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"GREAT IS TRUTH AND IT SHALL PREVAIL"

ALTERNATE SATURDAYS

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## CONTENTS

A GREAT PIONEER OF YOGIC POETRY: An Appraisal of AE's Inspiration .. .. .	1	NEW TRENDS IN WESTERN THOUGHT The West in Search of a Metaphysics by F. H. Heinemann .. .. .	8
THE HINDU CODE BILL: The Reformist Point of View By Birendrakishore Roy Chawdhury .. .. .	3	LIVING IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY: Genesis of the Plight of Our Civilisation by Kewal Motwane .. .. .	9
BERNARD SHAW—THE PHILOSOPHER by K. D. Sethna .. .. .	4	IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT .. .. .	11
THE WORLD CRISIS AND INDIA By "Synergist" X. The Need of a New World View .. .. .	6	THE OWL'S BANQUET by "Minerva" .. .. .	11
LIGHTS ON LIFE-PROBLEMS: Selections from Sri Aurobindo .. .. .	7	SPACES—NATURE'S GREAT HEALERS by Nora Secco D'Souza .. .. .	12

## A GREAT PIONEER OF YOGIC POETRY AN APPRAISEMENT OF AE'S INSPIRATION

The fourteenth anniversary of the death of George Russell, known to the literary world as AE, fell on the 17th of this month. During the years since his passing, his reputation has steadily grown. He has come to be regarded as not only the most sanely universal man Great Britain has had after William Morris but also one of the choicest spirits of the age by virtue of his rare mystical experience. A large body of profound beautiful prose on various subjects stands to his credit. It is, however, as a poet of the mystical consciousness that he reached his peak of self-expression and will be most remembered, especially by India with whom he had deep inner affinities. The present occasion is opportune for the editor of MOTHER INDIA to offer his readers an essay in the just valuation of this great Irishman's poetic achievement.

It was in starlight that I heard of AE's death. I do not know if he died also under the stars, but there could have been no better time to hear of his passing. For often he must have shut his eyes in tranced forgetfulness of earth at this deep and passionless hour: he was one of those to whom meditation and self-communion was the truest life, and he has told us how those little gemlike songs of his early days came to him pure and perfect out of the profound hush into which he had plunged his mind. I remember my own joy on first realising what his poetry disclosed—a cool unpretentious flowering grace, yet laden with a glimmer of mystery rooted beyond our earth's transiencies. Tiny they were, his poems, but I felt that their smallness was an illusion produced by the great distance of soul-height from which their inspiration glowed upon us: they were small like the stars—immense worlds that were pin-points because of the farness of their flame.

AE's work is remarkable for the unique spiritual experience by which it is kindled: an experience of many colourful changes resolved by a certain underlying movement of mystical aspiration into a single-shining mood. The colour and change were not valuable to him for their own sake; they derived their intensity, their appeal, from something hidden and invisible, an essence of eternal beauty secretly one behind all its magic myriadness. And the presence of this sacred simplicity AE suggests not only by his words but also by a simple spontaneousness of metre; his rhythms, bare and whisperlike, seem to spring from a chaste unaltering calm. That is at once his merit and his defect. Defect because his technique is prone to be monotonous and his creation to lack vigour and wideness; if he had commanded a more flexible and conscious artistry he would have been able to embody with a finer verisimilitude many realisations which are now lost by his poems in a sort of enchanted emptiness. Still, at his best the sense of a primal peace, a white tranquillity dreaming vaguely behind the veil of multi-hued vision and emotion gives his work a Spirit-touch found nowhere else. Blake may have a deep suggestiveness born of the simplest phrases but he has the clairvoyance of a wise child, not the remote, the ultimate, the transcendental gleam. Though Wordsworth catches a vastness as of the Spirit, the philosopher in him preponderates over the mystic. Even Shelley's wizard tunes float in an ether different from AE's. The world of AE is not the rarefied mental with its abstractions and idealities come to life under the stress of a lyrical feeling, but an occult atmosphere of mind out of reach for the normal poet and open only to those who follow a discipline of concentration, a yoga of insight such as the Orient has always prescribed. To a sensitive Celt like AE, in whom the old Druid race with its reveries was still alive, the practice of yogic concentration was bound to be fruitful. No doubt, he also lives in iridescence and not in the full Spirit-sun; but the shimmering haze of Shelley differs from his diffuse illumination in that Shelley sees hazily from an aching distance while AE sees diffusely from very near. And it is the satisfied nearness which imparts to his verse the Spirit-appeal peculiar to it. There is

a more intimate, more effulgent poetry possible, but this is the first expression in English literature of a close relationship with some sovereign Splendour through a poetic yoga transfiguring both thought and image.

Almost the whole mood of AE's mystical desire is summed up in his *Alter Ego*:

*All the morn a spirit gay  
Breathes within my heart a rhyme,  
'Tis but hide and seek we play  
In and out the courts of time.  
Fairy lover, when my feet  
Through the tangled woodlands go,  
'Tis thy sunny fingers fleet  
Fleck the fire dews to and fro.  
In the moonlight grows a smile  
Mid its rays of dusty pearl—  
'Tis but hide and seek the while  
As some frolic boy and girl.  
When I fade into the deep  
Some mysterious radiance showers  
From the jewel-heart of sleep  
Through the veil of darkened hours.  
Where the ring of twilight gleams  
Round the sanctuary wrought,  
Whispers haunt me — in my dreams  
We are one yet know it not.  
Some for beauty follow long  
Flying traces; some there be  
Seek thee only for a song:  
I to lose myself in thee.*

Four psychological motifs are to be observed in these lines. AE seeks the Divine with love's happy instinctive heart; then, he wanders in search of this Divine through a various world of occult brilliances, either suffusing earth-vistas or in their native cosmorama opening to the sealed eyes of trance; but the master-passion is not a wanderlust of the mere occult, it is an *amor dei* athirst for an all-absorbing contact. Not for any gift of vision or inspired voice does AE follow the Great Magician—he yearns for the Magician's being of beauty rather than for his many-coloured miracles. The divine display too is a valued experience; yet it is not the goal of desire. As a poet, AE cherishes the wealth of inspiration scattered from the Unknown, but his soul goes inward with hands that hunger to clasp the Supreme and not to beg to Him a boon of music or magnificence. For, the mainspring of the whole psychic process is an intuition that the lover is craving to gain consciously what he already holds somewhere in the buried places of the subliminal. As the penultimate stanza hints, he is at heart one with the

Divine; only, he does not remember with an entire certainty this ecstatic fact. An obscure feeling is all that he has; but the feeling is pregnant with fate, and its sleeping seed determines the blossom which shall crown his life.

There is, without question, an earth-self in AE which takes interest in the passing phenomena of time; it is drawn by human faces, but in them also he is ever visionary enough to trace the hidden Beauty. Along the rays shot here in the mutable world he travels home to the centre of light in the inner heaven. Sometimes the inner meanings call so imperiously across the outer symbol and suggestion that he has no sooner loved than lost the mortal and the tangible. In that plunge into the deep, the human starting-point looks well-nigh an illusion:

*What is the love of shadowy lips  
That know not what they seek or press,  
From whom the lure for ever slips  
And fails their phantom tenderness?  
The mystery and light of eyes  
That near to mine grow dim and cold,  
They move afar in ancient skies  
Mid flame and mystic darkness rolled.  
O beauty, as thy heart o'erflows  
In tender yielding unto me,  
A vast desire awakes and grows  
Unto forgetfulness of thee.*

At other moments, there is a balance between the known and the unknown: the truth is seen without the appearance being destroyed—the phenomenon assumes a secondary place but is not robbed of its warmth and its right of response:

*I did not deem it half so sweet  
To feel thy gentle hand,  
As in a dream thy soul to greet  
Across wide leagues of land.  
Untouched more near to draw to you  
Where, amid radiant skies,  
Glimmered thy plume of iris hue,  
My Bird of Paradise.  
Let me dream only with my heart,  
Love first and after see;  
Know thy diviner counterpart  
Before I kneel to thee.  
So in thy motions all expressed  
Thy angel I may view:  
I shall not on thy beauty rest,  
But beauty's self in you.*

There is also another phase of AE in answer to earthly contracts. It is an idealistic acceptance of the clay's caress; the human is given a reality, a justification to exist in its own nature just because that nature is regarded as an echo of some divine drama enacted on the higher planes. Beauty's self is here visioned as projecting its own glories below rather than absorbing those of the earth and drawing the poet's consciousness beyond:

*We liken love to this and that; our thought  
The echo of a deeper being seems;  
We kiss because God once for beauty sought  
Within a world of dreams.*

We must not, however, commit the mistake that the echoes of a deeper being are the flesh and bone of one brief life; these are the outermost vibration, so to speak, of the "mirrored majesties". The true correspondence is between some heavenly game of archetypes in the Eternal and the play of soul with soul down the ages. A believer in reincarnation, AE makes poetic use of the meeting again and again of souls in sympathy with one another; and the earthly love he praises at times is the flame leaping to flame across clouds that change with each rebirth. Perhaps the most attractive turn taken by this inner romance is in *Babylon*:

