall never know any more about it". James Harvey Robinson, in *MIND IN THE MAKING*, confessed that we have no means of knowing when and where the first contribution to civilization was made and with it a start on the arduous building of the mind." Arnold Toynbee, in his monumental *STUDY OF HISTORY*, says bleakly: "The mutation of sub-Man into Man was accomplished in circumstances of which we have no record."

### Does Sir Arthur Keith's "New Theory" Help?

Now when I read the announcement that Sir Arthur Keith was to publish *A NEW THEORY OF HUMAN EVOLUTION* (Watts, 21s.) I felt very hopeful that fresh and clear light would be thrown by this veteran anthropologist on the dark gap in our knowledge. That expectation has been disappointed.

The value of his New Theory lies in its suggestions as to how "primal Man" during a million years or so grew into something very much like what we are to-day, and how during the last 9,000 years (the Post-primal period) humanity has continued to develop on primal lines. For example, Sir Arthur holds that the primates, living in separate in-breeding social units or groups, lived peaceably among themselves, but were at enmity with all outsiders. They were not bound by ties of kinship, but by the fact that they shared the same territory. They strove to enlarge their territories, to become larger units by absorbing others, and so to form nations. Hence the nationalism of recent ages, hence the inclination to hate rather than like "foreigners", hence the patriotic at-

tachment to a country and not to a tie of common ancestry.

Of course, all this will be contested by those who are convinced that civilization did not begin in a number of places at once, but spread from a single centre, and that early Man was not ill-disposed towards his neighbours. It will infuriate everyone who maintains that the human race has since those far-off millennia improved out of all knowledge. The notion that men began to walk on two legs instead of four because, when they lived in trees, they used what are now our arms to swing from branch to branch is opposed to the idea that they made the change when they had to come down to earth because of drought. Contrary to modern historical thinking is Sir Arthur's belief that nations are formed because great masses of people long ardently for nationhood. So he is certain to find his New Theory challenged from many quarters.

Yet this is certain also: no one will twit him with being dull. There are sparkles on almost every page. The book is immensely interesting as a study of Man since he became self-conscious, but it scarcely touches the question, "How did he become self-conscious?" Sir Arthur attributes Man's "evolutionary success" to his great brain, but "we are far from being in a position," he says, "to explain the rise of the human brain. Into its instinctive centres there was introduced, in the passage from the ape stage to the human stage, a magical texture which made all connected with life seem not only desirable but beautiful, but what the nature of the neutral changes which gave the human brain these magical qualities may have been, we do not know."

So there it is again—the avowal that we are up against a blank wall. Sir Arthur leaves the unsolved mystery of Man just where it was.

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# DEBATES AND CONSTRUCTIVE THINKING

## THE BASIC FUNCTION OF THE EDUCATIONIST

BY R. N. KHANNA

In our educational institutions there is nowadays evident a universal tendency to give a fillip to the debating faculty among the students in order to sharpen their intellect and thus make them leaders of men. One despairs to see how unthinkingly we ape the worn-out and otiose ideas of the West.

It is to be questioned, first, whether the cultivation of the habit of taking up any point and arguing it endlessly really leads to any development in the mental make-up of students. Debating does sometimes make the intellect a keen-edged weapon of offence and defence. But any system of education that aims only at this and ignores the fundamental problem of the development of human personality is foredoomed to end as mere moonshine and frippery.

### The Hall-Mark of Intellectual Enquiry

Even in the debates held in our colleges the echo of Art for Art's sake is heard in the slogan "argument for argument's sake". The champions of a particular side seldom believe in the soundness or rightness of the cause they espouse. That does not concern the judges, or for the matter of that, the audience either, because what is to be seen, apart from the fluency and eloquence, is the arguing capacity of the speaker. The speaker also is more concerned with winning laurels and adding a feather to his cap than with throwing light on a subject. What is the result? For the hearers the whole show is merely an elevated pastime. They enjoy more the antics and pranks of the speaker than the cogency of his arguments. The speaker, also, on his part, is more concerned with carrying the day, if not the point, than with any constructive line of thinking.

The foremost pre-requisite of intellectual development is the habit of not allowing our bodily needs, our vital hungers, passions, jealousies, rivalries and even our mental prejudices to obsess and obscure the colourless and austere light of reason. Whenever the ego with its narrow, parochial and competitive spirit finds a passage, the limpid and pellucid stream of reason gets turbid and muddied. Impersonalisation, or more precisely, complete cessation of egoistic activity is the hall-mark of intellectual enquiry.

Psychologically speaking, all these debates, chicaneries, dodges and counter-dodges constitute a surface agitation only and do not touch even the fringe of the deeper layers of consciousness. "It is merely beating the water with a stick", as a great voice remarked very poignantly. The people who organize these debates betray a woeful lack of insight into the human psyche.