*The blue dusk ran between the streets: my love was winged within my  
mind,  
It left today and yesterday and thrice a thousand years behind.  
Today was past and dead for me, for from today my feet had run  
Through thrice a thousand years to walk the ways of ancient Babylon.  
On temple top and palace roof the burnished gold flung back the rays  
Of a red sunset that was dead and lost beyond a million days.  
The tower of heaven turns darker blue, a starry sparkle now begins;  
The mystery and magnificence, the myriad beauty and the sins  
Come back to me. I walk beneath the shadowy multitude of towers;  
Within the gloom the fountain jets its pallid mist in lily flowers.  
The waters lull me and the scent of many gardens, and I hear  
Familiar voices and the voice I love is whispering in my ear.  
Oh real as in dream all this; and then a hand on mine is laid;  
The wave of phantom time withdraws; and the young Babylonian maid,  
One drop of beauty left behind from all the flowing of that tide,  
Is looking with the self-same eyes, and here in Ireland by my side.  
Oh light our life in Babylon, but Babylon has taken wings,  
While we are in the calm and proud procession of eternal things.*

In this poem we are struck with a richness and a variety of movement which are not so frequent in AE of the earlier years but which develop as he grows older. His art undergoes a change owing to a more alert mastery, though the seeds of that development were already there in his young days,

as proved by pieces like that veritable quintessence of Vaishnava insight, the poem entitled *Krishna*. Artistically, *Krishna* and *Babylon* are the most opulent things he has done, opulent in the sense not only of jewelled phraseology but also rhythm-modulation, the technique of pause, stress and changing tone. The poet and the artist are fused: AE's inspiration had tended to be lyrical cries subdued in their rhythm, theirs was an intensity of feeling but not of art, an intuitive appeal was in them which almost made us forget that it came on word-wings, the language was like a breath of air laden with perfume and we got dreamy with the strange scent of the spirit and did not notice the medium by which it was conveyed. Surely such a transparent inspiration is precious; but it gives by constant recurrence an impression of tenuity no less than monotony, and the greatest poets have, besides the direct touch of intuition, a life and strength of language, a palpable motion of the word-body as well as the soul's sign from afar. This means that not merely the subtle mind or the inner vision but at the same time the energy of the full waking consciousness is employed to catch inspiration. What is thus created acquires a certain impetuous diversity; and in AE the new movement comes when he begins to write with a more open-eyed intelligence. Formerly he used to draw upon trance-depths, now he listens with the same inward ear but without dissolving into trance. He does not shut his eyes, as it were, but watches the turn and thrill of his poetry, so that it grows clearer and stronger under his gaze, modulating itself sufficiently in order to satisfy the observing artist-conscience.

We can gauge the new alertness from the fact that he actually turned to blank verse where the grip on the medium must be most steady. Even a poet like Milton who was born with a blank-verse genius had to revise and polish in daytime what Urania had whispered to him in the still hours. With Shakespeare the art was immediate but because he was the most wide-awake, the most out-gazing and conscious of all poets, his nerves ever on the *qui vive* to respond to sense-stimuli. Yeats's blank verse can float in a half-light and seem a sudden birth from secret worlds—and yet is in fact the most deliberate perhaps of all recent poetry; for Yeats writes with an unsleeping vigilance over words—to such a degree that, occultist though he is, he does not incline to accept AE's description of how his own songs were snatches heard verbatim from the recesses of his meditative mind. Of course, poetry composed with deliberate care is as much really heard from within; only, it is heard after effort of the consciousness to tune-in to the soul-ethers and it is received sound by sound instead of in a running strain. Blank verse especially is accompanied by a wakefully inspired intelligence, though its composition may be slow or rapid according to the poet's power to grasp the suggestion out of the subliminal. And AE's rescue to this form of self-utterance shows the awakening word-artist in him and from that coming to grips with the language are evolved a force and a versatility absent before. Indeed many of his efforts are not wholly successful and the majority of his best work lies among the simple voices with which he began; nevertheless, the innovation is worth weighing because of a few astonishing triumphs.

Being contemporaneous with Lascelles Abercrombie and Gordon Bottomley, the two poets who have influenced modern blank verse most, he models his with rather a free and quick hand, pushing nervously the idea-vision into the language when he might achieve better results by teaching the language to respond organically to the creative glow. There is, in consequence, an unassimilated look about many of his lines even if they are metrically normal and not inlaid with truncated feet, trochees, anapaests, tribrachs and cretics. Poems like *The Dark Lady* are full of a metricised prose, rich and puissant though that may be; but the new will-to-power, when put in tune with older types of blank verse, brings forth fine rhythmic swings and expressive strokes. AE's most ambitious work in this line is *The House of the Titans*, wherein he sets to potent use a Celtic myth for embodying his conception of the worlds of light and darkness born from the Absolute, the descent of the Soul with its heavenly godheads and powers into earth-consciousness, their slow oblivion of the heights whence they derived but ultimately their recalling that high home and their destiny to transform chaos into a divine image. Despite unfinished versification in several places and even limping lines like

*She heard first the voice of the high king,*

or,

*If thou  
Hast from pity come to help us, fly—*

and despite drops again and again into a half-kindled style, *The House of the Titans* is a notable performance. There is a reflection of Keats, naturally enough since the theme is affined to that of *Hyperion* where also grand music is made from the falling of Titans. Especially the start, after the first five lines, is reminiscent of Keats's picture of Saturn stone-still in the lightless woods with Thea by his side. Keatsian too are the lines:

*Her weeping roused at length the stony king,  
Whose face from its own shadow lifted up  
Was like the white uprising of the moon.*

Quite original, however, are the manner and the movement in the vehement unwillingness of Armid, the fallen king Nuada's companion, to let the memory of heaven die in order to cut short the nameless grief in her heart;

*"Let it not die", cried Armid flinging up  
In fountainous motion her white hands and arms  
That wavered, then went downward, casting out  
Denial.*

Continued on page 3

# THE HINDU CODE BILL

## THE REFORMIST POINT OF VIEW

BY BIRENDRAKISHORE ROY CHAUDHURY

Working President, Sanatana Dharma Parishad

The President of the Constituent Assembly, Dr. Rajendra Prasad has advised the postponement of the consideration of the Hindu Code Bill on the ground that this was not an issue in the last elections. We, however, fail to appreciate the force of this plea. The present Government have done many things for which they have no mandate from the people, and in some instances, as in the matter of the partition of India, they have gone definitely against their verdict, as in the last elections assurance was given of a free and undivided India. Why then this consideration about the Hindu Code?

This Bill will never be passed if you depend on counting the votes of the people, for Hindus have a prejudice against such things as the dissolution of marriage, and prejudice, it is well known, dies hard. Here is a clear case where progressive individuals should give a lead to the masses instead of following them. The majority of Hindus were against the Sarda Bill and the abolition of child marriage; but now that this is law, it is accepted or is being accepted by the people in general. The same procedure ought to have been followed also in this case; if Parliament passes the Bill the country will accept it as the time is ripe for such legislation. The Hindu Code Bill is an urgency and should suffer no delay; if it be taken to the next election, there is little chance that the orthodox Hindus, who constitute the majority, will give consent to it; so the measure will have to be indefinitely delayed and that would be disastrous.

### The Real Issue

For the real issue is: now that the country is free, are we to free our women from the virtual state of slavery in which they are now living

in society? Freedom of women implies that they should be free to contract a marriage or to dissolve it, and that they should have some independent means of livelihood so that they may not be compelled simply for economic reasons to live the life of slaves or harlots. Many educated women in our country are turning towards Communism as they do not find any hope of living their life fully in Hindu society. Many recent conferences have shown how progressive opinion in the country has been roused in this respect and we give here two instances. The ending of the purdah and dowry systems by legislation was urged on the Government by a Social Reform Conference which concluded its two-day session in Calcutta on May 20. Mr. Siddharaj Dhadda, Minister for Commerce and Industries, Rajasthan Government, presided. The Conference, in a resolution, urged the mobilisation of strong public opinion in favour of widow remarriage. It asked for the enactment of legislation providing for the dissolution of marriage under certain specific circumstances. The Conference warmly supported the broad principles underlying the

Hindu Code Bill. It also stated that boys and girls must have complete freedom in choosing their wives or husbands respectively and this freedom of choice must in no way be influenced by considerations of caste or creed. The Sanatana Dharma Parishad, with its Head Quarters in 52, Hurrish Mukherji's Road, Bhowanipur, Calcutta, is mobilising public opinion in favour of all these urgent reforms for creating a new social order. Mr. Brij Bhan commended the Hindu Code Bill in his presidential address to the Kureeti Sudhar Sabha Conference at Gid-darabaha.

### The Arguments Against and For

The arguments against the provisions of the Hindu Code Bill have been well stated by Mr. C. M. Ramalinga Iyer in *Kalyan-Kalpataru*, a widely circulated organ of the Orthodox Hindu Community. Thus he says: "The proposed liberty to divorce marriages is against all the Hindu Shastras which the Hindus have been following for ages. These Shastras have been written by sages and religious seers who were quite competent to consider the pros and cons of every position, and laid down the laws which would give the maximum benefit to its followers." Mr. Iyer ignores the well-known verse in *Parasara Samhita* which expressly provides for divorce by women; *naste mrite prvrjate klive va patite patau*, "if a man is debauchee or is dead or has renounced the world or is impotent, his wife can take an-

other husband." But supposing that there was no such provision in the Shastras which the Hindus have been following for ages, why should not that provision be made in the present age if it be found to be conducive to the welfare and progress of society? It is a fundamentally wrong idea of the orthodox Hindus that society is static and that the laws governing it are made once for all and are immutable. In the Mahabharata we find the description of a state of society in which women did not cover their whole body and there was no marriage, any man could unite with any woman, and that was regarded by the people of that time as an immutable *Shashtra, esha dharma sanatana* (*Adiparya*, chapter 122). Sri Krishna disregarded the ignorant cry of Arjuna in the Gita that the "kuladharmas" and "jatidharmas" were "sanatana". Those who are now citing Shastras in support of injurious customs and usages are like Arjuna under a spell of darkness and ignorance.