But if our students are really to possess some solid acquirements, then an insight into the soul, which is the matrix of creativity, is imperative.

### The Problem of Human Personality

In the West the problem of human personality has always eluded all attempts at giving a definite and precise picture of it because there the psychologist has not penetrated beneath the superficialities. What do we understand by personality? It is that something, to start with, which is always the same behind the ever-changing flux of ideas, opinions,

thoughts and desires, passions, hungers and bodily modifications.

In the apparent human being three threads seem to be inextricably interwoven and it is difficult to disentangle them for practical purposes—we mean the physical, the vital and the mental. In our haste we focus our attention on anyone of these and explain away the other two as its formations or deformations. But an eye that sees these things carefully and in their totality cannot fail to discern these elements in the texture of our humanity.

But none of them, nor even all of them taken together, can be said to constitute the human personality. Metaphysical consideration apart, it is a matter of experience that Mind, Life and Body are the raw material and are constantly given shape, direction and synthetised by something behind them.

It is true that the growth of man means the efflorescence of the Mind principle and its increasing dominance over the violent energies of the Life principle and, through the intermediary of the vital, over the rigidity and obscurity of the Physical—the bedrock of the inconscience. The mind seeks to organize the multitudinous vital impulses, holding back some and releasing others but always endeavouring to subjugate them for the accomplishment of its own ideas.

But the mind itself needs a master to organise its perceptions and harmonise its conflicting ideas, otherwise it is bound to become a mere passive recipient of the ideas that come like aimless wayfarers and then take their exit. It is this inner architect whom the seer-poet invokes in that verse of Sri Aurobindo's:

*In the uncertain glow of human mind,  
Its waste of unharmonied thronging thoughts,  
Carve the epic mountain-lined,  
Crowded with deep prophetic grots.*

### The Divine Psyche

With the advance of biological research in tracing the course of evolution the element of the fortuitous seems to have shrunk to the vanishing point. The course of evolution gives unmistakable signs of a definite goal towards which things are moving. Bergson puts a very apposite question. "A very inferior organism is as well adapted as ours to the conditions of existence, judged by its success in maintaining life: why, then, does life, which has succeeded in adapting itself, go on complicating itself and complicating itself more and more dangerously? Why did not life stop wherever it was possible? Why has it gone on? Why indeed, unless it be that there is an impulse driving it to take ever greater and greater risks towards its goal of an ever higher efficiency?" For Bergson this 'thrusting force' is like some vital surge and hence he uses the word 'Efficiency': that is, the skilful employment of means to the one end, the preservation of life. But the evolution of the ever dynamic and growingly sentient Life out

of inert matter and, further, the evolution of conscious Mind out of subconscious life and, in Man the mental being, the irrepressible urge to emerge from the twilight mentality into some plenary supramental light establish the claim of the 'Spiritualist' that this *élan* is a spark out of the flaming heart of the universe that mounts upwards to higher and higher planes of being, consciousness and bliss.

But for a long time this tiny spark chooses to remain screened and exerts its forward, nay rather upward pressure, indirectly. It is this psyche that impels us to edify, purify and ennoble our nature. This is the Godhead pent in the mire, the infinitesimal infinite, which in Sri Aurobindo's words, though appearing as

*A little life wearing the flesh for robe,  
A little mind winged through wide space to run*

is in reality,

*Deathless, outmeasuring Space, outlasting Time.*

This is the essential personality and all else is environmental, fleeting and can be thrown out at will. This personality of a man is the inner control which imposes itself on Mind, Life and Body. Hence it is always risky to judge a man by his physical, vital or even mental appearances. A lean man may become fat and *vice versa*. A person who flies into a rage at the least provocation may become ice-cold, a man of extravagant habits can change into a frugal man. Similarly a man adhering to a particular set of ideas or ideals, may abandon them altogether and pursue others, discovering their insufficiency. There is nothing permanent here, everything is in a flux. These are surface details and none of them may bear the essential stamp of the personality. And yet there is something ever growing in us which sheds off sometimes even deeply ingrained traits as the serpent casts off its slough and grows a new skin. It is this that maintains a certain direction, in the development of a human being in spite of the numberless deviations, retrogressions, and periods of dormancy. So our basic problem is of

detecting this inner being, hearing its voice, following its dictates, extirpating all that shrouds and clouds it, and obstructs its full emergence.

### The Creative Act "Par Excellence"

It is this indwelling deity that has to be awakened by the educationist. This inmost reality is a dynamo that produces and creates, and transmutes our dross into the pure gold of divine outflowing. The first essential is the stilling of the passions and the making of the mind quiet and calm so that no ripple disturbs it. This will, on the negative side, necessitate banishing the egoistic motives or ambitions, the spirit of display, the desire to gain advantage over the opponent and, on the positive side, receiving intimations from the deeper and higher well-springs and allowing them free passage without any intermixture of the lower nature.