Shastras have no absolute values, and they change according to the needs of social progress. And the Shastras that the Hindus have been following for ages were not really written by rishis or seers; the Vedas and the Upanishads which contain the words of the seers deal with spiritual truths and are not concerned with laying down social rules and regulations for all time. Thus the Smritis which pass as Hindu Shastras were not written by sages

Continued on page 10

## A GREAT PIONEER OF YOGIC POETRY —Continued from page 2

And boldly individual like that famous Homeric comparison of the elders on the walls of Troy to thin-legged squeaky grass-hoppers is the image:

*And as a spider by the finest thread  
Hangs from the rafters, so the sky-born hung  
By but the frailest thread of memory from  
The habitations of eternity.*

But the choicest passage in this poem packed with AE's peculiar Celtic clairvoyances is the speech of Dana the Goddess of beauty, the mysterious all-mother:

*I am the tender voice calling away,  
Whispering between the beatings of the heart,  
And inaccessible in dewy eyes  
I dwell, and all unkissed on lovely lips,  
Lingering between white breasts inviolate,  
And fleeting ever from the passionate touch,  
I shine afar till men may not divine  
Whether it is the stars or the beloved  
They follow with rapt spirit. And I weave  
My spells at evening, folding with dim caress,  
Aerial arms and twilight-dropping hair  
The lonely wanderer by wood or shore,  
Till, filled with some vast tenderness, he yields,  
Feeling in dreams for the dear mother heart  
He knew ere he forsook the starry way,  
And clings there pillowed far above the smoke  
And the dim murmur from the duns of men.  
I can enchant the rocks and trees, and fill  
The dumb brown lips of earth with mystery,  
Make them reveal or hide the god; myself  
Mother of all, but without hands to heal,  
Too vast and vague, they know me not, but yet  
I am the heartbreak over fallen things,  
The sudden gentleness that stays the blow,  
And I am in the kiss that foemen give  
Pausing in battle, and in the tears that fall*

*Over the vanquished foe. And in the highest  
Among the Danaan gods I am the last  
Council of pity in their hearts when they  
Met justice from a thousand starry thrones.  
My heart shall be in thine when thine forgives.*

AE had nothing more to learn in blank verse style when he burst into so exalted a cry; and it is very probable that had he lived he would have reached often this consummate eloquence. As it was, he could not keep the sustained mastery vouchsafed to him in this moment and though telling periods and unforgettable flashes of poetic vision are frequent he could not be said to have mobilised fully the fine energy and prophet-passion that was in him and that had not found deliverance in the intonations of his usual mood.

He will, therefore, take his place in the poetic pantheon as pioneer of yogic art mainly for his ability to cast brief exquisite Spirit-spells. A fair amount of his work will go to limbo owing to an ambiguous phantasy, a thinness of imaginative wash with no clear articulate thrill. Nevertheless, what remains is destined to mark the beginning of a novel epoch in verse, an effort to clothe sense and sound with strange radiances or shadowy raptures drawn from an inner mystical life lived constantly by the poet unlike the fitful dips made on rare occasions into the unknown by former bards. There will be, ultimately, a tremendous outburst of spiritual fire, poems that bear the full frenzy of that "multitudinous meditation" which is the Soul; but ere the unearthly day breaks we shall have a constellation of singers whose voices float in a dim sky, the divine darkness heralding the divine dawn. Of such, AE is the leader, the evening star first plumbing the secret regions beyond the mere mind and the life-force. And among his achievements will rank, side by side with his early poems, the variations he played on that simple tone when the urge for diversity came to him. This urge took two channels—on the one side blank verse and on the other a freer handling than before of rhymed metres, a less repetitive form, a poignancy shaping itself with an innocent caprice and not falling into a rigidly regular pattern. Many failures are noticeable here, the inspiration is frequently lost in a too outward shifting of rhythm and word but essentially as excellent as the old uniform lilt or chant are the subtle changes

Continued on page 11



# BERNARD SHAW—THE PHILOSOPHER

BY K. D. SETHNA

G. B. S. will be 93 on the 26th of this month. His abundant genius has left its mark not only on contemporary literature but also on contemporary life. A heap of sentimentality, prudery and hypocrisy, he has blown off and mostly by his virile intellectual wit. But he has often complained that people do not take him seriously enough and that his very wit has frequently served to distract attention from his wisdom. He claims to shed light on life's deeper issues no less than on its socio-ethical questions. In the following article an attempt is made to take him as seriously as he could wish and to appraise him on the most fundamental level of his thought and feeling.

Frank Harris "booed" the claim of Bernard Shaw to be a philosopher. Many people are inclined to echo that negating noise. It may be conceded to them immediately that Shaw does not follow the usual method of philosophy: dry reasoning, relentless and unswerving logic—no side-track of any imaginative rhetoric, no flight of the least literary language—nothing save preoccupation with proving a thesis in the most direct and abstractly argumentative style. But Shaw, though quite a Tartar at debate, never did claim the title of philosopher in this sense: in point of fact, he calls himself an artist-philosopher.

An artist-philosopher's appeal is not confined to the reason: addressing himself to something more elemental in us, he combines with the dry light of the intellect the creative heat of the imagination. He is a logician who is also a visionary, and who is able to express his vision in a spirited and cogently attractive form by means of his literary gift. So the question arises: does his vision confront, as philosophy should, the riddle of the universe and does his art aim, as philosophy must, at interpreting the world's essence?

## The Life Force

Now what in brief is Shaw's vision? The most striking as well as the most profound fact of psychology, according to him, is man's Will towards deeper, wider, intenser consciousness. We have an ineradicable sense of something immense in us, which is not yet fulfilled and realised, but the intuition of which is the motive-power of civilisation. Why do we strive to master physical Nature, to control and marshal the forces of mind, to bring to light the secrets of the subliminal? It is in order to unfold and evolve as fully as possible the latent greatness, the potential godhead which we feel in ourselves, the unborn superman with whom our consciousness is pregnant.

But is the Will to betterment confined only to humans or is it at the back of all things? What is the truth of the general evolutionary process? Is evolution mechanical, an unpurposeful affair happening just through accidental variations in the species and through a favouring of some variations by an accidental character of the environment so that such variations survive? The Darwinian says Yes. Shaw says No—for Darwinism explains neither the cause of variation nor the rising from lower to higher grades of consciousness, the ascent from the amoeba to man. Only a Will that strives, however fumblingly, to change always for the better and makes terms with, rather than is ruled by, its environment is the truth of evolution. If that is so, Life indeed cannot be more aptly defined than as a Force of incessant self-formation which refuses to be beaten because it has a blind faith in its own deific possibilities.

The epithet "blind" is of considerable importance, for we must not in the Shavian vision confuse the pure stuff of the Life Force with its manifestation in us. In itself, it is a kind of impetuous in-feeling, a pure *élan* towards self-growth: its in-feeling is just an apprehension of its own enormous potencies and not a distinct idea of what they involve. To realise this non-descript apprehension, it tries a myriad experiments in consciousness. Our intellect and imagination are some of the means it has invented—by long groping and experimentation with lower types of conscious functioning—in order to comprehend the universe within and the universe without. It cannot comprehend totally yet, but our science and art, philosophy and religion are the eyes with which its Will attempts to read its own grandiose secret and fulfil its ultimate destiny.

## The Life Force and Matter

Nowhere has Shaw elaborated his notion of the exact relation between what we call matter and this Life Force of his. But he finds it impossible to draw a trenchant line of demarcation between animate and inanimate, he recognises only various degrees of manifestation of life everywhere. That is why he hails the discoveries of Dr. Jagadish Bose as philosophically the most important in our own day. For Bose contends that the restriction of life to organic form is arbitrary: when we find metals reacting to stimuli like a living tissue, the lack of organic form need not debar us from calling them living. The Life Force is inherent in all material being, the activity of the physical universe is but a multitudinous result of this Force essaying to complete the godhead which is emergent in it, a series of trials and errors and self-corrections on its part, a labyrinthine process towards its own supreme possibility. But to say this is not necessarily to give the Life Force a status prior to the physical universe nor even independent of it. There may be no progressive activity of matter without it: but can there be matter itself—the stuff which is activated? And can there be the active agent without the stuff?

Bergson, whose *'evolution creatrice'* Shaw anticipated, is inclined to see the Life Force as a fountain rising upward with yet a tendency to fall back. The drops and sprays which do fall back are felt by the upward thrust as resistances against which and through which it has to progress.

These resistances constitute our sense of matter. Matter is for Bergson nothing save the Life Force opposed by an insufficiency in its own push. At times Shaw seems to subscribe to the Bergsonian view: it is at least in consonance with his conviction that, though the Life Force is the one reality that counts, what it undertakes is a groping self-resisted adventure, prompted by a mighty yet unilluminated instinct of betterment.

But whether or not he reduces matter to a particular mode of the Life Force, the Life Force for him can exist independent of the physical universe. If it is not only coeval with physical stuff but handles it and shapes it with a mastery which is often concealed yet always to be discerned on a long view, it is likely to have an existence in itself. Not, however, as personalities surviving death: a personality, according to Shaw, is too much a result of the Life Force associated with an organism made of matter. When an organism dissolves, the personality perishes: as he uncompromisingly puts it, "Bernard Shaw as such will be dead as mutton." What will survive is the impersonal Presence whose one experiment among many is Bernard Shaw. A survival with any stamp of personality might take place only when we have attained freedom from all the weaknesses and limitations connected with bodily being, when that which began its evolution as "a vortex in pure force" can achieve "a vortex in pure intelligence." That is indeed a far cry. In the meantime, we have brief personalities in physical formations that last a short while. What is eternal is only the *'élan vital'* pressing towards an illumined future from a blind past.

## The Life Force and God

Such a conception cannot, it must be admitted, satisfy either the 'bhakta' who wants to be wholly in the hands of a Lord of the world or the 'jnani' seeking union with an Absolute Existence, Consciousness and Bliss. Even the ordinary religious man must find it rather unassuring. But it has one advantage, urges Shaw, over other notions of the Divine: it solves the most crucial difficulty of the nineteenth-century apologist of religion—the reconciliation of God's omnipotence and omniscience with His benevolence.

If God is benevolent, then He cannot be omnipotent and omniscient, said John Stuart Mill: for if He is omnipotent and omniscient and has still left the evolutionary process so wild and stumbling and suffering-packed and even now leaves the world the miserable hell it is for the majority of living creatures, He must be not a God but a Devil! The Life Force, ever aspiring yet endowed with no superlative attributes and proceeding by trial and error, escapes the horns of Mill's dilemma and supplies in Shaw's opinion the crying need of the world for an invigorating religion without slurring over the vast body of scientific fact with its grim picture of the struggle for existence and of the indifferent pruning by Nature.

Shaw forgets there is a deeper way of tackling the poser of Mill—a refusal to apply our standards of Good and Evil to a Being who is by definition above our mental consciousness and hence transcendent of our mental criteria of moral fitness, just as much as we are above a chimpanzee's presumable sense of what the universe ought to be.

A supra-intellectual Truth of which our righteousness is a limited reflection but which works out essential Good by its large luminous look and which has chosen the hard evolutionary way because of some purpose too profound for mortal plumbing—that is the faith the mystic would hold against a measuring of the Infinite and the Eternal by the fumbling rod of the human intellect. To embrace this faith would not go against the grain of Shaw's mind with its contempt for conventional morality and so-called rationality; but brought up in a psychological environment uncongenial to transcendentalism he has taken to what appeared a more scientific theory—a theory which seemed to make a less exigent demand on his capacity for belief.

It must, however, be said that he shilly-shallies about basic issues; while he insists on going beyond biology into metaphysics and subscribes to the mystic's in-feeling of godlike possibility, he fights shy of the results reached by those who have explored and developed most that in-feeling, he avoids assessing the full implications of what the Saints and the Yogis have experienced. He is content to have just sufficient metaphysics and mysticism to give mankind a message of hope and of honour and save it from the blight cast by Darwinian materialism, an utter purposelessness and egoistic cupidity.

## The Fulfilment of the Life Force

The message of Shaw, couched in the highest terms, would be: "Let us, by invoking the evolutionary Presence in us, put an end to our fitful pathetic ignorance and wavering twilight struggle against the powers of darkness and death." Yes, death as well as darkness. Shaw considers our present span of living to be too brief for adequate development. No sooner

are we on the brink of some little wisdom than we begin the downward grade to the dust.

Three score years and ten are not Nature's irrevocable 'finis' to our life-story. In *Back to Methuselah*, Shaw imagines a race of men who have at last put away the old Adam in them and attained eternal life, a kind of earthly immortality threatened only by a fatal accident. Natural death is nothing but an expedient introduced by the Life Force, as Weismann long ago pointed out, to provide for renewal without overcrowding. Hence, even as vitality can be directed, by a constantly intense conviction of necessity, to build up any sort of organism,—from the hundred-legged centipede to the legless fish and from the mammal gestating her young inside her body to the fowl incubating her young outside hers—so also can it by an inner compulsion work the miracle of a body contrived to last centuries of wear and tear. In the turtle we have almost an instance of Methuselahite longevity. There is thus no reason why the tremendous creative power of the life in us cannot be employed by deep and sustained willing, to produce an organism that will be practically immune from natural decay.

But what should be the ideal consciousness functioning in such an organism? Shaw has pictured the Wise Ones in whom the Life Force has advanced the most. The Ancients, in the *grand finale* to his "metabiological pentateuch," dwell in intimate and incessant contact with the hidden Life Force: they are immersed in a species of infinite in-feeling, letting their outer consciousness and body be moulded by the urge of the divine potentiality in them. They have long outgrown the fascination and folly of sex; worldly ambition too has left them. They carry about them an aura of attraction towards some sheer ecstasy and insight. Not merely the power they have won of producing changes in their bodies at will is their goal. They aspire to command an existence free of matter, a redemption from the flesh, as "vortices" of luminous consciousness. Their endeavour is to achieve an immortality which laughs at the age-long slavery of the Life Force to its own self-figuration as the animal body. They want to use the body but not be victimised by it nor destroyed when it disintegrates in the wake of a fatal accident and puts an end to the superficial outer personality which they in their ignorance were once content to be. And when they succeed, when the new focus of supra-physical consciousness is formed, vastly wise, fiery with a miraculous effectivity, the Life Force will have come into its own, accomplishing what lay in seed within the past ages.

Shaw's Ancients are pretty vague about their own state of ecstasy and insight. Very few mystics are able to give a lucid account of their realisations, but many throw out suggestive glimmering clues and some figure forth the secret splendour in marvellously moving bursts of inspired language. The Vedas, the Upanishads and the Gita cast a powerful light on what the divine consciousness is; the western contemplatives and saints spring on us bright surprises; and in our own day Sri Aurobindo has on the one hand a massive philosophical exposition of the supreme mystery and on the other a concrete colourful revelation of it in poetry. Compared to any account, by a genuine mystic, Shaw's hints in *Back to Methuselah* are poor and pallid. Nor are his Ancients properly fitted for earth's completion. Although they are practically undying, their eyes appear to be fixed beyond the earth and the best of bodies would be to them a bother and a burden. The whole complex embodied being of us with its diverse activities, its manifold dream to build a heaven out of clay, is set aside by them as a huge childishness. In this there is a strong influence of the old type of ascetic and puritan mysticism with its other-worldly ultimates. And even this mysticism is not regarded by Shaw as promising its ecstasy and insight to present-day humans; the Ancients are products of evolution in the far-away future, and consciousness like theirs cannot be achieved by us today; all we can do is to keep desiring, imagining and willing the Perfect, and if this is sustained by generations the remote posterity will find itself possessing one by one the attributes of Perfection! Shaw seems to make very little of what Yoga means and offers here and now. Yes, his vision is deficient in various respects. Nonetheless, there is a certain exaltation about it and a sense of endless distances of superhuman glory and power—hazy indeed yet with a conviction that this haze is the most significant thing going and more full of vital substantiality than flesh and bone.

#### The Philosophy and the Philosopher

Shavianism—however incomplete in its intuition of the basis, process and fulfilment of the world—is more in consonance with the great tradition of religious philosophy than the Wellsian worship of mankind's growing sense of community and solidarity. Wells, no doubt, has his Utopias of more energetic, brilliant, beautiful, harmonious expression of the life-impulse and he has a more serious-seeming prefiguration of the future's progress. Shaw is often fantastic and makes an impression of irresponsibility; but Wells's mind, though sensitive and penetrating, lacks that touch of "inwardness" which carries Shaw through the passionate religio-metaphysical argument of the third act of *Man and Superman* or the prophetic enthusiasm of the speech of Lilith with which *Back to Methuselah* tries to lift towards a kind of disembodied vastitude.

Yet Shaw's "inwardness" falls short of its own promise; and it falls short less because of his irresponsible fantastications than because of the ultra-critical penchant of his mind and his over-energetic interest in current contemporary affairs. He has let his keen intellect turn so persistently destructive of superstitions and fanaticisms, so sarcastically vigilant against being taken in by sham idealists and self-deceptive mumbo-jumbos, that by its practice of cutting up things and laughing them out of court it has acquired a habit of doubt and detachment and ironic analysis

even where they have no place: he denudes religion and mysticism of most that is organic to them, what in fact supplies the true driving power to the exploration of and union with the inmost Spirit. While declaring that of the old Trinity modern thought has done away with God the Father and God the Son and kept only God the Holy Ghost, alias the Life Force, he forgot that the Holy Ghost became thereby too ghostly and not holy enough to pull him towards the deific mystery which he intuited at the back of himself and the world. Even when running down the dictatorship of rationalism, he could not escape the subtle essence of the reason's tyrannical superficiality; the atmosphere of the age was too strong for him, he chipped and chopped at the "soul" in man to such an extent that his intuition of it got thinned and divested of both its elemental urgency and its plenary creativeness. He permitted the "soul" to be a fine talent instead of a sweeping genius. And in this error he was aided by the imperious demand he, quite unlike his own Ancients, allowed external problems—economics, politics, sociology, eugenics—to make on him. That was another concession the nature of the age wrested from him to an exaggerated degree. Although he kept harping on the superman's turn towards the depths within and the necessity of following the inmost Will, he could not bring about the correct creative relation between the inner and the outer.