This will be the creative act *par excellence*, the true source of constructive thinking. Such thought wings its way into the innermost sanctuary and kindles the flame of aspiration in the hearer's heart. All effective thought and word originate from a certain poise of the mind in which no desire, no passion is permitted to assail and disturb it. A perfect inner harmony is an indispensable pre-requisite of any new and original light.

These ideas may appear antique and invite ribald laughter, but an enquiry into the origin of all great thoughts that ever galvanized the common humanity will inevitably lead us to plumb deeper the human psyche.

Some sort of askesis (Yoga) has to be practised by those who aspire to initiate new thought-currents and movements. The more we quieten our wandering thoughts and roving passions, the more will this hidden person come to the front and raise all our powers and faculties to their summit of possibility and thus pave the way for an integral development. As Sri Krishna Prem puts it: "The truth is that the reintegration of the psyche that is brought about by Sadhana has the effect of releasing unsuspected powers that were lying latent in the heart of the Sadhaka, as indeed they are in the hearts of all".

## AN APPEAL

To the Editor, "MOTHER INDIA"

Sir,—I am a voluntary social worker of many years' standing, both for human and animal welfare.

In all probability you may have read or noticed my name in letters which have appeared in the press.

One of the difficulties I find is lack of public interest and support in an active manner to prevent cruelties to dumb creatures on the open road in full view of passing people.

Therefore I am very desirous of knowing if, amongst your readers, there are any willing to form a club for exchanging opinions about this evil and giving suggestions for carrying out preventive measures.

Industrial Assurance Bldg.,  
Churchgate, Bombay.

Yours truly,  
MRS. E. KHAN,



# THE DARK CLOUD IN THE EAST

BY SAMIR KANTA GUPTA

What will happen to China is the question now on everybody's lips. The politician has no answer to give. The historian can only look with a heavy heart at the miserable plight of ancient China but assure no definite future for her. Others, newspapers and wishful thinkers, speculate in a hundred ways; but they lead nowhere.

In the meanwhile news has come that the communist armies of Mao Tse-tung are fast thrusting southward more and more. All negotiated peace talks have failed. And nationalist China, resolved to carry the fight to its bitter end, has found once again in Chiang Kai-shek its Defence Chief. But can Chiang with only his brave comrades stem the tide that comes sweeping from the North? It is very doubtful unless Providence comes to their succour. For, communist China has not only a fanatic, compact and ruthless military machine, *a la Russie*, but the active support of the powerful Soviet government also. It is well known that the communist victories were made possible by Stalin's turning over to Mao Tse-tung the entire military equipment of the Japanese army of one million that surrendered in Manchuria. The hope that Mao might prove another Tito has been dashed by his clear pronouncement lately about standing shoulder to shoulder with the Soviet Union and using trade with the West just for strengthening the communist economy still further. Against Mao nationalist China, after continuously fighting with the Japanese for more than eight long years, physically exhausted and economically crippled,

has her ideal and her dream of the future as the only comrade in arms.

## The West's Policy

While she is thus placed, other nations, especially the western democracies, follow a policy of not "to precipitate a crisis but wait and see." The overall situation in China is undoubtedly very fluid and precarious; so much so that other nations naturally shrink from the idea of stepping in to aid her. To help China at this stage is to accept an immense burden of risk and responsibility. Neither the U.S.A. nor Great Britain is prepared for that. Britain perhaps wanted to show her sympathy, as it appeared after the "Amethyst" incident, towards nationalist China but she could not go far without close assistance from America. Actually a Briton writing in the *Statesman* has strongly urged the champions of Democracy to come forward and help China out of her ordeal. Many in other countries feel in the same way.

American Trade Union leaders recently called for "prompt and

adequate aid" to Chiang and agitated against trade with Red China. Not that anybody wishes to condone the corruption into which Chiang's government had sunk: surely Chiang must be criticised for his autocracy as well as for letting commercialism be rampant and the masses be neglected. All these evils must be checked: but at the moment the more urgent call is to thwart the impending Communist totalitarian regime and roll it back from China.

## Russia's Strategy

The official policy of the U.S.A. seems to be firm with regard to the Marshall Aid countries. Accordingly the three powers put up a stiff fight on the Berlin issue and ultimately succeeded in forcing Russia to lift the blockade. But, one may ask, why did Russia at all agree to give way? It was not certainly prompted by a change of heart that suddenly came upon the Russian militarists and diplomats. It seems to be only a change of strategy; to open a second front, where the opponent is a more vulnerable one, and where the western powers would be too far to make any assistance, even if given, immediately effective. The drive is to continue through the mainland of China and Burma and proceed as far as it possibly can. This has not come as a surprise, for it was expected that if Russia met a stiff opposition in Europe, she would turn her attention towards Asia.