#### The Central Shaw

However, all said and done, Shaw is an inspiring philosopher and his general affinity with religious values must be recognised. Few men of his generation have been less carnal in personal life; and the word "divine" is used by him always with a strange intensity lacking in most churchmen. For all his rationalising and externalising of Saint Joan in his most applauded play and for all his pseudo-psychological explaining away of her visions, he conveys vividly that she was actually in communion with an immaterial Magnitude which is our essence. And even in his dramatisation of secular "men of destiny", giants preoccupied with the active outer world, he retains a sharp though sporadic sense of hidden spiritual mainsprings. Something almost of Plato and Plotinus finds voice in that splendid apostrophe of his Caesar to the Sphinx:

"Hail, Sphinx: salutation from Julius Caesar! I have wandered in most lands, seeking the lost regions from which my birth into this world exiled me, and the company of creatures such as I myself. I have found flocks and pastures, men and cities, but no other Caesar, no air native to me, no man kindred to me, none who can do my day's deed and think my night's thought. In the little world yonder, Sphinx, my place is as high as yours in this great desert; only, I wander, and you sit still; I conquer, and you endure; I work and wonder, you watch and wait; I look up and am dazzled, look down and am darkened, look round and am puzzled whilst your eyes never turn from looking out—out of the world—to the lost region—the home from which we have strayed. Sphinx, you and I, strangers to the race of men, are no strangers to one another; have I not been conscious of you and of this place since I was born? Rome is a mad man's dream: this is my reality. These starry lamps of yours I have seen from afar in Gaul, in Britain, in Spain, in Thessaly, signalling great secrets to some eternal sentinel below, whose post I never could find. And here at last is their sentinel—an image of the constant and immortal part of my life, silent, full of thoughts, alone in the silver desert. Sphinx, Sphinx: I have climbed mountains at night to hear in the distance the stealthy footfall of the winds that chase your sands in forbidden play—our invisible children, O Sphinx, laughing in whispers. My way hither was the way of destiny; for I am he of whose genius you are the symbol: part brute, part woman and part god—nothing of man in me at all. Have I read your riddle, Sphinx?"

It is in the thrilled visionariness of such language that we touch the central Shaw, the Shaw who is so often swaddled away by surface interests and controversies and prevented from standing out in the full dynamic idealism of that declaration of his—"This is the true joy in life, the being used for a purpose recognised by yourself as a mighty one; the being thoroughly worn out before you are thrown on the scrap heap; the being a force of Nature instead of a feverish selfish little clod of ailments and grievances complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy." The public knows well enough the Mephistophelean wit, the indefatigable Fabian, the fiery-tongued Ibsenite, the breaker of conventional idols; it knows of all the oddities and audacities of Shaw the vegetarian, teetotaler and anti-vivisectionist, the educational antinomian and apostle of eugenics; but how very few dream that his most intimate pleasure and profoundest pursuit is the practice of contemplating in a church—when it is empty! There we have the key to his essential character and philosophy as well as to the inspiration of his supreme moments of utterance.

The empty cathedral, he once said in an interview, is the one place he can go into and pray and fully express his soul. "There I find rest without languor and recreation without excitement, both of a quality unknown to the traveller who turns from the village church to the village inn and seeks to renew himself with shandygaff. Any place where men dwell, village or city, is a reflection of the consciousness of every single man. In my consciousness there is a market, a garden, a dwelling, a workshop, a lover's walk—above all a Cathedral. My appeal to the master builder is: Mirror this Cathedral for me in enduring stone; make it with hands; let it direct its clear and sure appeal to my senses, so that when my spirit is vaguely groping after an elusive mood, my eye shall be caught by the skyward tower, showing me where within the Cathedral I may find my way to the Cathedral within me."

Rodin has sculptured for posterity the superb Caesarian Shaw looking out—out of the world. Will no painter give us the vacant church with that lonely meditative figure, trying to glimpse the Dweller in the Inmost?

# THE WORLD CRISIS AND INDIA

BY  
"Synergist"

## X. THE NEED OF A NEW WORLD VIEW

Our enquiry has brought us to the conclusion that only a theo-centric world-view, based upon a spiritual metaphysic, one that can show the purpose of existence and the goal of life, and one that can give rise to a true ethic, a dharma—and not some rigid moral formula or a convention regulated by social utility—is urgently needed by the world. All types of utilitarian and humanistic philosophies of life have failed, and man's dream of creating the kingdom of heaven upon earth by reason and science is daily fading. The old saying "Where there is no vision, the people perish", was never truer than it is today; for, as we have seen, man is passing through a serious evolutionary crisis, a right solution of which alone can lead him to his divine fulfilment. The world needs a spiritual metaphysic that can serve as a foundation for a new *Weltanschauung*, one that writes new values on new tablets and at the same time salvages the *Pistis Sophia*, the Ancient Wisdom.

That the Positivist and Humanistic views of life are highly inadequate and are gradually becoming things of the past can be seen from the way Dr. Julian Huxley's speech was received at the Tenth International Congress of Philosophy. This is what Mr. F. H. Heinemann writes in his article, "The West in Search of a Metaphysics", in *The Hibbert Journal*: "Likewise Mr. E. Heath's (Swansea) attempt to find a scientific basis for freedom in the plasticity of human nature (or in its being unfinished) was thought compatible with Mr. Mirko Novak's (Brno) thesis that our mind and values are functionally dependent on biological, economic and social processes. The assumption seemed to be that some sort of scientific humanism could form a bridge between East and West. This intention came to the fore in UNESCO's second experiment, namely the attempt to sponsor a philosophy of its own in a speech by its Director-General, Dr. Julian Huxley, in the India Institute. Dr. Huxley believes that 'in order to carry out its work, UNESCO needs not only a set of general aims and objects for itself, but also a working philosophy, a working hypothesis concerning human existence and its aims and objects, which will dictate, or at least indicate, a definite line of approach to its problems'. His speech, advocating his well-known scientific or evolutionary humanism, fell flat. Not only is this sort of naturalism totally inadequate for the solution of the spiritual crisis of our time, but the whole attempt to produce an official philosophy seems to be mistaken. Just as Ministers of State cannot write the poetry of their time, so the Officials of UNESCO cannot produce the philosophy of their age." And Professor F. J. E. Raby writes in his Introduction to the *New Learning*: "For whatever we may say or think, it is the ultimate questions that must be asked and are being asked at the present time with an insistence that cannot be misunderstood. The truth is that there has been a revival of interest in religion, a revival which we can hardly be wrong in interpreting as a return to the normal human state. The failure of naturalism and positivism is patent to everyone who can think at all, and it is hardly less clear that the modern attempts at offering us a new religion in the guise of a 'new Humanism', or a 'new Romanticism' are doomed to a like failure."

Here both Mr. Heinemann and Professor Raby are not voicing only their own opinion but that of most of the leading thinkers of the world. To the former's very apt remark we may add that a new metaphysic which can serve as a basis for a complete philosophy of life, cannot be constructed—it has to be created, otherwise it will end by being more a 'summation' than a synthesis. A true synthesis, as was stated in the essay: *The Rise of Materialism*, can only be made by possessing a "whole-knowledge", and that can only be possessed by attaining a "whole-vision"—an integral vision capable of seeing parts and their relations at a single view, and knowing through direct contact their truth and inner significance which the ordinary mind is incapable of doing. It must be a vision capable of viewing the working of the world-process from its Transcendent Source in the Timeless to its nether end, the dark Inconscient. It is obvious that such an all-comprehending vision can only be possessed by a seer philosopher—a rishi.

### The Intellectual Philosopher and the Seer Philosopher

That is why we make a distinction between a seer philosopher and an intellectual philosopher, and between a spiritual metaphysic created by the former and an intellectual one created by the latter. To the intellectual philosopher truth is ideative—belonging to the pure reason; to the seer philosopher truth is of the Spirit—of Being and Consciousness, to be apprehended by direct vision and experience, and the truths of terrestrial existence are to him modes of the one Spiritual Reality. Whilst the intellectual philosopher, by the light of his reason, creates a metaphysic based upon the truths discovered by science, or upon some *a priori* concept, the seer philosopher first apprehends as a fact a truth of the Spirit—like the essential oneness of all existence, or the Unity of the One and the play of the Many, or the static aspect of the Supreme Self impartially supporting the cosmic manifestation and the dynamic aspect projecting it out of Its own Being; after possessing this direct spiritual knowledge, he creates a metaphysic. When he does this, he by no means neglects the indirect knowledge he has gained of the outer world through science, but tries to put it in right relation with this knowledge. The first metaphysic stands as an intellectual system which may or may not throw some light on the facts of human existence, but the second has its roots in Reality, and sees behind

appearances and outer forms the inner truth of things. The intellectual philosopher "sees the field from within the field", but the seer philosopher is truly "the spectator of all Time and all Existence."

With Kant philosophy woke from its dogmatic slumber and became critical; now it has to wake up once again and become this time revelatory and creative. But such a revolution in philosophy can only take place if the intellectual philosopher either himself becomes or gives way to the seer philosopher, for a spiritual metaphysic presupposes the existence of a spiritual metaphysician. Also, the intellectual philosopher will have to realise that the mind of man as it is constituted at present has its limitations, especially the ratiocinative faculty, and is consequently incapable of pronouncing verdicts upon supra-physical or supra-rational truths, but that by opening it to the Light of the Gnosis, the Divine Truth, whose derivative principle it is in earth-existence, it can have a direct knowledge of Reality.

### Ends and Purposes

Our civilisation is in its present decadent condition because of its ignorance of ends and purposes, and its consequent pursuit of false ends, and the cause of this ignorance is the lack of a true vision. If we only knew the purpose of existence and the goal towards which we are all moving, we would be in a position to know at least how to govern our lives. The philosophy of "purposelessness" encouraged by non-finalistic and non-teleological interpretations of the world, and the idea that it is man who reads purpose in a world whose processes are blind has done great harm to the true development of his being. It would be more appropriate to accuse the non-finalistic philosopher of reading "purposelessness" in a world that has a purpose in it—a purpose which his human limitations prevent him from seeing but which could be comprehended by possessing a vision that can see in larger spaces the cosmic totality and the working of universal processes. It is man's ignorance that keeps the cosmic purpose veiled from his eyes and it is only an influx of some greater Light into his mind that makes him think in spite of this ignorance that there is a purpose in this world.

A world-view which humanity is seeking today must revolve round a purpose, and a spiritual metaphysic which serves as the *Unterbau*, the basis of such a world-view, must be able to show this purpose, and it will do so if it has behind it a true vision.

As we have stated before, the idea that the goal of civilisation is to produce a "classless society" or a political and economic world-unity cannot have an appeal for the enlightened philosophic reason of man. When one examines the evolutionary process and sees the growth of consciousness from nescient matter into plants, then into animals and eventually into man, one feels that it must finally become fully aware in a higher type of being—one is led to conclude that there must be some secret goal towards which we are proceeding and that the world could not have been created just to produce a political world-unity. Such a mundane fulfilment can come only as a necessary consequence of a divine consummation; by itself, it is of little value.

If the world attains political unity and countries learn to help one another, and peace reigns upon the earth, but there is no uplifting aim or high ideal before them, a supreme divine goal which they can pursue, it is quite possible that men may stagnate and finally degenerate, for a retrograde psychological movement may start in their being.\*

This is why we state that our problem is one of ends and purposes, and that only a vision of right ends will enable us to govern our lives so that we can move towards the visioned goal. The evolutionary crisis through which we are passing makes it imperative for us to make a definite choice—either to co-operate with the underlying purpose of existence or refuse to do so at our own peril; but in order to choose, we must first know what that purpose is.

In "The Failure of the Religion of Humanity", we saw that three Cosmic principles, Matter, Life and Mind have emerged in terrestrial existence and become operative powers, and that now the highest Divine Truth-principle has to emerge and integrate all the other principles into It and make the reorientation of existence on earth possible as also the creation of a race of divinised beings. The divinisation of humanity—the creation of a God-man is the goal of the evolutionary process, and a growth into a Divine Consciousness and a Divine Nature, *Sadharmya*, is the end man should pursue. The Religion of a Divine Humanity is the religion of the future, where each man through realisation of the Spirit will come to know as a concrete fact of experience that his self is the self of all and that his fellow being is the same as he in essence; as Sri Krishna says ". . . Thou art not distinct from Me. That which I am thou art, and that also is the world. Men contemplate distinctions because they are stupefied with ignorance." After he has realised this he has to express and manifest the Spirit in life. So what the world immediately needs today is neither a political unity, nor a classless society, nor a religion of humanity, but the New-birth of humanity into the Spirit, culminating in a race of spiritually transformed beings.

\* Refer to Essay IV—Adaptation of Environment Leads to Stagnation.



# LIGHTS ON LIFE-PROBLEMS

(12)

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 moralist enjoins the practice of virtue by laying down the dictum that good must create good and evil must create evil in accordance with the law that like creates like. "Do unto others as you would be done by" he says, because then they will indeed so do to you. The strict pacifist, for example, would never admit the use of violence or a resort to war in any circumstances whatsoever on the ground that violence leads always to further violence. Does any such strict rule of moral return prevail in actual life?

**A:** The rule is true to a certain extent in tendency and works sometimes well enough and the prudential intelligence of man takes some account of it in action but it is not true all the way and all the time. It is evident enough that hatred, violence, injustice are likely to create an answering hatred, violence and injustice and that I can only indulge these propensities with impunity if I am sufficiently powerful to defy resistance or so long as I am at once strong and prudent enough to provide against their natural reactions. It is true also that by doing good and kindness I create a certain goodwill in others and can rely under ordinary or favourable circumstances not so much on gratitude and return in kind as on their support and favour. But this good and this evil are both of them movements of the ego and on the mixed egoism of human nature there can be no safe or positive reliance. An egoistic selfish strength, if it knows what to do and where to stop, even a certain measure of violence and injustice, if it is strong and skilful, cunning, fraud, many kinds of evil, do actually pay in man's dealing with man hardly less than in the animal's with the animal, and on the other hand the doer of good who counts on a return or reward finds himself as often as not disappointed of his bargained recompense.

**Q. 2:** Why is this so?

**A:** It is because the weakness of human nature worships the power that tramples on it, does homage to successful strength, can return to every kind of strong or skilful imposition belief, acceptance, obedience: it can crouch and fawn and admire even amidst movements of hatred and terror; it has singular loyalties and unreasoning instincts. And its disloyalties too are as unreasoning or light and fickle: it takes just dealing and beneficence as its right and forgets or cares not to repay. And there is worse; for justice, mercy, beneficence, kindness are often enough rewarded by their opposites and illwill an answer to goodwill is a brutally common experience. If something in the world and in man returns good for good and evil for evil, it as often returns evil for good and, with or without a conscious moral intention, good for evil. And even an unegoistic virtue or a divine good and love entering the world awakens hostile reactions. Attila and Jenghiz on the throne to the end, Christ on the cross and Socrates drinking his portion of hemlock are no very clear evidence for any optimistic notion of a law of moral return in the world of human nature.

**Q. 3:** If not in human nature, does this law operate in the action of the larger world measures?

**A:** There is little more sign of its sure existence in the world measures. Actually in the cosmic dispensation evil comes out of good and good out of evil and there seems to be no exact correspondence between the moral and the vital measures. All that we can say is that good done tends to increase the sum and total power of good in the world and the greater this grows the greater is likely to be the sum of human happiness and that evil done tends to increase the sum and total power of evil in the world and the greater this grows, the greater is likely to be the sum of human suffering and, eventually, man or nation doing evil has in some way to pay for it, but not often in any intelligibly graded or apportioned measure and not always in clearly translating terms of vital good fortune and ill fortune.

**Q. 4:** Does this rule of moral return correspond to the true principle and the whole law of ethics?

**A:** It cannot because good and evil are moral and not vital values and have a clear right only to a moral and not a vital return, because reward and punishment put forward as the conditions of good doing and evil doing do not constitute and cannot create a really

moral order, the principle itself, whatever temporary end it serves, being fundamentally immoral from the higher point of view of a true and pure ethics, and because there are other forces that count and have their right,—knowledge, power and many others. The correspondence of moral and vital good is a demand of the human ego and like many others of its demands answers to certain tendencies in the world mind, but is not its whole law or highest purpose. A moral order there can be, but it is in ourselves and for its own sake that we have to create it and, only when we have so created it and found its right relation to other powers of life, can we hope to make it count at its full value in the right ordering of man's vital existence.

**Q. 5:** Is there not a retaliatory action in Nature, a sort of a boomerang movement of energy by which the results of a man's actions rebound upon him, sometimes in exact figure and measure? The ancients recognised this action of Nature and called it the law of the talion which seemed to them a sufficient evidence of a moral order in the universe. Does any such law of exact and unfailing retributive rebound exist in Nature?

**A:** The careful thinker will pause long before he hastens to subscribe to any such conclusion, for there is much that militates against it and this kind of definite reaction is rather exceptional than an ordinary rule of human life. If it were a regular feature, men would soon learn the code of the draconic impersonal legislator and know what to avoid and the list of life's prohibitions and vetoes. But there is no such clear penal legislation of Nature.

The mathematical precision of physical Nature's action and reaction cannot indeed be expected from mental and vital Nature. For not only does everything become infinitely more subtle, complex and variable as we rise in the scale so that in our life-action there is an extraordinary intertwining of forces and mixture of many values, but, even, the psychological and moral value of the same action differs in different cases, according to the circumstance, the conditions, the motive and mind of the doer.

**Q. 6:** But in the dealings of man with man and man with universe and God, would not this law work out a strict ethical justice?

**A:** The law of the talion is no just or ethical rule when applied by man to men and, applied by a superhuman dispenser of justice or impersonal law with a rude rule of thumb to the delicate and intricate tangle of man's life action and life motives, it would be no better. And it is evident too that the slow, long and subtle purposes of the universal Power working in the human race would be defeated rather than served by any universality of this too precise and summary procedure. Accordingly we find that its working is occasional and intermittent rather than regular, variable and to our minds capricious rather than automatic and plainly intelligible.

**Q. 7:** But how is it then that in a number of cases a definite and unmistakable recoil of a man's actions comes upon him sooner or later?

**A:** At times in the individual's life the rebound of this kind of Karma is decisively, often terribly clear and penal justice is done, although it may come to him in an unexpected fashion, long delayed and from strange quarters; but however satisfactory to our dramatic sense, this is not the common method of retributive Nature. Her ways are more tortuous, subtle, unobtrusive and indecipherable. Sometimes a nation pays for its crimes or offences though not with that kind of precision but still enough for the sign manual of the law to be there, but individually it is the innocent who suffer.

**Q. 8:** Is there no truth then in man's idea of this law of the talion? Does it not serve any moral purpose in the will and the workings of the universe?

**A:** It is evident that we cannot make much of a force that works out in so strange a fashion, however occasionally striking and dramatic its pointing at cause and consequence. It is too uncertain in its infliction of penalty to serve the end which the human mind expects from a system of penal justice, too inscrutably variable in its incidence to act as an indicator to that element in the human

Continued on page 9

# NEW TRENDS IN WESTERN THOUGHT

## THE WEST IN SEARCH OF A METAPHYSICS

### THE TENTH INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF PHILOSOPHY

By F. H. HEINEMANN, PH.D.

Condensed from *The Hibbert Journal*.