If Communism triumphs in China and South East Asia, it will redouble its force, having gained control over immense man power and other potentials, to retighten measures in Berlin and create fresh troubles in Europe.

## What Should Be Done?

Thus if we are to think in terms of ideals and truth, instead of local and temporal advantages, we must judge the situation in a global perspective. Russia may be allowed to keep her own form of Government and ideals confined within her borders but she cannot by any means be allowed to force them down the throats of other nations and other countries. There she must be met with the strongest possible resistance.

If the Commonwealth nations, America and France put their hearts together and give all they can—goodwill and immediate aid (on certain conditions which could be agreed upon by a joint discussion among the nations concerned), they can perhaps save China whose genius is ever alive and whose soul is ever at work, the China of Laotse and Confucius, China that has made such a profound contribution in the field of humanity's nobler achievements—art and painting and philosophy and mysticism.

## The Owl's Banquet

BY "MINERVA"

What is heroism? Balzac gives a very original illustration. "George Sand", he tells us, "is said to have finished one novel at 2 a.m., then taken a fresh sheet and started another. That is heroism."

\* \* \*

Balzac himself had plenty of the "hero" in him. Consider his achievement. As Campbell Nairne puts it: "In twenty years he wrote more than seventy full-length novels, in addition to a vast amount of miscellaneous writing, and nearly every one of these novels is a masterpiece! Taken together, they make up the most impressive literary monument that has ever been raised by one man. Many artists have created a world within the world, but none of these imaginary kingdoms has the scale and amplitude of Balzac's."

Then there is the colossal care he took over his writing. To quote Nairne again: "Flaubert is commonly regarded as the archetype of the martyrs of literature, the men who sacrifice everything for their art. But Flaubert's unwearied search for the mot juste did not involve greater labours than Balzac's frenetic proof-correction. Stefan Zweig describes the process in his book, *Balzac* (Cassell, 21s.) He wrote the first draft at a furious pace, working as a rule between midnight and dawn. The printer's boy collected it in the morning and during the day it was set up in type. The next morning he received the proofs—printed on long, wide sheets with vast margins

for corrections and alterations. If he was dissatisfied he attacked the printed text 'like a cavalryman charging at the solid phalanx of the enemy . . . A sabre-thrust with his quill and a sentence was torn from the context and flung to the right, a single word was speared and hurled to the left, whole paragraphs were wrenched out and others plugged in.' We cannot wonder that the compositors rebelled and refused to set up more than an hour of Balzac a day, even when they were offered double wages. Balzac treated his second set of proofs in much the same way. Often he demanded five or six 'revises', and each went back in the same state as its predecessors. Zweig says that in the case of some of his books he recorrected the proof-sheets as many as fifteen or sixteen times.

"He had to bear the cost of all this proof-correction himself, and sometimes it swallowed up a large proportion of the money his publisher had advanced—money of which he was desperately in need. Why did he take such pains? The majority of his readers would not have cared if he had never altered a comma. The answer is perhaps to be found in Proust's meditation on the death of Bergotte (who has been identified with Anatole France). Every act of artistic creation, Proust thought, raises a man to a plane on which he obeys laws that govern another world than ours—a world he may have known before birth and to which, perhaps, he will return."

\* \* \*

In view of the strange and secret founts of art, how egregiously inept sounds that remark of Napoleon's: "They tell me that we have no literature now in France. I will speak to the Minister of the Interior about it." Art cannot be produced by legislation or socio-political means. What Napoleon needed is not an official concerned with home-affairs but a Minister of the Interior of Man's Being!

\* \* \*

Art, besides being a mysterious activity, is also highly individualistic in the sense that any attempt to make it fit a particular pattern of thought approved by the State will spoil it—least of all can it flower and flourish if it has to toe a political party-line, as it has to do in present-day Russia. James Agate in his *Ego* 7 remarked: "Soviet Russia has not produced a composer fit to lick the boots of the Czarist lot . . . I prefer Tchehov's plays to dramas

about communal wash-houses." Of course, Agate had no desire to defend the unpleasant features of Czarism: what he insisted on is the inadequacy of a narrow cramping propagandist attitude towards art, an attitude determined either by a fixed doctrine or by the weather-cock of party-tactics. To what ridiculousness the weather-cock of party-tactics can reduce a State is seen in the following fact: the stories of the well-known Russian writer Zoshchenko were recommended for a 100,000-copy edition on June 22 and then attacked and proscribed on August 14 of the same year 1946! The fixed doctrine of Marxist socialism recently "flabbergasted" the whole world by denouncing one of Russia's greatest writers in the past, Dostoevsky, as a decadent unworthy of being read because he was "tainted with international cosmopolitanism."

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