International Congresses of Philosophy are an invention of the twentieth century, appropriately started in Paris in 1900 and continued in Geneva, Heidelberg, Bologna, Naples, New York, Oxford, Prague, and Paris. Those who snub the congressites are, I submit, mistaken, for these Congresses can and should fulfil a specific function. Philosophy is always (even in the thought of the most solitary hermit) based on a dialogue which in these meetings is continued on a new level as a personal discussion between philosophers of different countries. This is important in an interdependent world in which the different nations are faced with very much the same problems.

#### Eclipse of Logical Positivism

The Tenth Congress was opened by Professor H. J. Pos in the hall of the University of Amsterdam. It is obviously impossible to write a report on the thousand and one papers read at this Congress. One can only try to sketch the chief tendencies prevalent at these meetings. Negatively the eclipse of Logical Positivism was a noticeable fact. In 1937 this school was still very much in evidence, and held special Congresses in Paris (1935), Copenhagen (1936) and Cambridge (1938). It has now, however, lost its influence on the Continent, partly because the leading members of this school have emigrated, and partly because it has nothing positive to offer in the present plight of Europe. Even from a purely mathematical and scientific point of view the analysis of the Logical Positivists has proved insufficient, based as it is on an identification of language and thought and on an interpretation of thought as a manipulation of symbols according to specific rules. In fact, a Logical Positivism which declares metaphysical propositions and judgments of value to be meaningless represents the same nihilistic dissolution of values which found its political expression in Bolshevism and Fascism. It is therefore of no use to a Europe which is faced with the task of overcoming this Nihilism. If the Congresses of the Positivists had the motto "Metaphysics forbidden", this meeting may be characterised as a Congress in search of a Metaphysics.

#### Principal Problem: the Marxist Challenge

The problem, put to the Western Hemisphere, is bluntly this: "What do you have to offer as a positive reply to the challenge of Russia?" One may dislike or even detest the Russian point of view; but one cannot deny that it offers a working hypothesis on which the life of millions of human beings is based. The problem is not a logical refutation of Marxism. It is not only extremely difficult to find arguments which convince Marxists, it is a fundamental mistake to assume that the refutation of Marxism is a logical problem. Marxism, being not a logical system but a world-view centralising the activities of a class and of those societies which are dominated by this class, can only be overcome (whether we like it or not) by another positive world-view. The lack of such a unifying force indicates the dilemma of the West.

There was first of all an official attempt to fill the gap. For the first time in the history of these Congresses UNESCO appeared as an active factor. UNESCO tried to do three things. First it arranged so-called "Entretiens de l'Unesco" with the intention of "attracting attention to

problems of topical interest and of acting as a guide in a world adrift". Not all the papers read at these meetings were written at the instigation of UNESCO, but their selection was characteristic. They centred round the ideas of humanism, naturalism, individualism and democracy, that is to say, around a secular philosophy which has its material centre in biology and its ideological centre in Western democracy.

#### Scientific Humanism Inadequate

Within the framework of these undefined terms Mr. H. Frere (Brussels) could look for a positive basis of human dignity in a strictly naturalistic ethic and install man as a "featherless biped" endowed with a lucid and generous conscience (a certainly original concoction!) whereas Mr. A. Kolman (Prague) was allowed to base his brand of humanism on the tradition of the progressive thinkers of all nations, especially on the teachings of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin. Likewise Mr. E. A. Heath's (Swansea) attempt to find a scientific basis for freedom in the plasticity of human nature (or in its being unfinished) was thought compatible with Mr. Mirko Novak's (Brno) thesis that our mind and values are functionally dependent on biological, economic and social processes. The assumption seemed to be that some sort of scientific humanism could form a bridge between East and West.

This intention came to the fore in UNESCO's second experiment, namely the attempt to sponsor a philosophy of its own in a speech by its Director-General, Dr. Julian Huxley, in the India Institute. Dr. Huxley believes that

in order to carry out his work, UNESCO needs not only a set of general aims and objects for itself, but also a working philosophy, a working hypothesis concerning human existence and its aims and objects, which will dictate, or at least indicate, a definite line of approach to its problems.

His speech, advocating his well-known scientific or evolutionary humanism, felt flat. Not only is this sort of naturalism totally inadequate for the solution of the spiritual crisis of our time, but the whole attempt to produce an official philosophy seems to be mistaken. Just as Ministers of State cannot write the poetry of their time, so the Officials of UNESCO cannot produce the philosophy of their age. UNESCO should wisely restrict itself to creating opportunities for discussion and perhaps to co-ordinating the activities of the nations with the help of some regulative ideas. Nevertheless, it could play a role in helping to formulate a minimum moral code for the behaviour of groups and in upholding essential values.

Most valuable, therefore, seems UNESCO's third experiment, undertaken jointly with the Institute

International de Philosophie to sponsor special issues of philosophical journals. This enabled Professor Jean Lameere's excellent "Revue Internationale de Philosophie," a welcome instrument of Anglo-French collaboration, to restart publication with an issue devoted to the Meaning of Liberty.

#### The Revival of Thomism

Besides UNESCO's more or less artificial attempts at a unification there were two organised groups which tried to influence the discussions, that of the Thomists and that of the Socialists. This is characteristic of contemporary Europe. I happened to assist at a delightful French lecture by Mr. Aime Forest (Montpellier) on "Le Monde Moral", in which the speaker advocated an ethics based on the notion of order instead of a morality founded on liberty or autonomy. What struck me was not so much what he said, for it was scarcely worked out, but the Thomist invasion which went on throughout the lecture, until finally the whole room was filled with black cloth. Some observers believed that the Catholic Church and its most active philosophical group, the Thomists, who are sometimes called Neo-Thomists, were on the whole on the defensive. But I do not think that this is a correct statement. On the contrary, the Catholic Church forms one of the most important rallying points of the anti-Communist forces in Europe and is making a determined effort to regain intellectual supremacy in Europe and the Western Hemisphere.

The Thomists represent the best organised contemporary philosophical school, having at their disposal twenty-five (!) Thomist periodicals, among them about a dozen specially devoted to philosophy; they make every effort to be up to date, publish comprehensive bibliographies, like the *Bulletin Thomiste*, and are now printing a complete *Bibliographica Philosophica* (1934-45); and they are well acquainted with the latest developments in Logic.

The other organised group, the Marxists (Socialists as well as Communists), reminded the Congress of the fact that a return to the Middle Ages is hardly possible. But though they were able to arouse lively discussions they convinced hardly anybody that their world-view, which as an expression of the proletarian self-consciousness is more an advice to revolutionary action than a theory, could solve our problems; and the papers read by this group (which, dominating Russia and Eastern Europe, has recently gained some positions in French and Italian Universities) did not arouse much interest. The Existentialists were absent, but they had sent a French lady who defended the thesis that "l'existence de l'homme est originalement absente" (a really nice metaphysical point).

#### Problem Raised by Modern Physics

It could hardly be said that Science acted as a unifying factor; on the contrary, the contributions of mathematicians, like Bertrand Russell, L.E.J. Brouwer, Bernays, Frankel and Gonseth were highly individual and un-co-ordinated. L. de Broglie's paper, "L'Espace et le Temps dans la Physique Quantique" is noteworthy, because it discusses in an interesting and stimulating

manner the influence of quantum physics on our notions of space and time. He maintains that our notions of space and time are transcended in microphysics, that they suffer a sort of bankruptcy (faillite) in this sphere, and that the assumption of the continuity of time is an illusion. But this article is to be pondered about and not to be taken as a dogmatic statement. Just as the Theory of Relativity destroyed the notion of absolute time, deprived the concept of simultaneity of its absolute character, introduced space-time and made space dependent on the electro-magnetic field, the Quantum Theory may be destined to destroy certain other assumptions about space-time. It seems probable, however, that only our schemata of space and time, that is, certain specific assumptions which we are making concerning the space-time order and which, admittedly, are formulated on the basis of our experience in macrophysics, have to be abandoned in microphysics.

In the course of its existence the corpuscle escapes, one could say, at least partially and almost constantly, the cadre of space, so that the geometrical notions of position and trajectory and the cinematic notions of velocity, acceleration etc. are not applicable.

If this is a correct description of the facts, spatiality and temporality should be distinguished from a specific cadre of space-time. Even if the macroscopic space-time cadre is inapplicable in this sphere, it is difficult to see how the corpuscles can 'escape' spatiality and temporality. Perhaps we have to learn that events and their space-time cadres are strictly correlative. This is a problem of general importance.

A determined effort is made by Professor Gonseth (Zurich) and his circle (especially in his "Journal Dialectical" which also devoted a special number to the Congress) to replace Logical Positivism. Gonseth rejects a purely formal interpretation of Mathematics, and adopts the misleading title of Dialectic in order to stress the fact that there must be, so to speak, a constant dialogue between the abstract formula of science and experience, or that "the philosophy of science must have the character of a dialectic open to experience". Knowledge is said to be based on three principles, experiment, intuition and abstraction (theory) and on their "schematic correspondence". There seem to be some fruitful ideas guiding this school which, however, have to be worked out before their value and prospects can be assessed. And in spite of the metaphysical implications of their work this circle will hardly claim to have discovered the new European metaphysics.

#### Value of Congresses

One cannot expect Congresses to produce a new philosophy. But it must be said that these Meetings have reached the Babylonian Tower stage. Experts estimate that between 60 and 70 per cent of the contributions could be cut out in order to save time and space, and that a nucleus of pre-arranged symposia would offer a welcome opportunity for a real discussion.

The most valuable part of these  
Continued on page 12



# LIVING IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

## Genesis Of The Plight Of Our Civilisation

BY KEWAL MOTWANE

The Indian Commission of the UNESCO that met at Delhi recently has set itself the task of drawing up a nation-wide scheme for training in social service. To be sure, this is quite a laudable idea in a country that sizzles with problems of maladjustment in every segment of its national life, educational, economic, industrial, political, cultural, moral and spiritual. India has just emerged from the dark night of slavery of two centuries, but the oppressed soul of the nation is much older. Indeed, India's subjection to a foreign nation owes its origin to this indifference of the people to their "Swadharma", the social and spiritual solidarity of their country.

India is in dire need of a crusading spirit of service of the masses. But there are grave risks in artificially creating this spirit of social service among the younger generation. The large element of self-seeking and indiscipline that entered the national movement is a standing warning against this regimenting of the masses for political or social welfare. Social service, like patriotism, can be a cloak for selfish, personal ends.

Our first problem is to find out the genesis of the critical situation in Indian life of today. To seek to solve a problem on its own plane is an unmistakable sign of mental immaturity. The one-track mind is a characteristic of the primitive man and the modern man does not seem to have gone very much further from this mentality. All problems, national or inter-national, have been handled in isolation. An overall approach is still unknown in some of the leading nations of the world. To look at life as a whole and to view every problem as a part of the world drama requires a new faculty, a capacity for "simultaneous thinking", to use the famous expression of the late Professor Patrick Geddes. It requires hind-sight, foresight and insight, a *trikal drishti*, if a Sanskrit expression may be permitted. In the light of this approach, the problem changes its visage completely. It undergoes a transformation and therefore its solution is different from what a single-track mind would conceive it to be. Hence it is of vital significance that this question of social service be approached in its proper setting. We must find out the genesis of the present chaos and fit India into the universal scheme of things.

### The Industrial Revolution

India is a part of the world and her problem reflects, in miniature, the world problem, and the world problem is essentially a creation of science and the machine. The present turmoil in the western world began with the Industrial Revolution, which was a creation of science and the machine, and that Revolution is about to come to a head. But before the Industrial Revolution burst upon the European continent in all its fury life was lived at a simple and even pace. Population was not large, one fourth of what it is today. There was no ruthless exploitation of natural resources. People lived in villages scattered far apart. There were no cities. Workers owned the instruments of production; it was a handicraft culture. Villages were self-sufficient and exported their surpluses to the urban areas. Nation, in the modern sense, was not yet born. Monarchy was a universal institution. Parliamentary Government had not come into being. The rulers were benevolent despots, who sported themselves with battles off and on, which, in retrospect, look like street brawls. There were land and sea routes, but they were unsafe, journeys took a long time, and traffic moved slowly. Man lived a life of personal integra-

tion; there were not many contradictory demands on his psyche. The church had a complete control over the individual's thought and action; religion was a matter of a few beliefs, attitudes and rituals. Racial conflicts, excepting for the conquest of southern Europe by the Moors, were few and restricted to local areas.

### The Sociological Implications of Industrialism

But with the birth of the Industrial Revolution, the life of the whole European continent, and in fact of the rest of the world, went through a complete change. All aspects of life registered drastic changes; there was serious maladjustment between various segments of life of the nations, the machine and science created a set of entirely new problems. The gaping jaws of the machine, which had to be continuously fed, led to ruthless exploitation of natural resources, a complete disruption of the fine web of ecological balance between nature, animal and man. The demands of industrial economy led to a sudden growth of cities. Large metropolitan areas grew up overnight, with all their complex problems of education, sanitation, health, food, transportation, crime, etc. The hand-workers lost their tools of trade, the peasants their livelihood. In the melée of these megalopolitan areas, these workers became thoroughly disorganized, psychologically and morally. The non-descript life of the cities made them social and moral outcasts. The villages were deserted, unemployment in the rural areas increased by leaps and bounds, while slums and prostitution thrived in the cities. Marriage and family institutions were subjected to a severe strain; laxity of morals became a common phenomenon. Social diseases increased, population took a sharp upward turn. Capital began to organise itself. Huge trading corporations and companies were formed, with their tentacles dug deep into the succulent parts of Asia and Africa. America was colonised first, later Australasia.

At this time, the concept of the nation was born. Democratic institutions grew up in some of the European countries; Constitutions were drawn up and ratified by the rulers and the people. Aggressive, arrogant, assertive nationalism became a ubiquitous fact in the West. The combination of technology, capitalism and nationalism gave birth of the twin brothers imperialism and racialism. The western nations, with their powerful arms and organisations, which science and the machine placed in their hands, became masters of the world and there began a race of carving up continents for their profit. They reinforced their supremacy in the use of arms with their claims of racial superiority. The dark, yellow, brown races were inferior to the white; the place of the former was to toil for the white ones. Religion fell into line. The West spoke of the

superman, a glorified ape. The hundreds of denominations of Christianity, constantly at war with one another in their own countries, presented a united front in the countries of conquered peoples. The missionary became the agent of the state, of his imperialistic nation. He sought to complete the picture through cultural conquest of his victims.

### Transformation of Social Institutions

The social institutions of the European countries registered the impact of these tremendous changes. Education became prostituted to serve as an instrument of propaganda for the party in power. The imperialistic nations got busy with manufacturing industrialists, bankers, captains, and sailors, doctors and lawyers, teachers and missionaries for service abroad. Great trade rivalries developed among the western nations, resulting in trade monopolies, preferences, bilateral agreements, tariff regulations and the anarchy of economic nationalism. Political parties took birth and they pursued sharply defined policies of self-interest. Constitutions guaranteed rights and privileges, which were easily abrogated in times of emergencies. Racialism became a universal phenomenon. The arts and entertainment became mechanised, vulgarised, geared up to one purpose, the moral and spiritual capitulation of the individual. A sordid commercialism invaded the arts and entertainment. Man's physical and mental health deteriorated. The incidence of physical and mental diseases in the mechanised milieu rose high. Most of the literature produced was erotic or neurotic, the rest was tommy-rotic.

### Secularisation of Arts and Humanities

Since science enabled man to move with certainty and assurance in the realm of the phenomenal and the machine worked with such regularity and precision and without fatigue, man and the universe were conceived in terms of the machine. Science gave a purely materialistic, mechanical interpretation of the universe. Biology traced all individual fluctuations and mutations to the blind urge of nature to succeed in the universal struggle for exist-

ence and survival of the fittest. If matter was dead, inert, then the physical body was all that there was to man. Psychology sought to reduce man to a few conditioned reflexes and a few subconscious complexes, the most urgent and irrepressible one being that of sex. Ethics and Metaphysics became reduced to being mere intellectual disciplines, not methods and norms of conduct and self-discovery. Political and social sciences followed suit. Every branch of human knowledge became secularised.

### The Basic Ethos of the West

Now, if we were to attempt to express in one word the fundamental note of this machine-cum-science culture of the West, it would be CONFLICT, conflict between man and nature, between man and woman, between capital and labour, between village and city, between individual and state, between nation and nation and race and race, between religion and science between life and form, between *purusha* and *prakriti*. The resolution of this antimony has been the chief task set to mankind, and the West sought to emphasise the dualism, and not resolve it. This Philosophy of Antinomination is now coming to a crisis in the western world. The titanic energy, hidden in the minutest speck of matter, may lead to complete annihilation of the human race. But if the spiritual aspect of this locked-up energy, shakti, is recognised in time and its implications worked out into the cultural pattern and thinking processes of mankind, if matter is also seen as divine, a *guna* of the Cosmic Consciousness, then there is hope for mankind. For the present, the forces of disintegration, conflict, *adharma* are in the ascendant in the whole world, and they are throwing their impact on India all the time. It is this impact that has given birth to numerous problems, with which India must reckon in the immediate future, if she is to survive, as a spiritual and a political entity. With this background in our minds, let us turn to India.

NEXT ISSUE:

India's Cultural Ethos: the Vision of the Whole

## LIGHTS ON LIFE PROBLEMS

Continued from page 7

temperament which waits upon expediency and regulates its steps by a prudential eye to consequence. Men and nations continue to act always in the same fashion regardless of this occasional breaking out of the lightning of a retaliatory doom, these occasional precisions of Karmic justice amidst the uncertainties of the complex measures of the universe. It works really not on the mind and will of man—except to some degree in a subtle and imperfect fashion on the subconscious mind—but outside him as a partial check and regulator helping to maintain the balance of the returns of energy and the life purposes of the world-spirit. Its action of Nature's penalties, seldom agreeing with any pure law of the talion, is intended to prevent the success of the vital egoism of man and serves as an interim compression and compulsion until he can discover and succeed in spite of his vital self in obeying a higher law of his being and a purer dynamism of motive in his directing mind and governing spirit. It serves therefore a certain moral purpose in the will in the universe, but is not itself, even in combination with others, sufficient to be the law of a moral order.

# THE HINDU CODE BILL

Continued from page 3

and seers like Manu, Parasara or Yajnavalkya. These Rishis belonged to the Vedic age, whole the Smritis were composed at a much later date to give social guidance according to the needs of the time as understood by the leaders of society at that time. The names of the Rishis were joined to these ancient Hindu codes to give them the sanction and authority of the Vedic seers. Thus the Gita expressly denounces the current Manu Samhita in the first two slokas of the fourth chapter, where it is said that the sayings of Manu were lost in the great lapse of time. The language of the Smriti Shastras is obviously of a much later date than the Vedic Samhitas and the society depicted there is different from the Vedic society. To take one instance, in Vedic society adult marriage was the rule, and young men and women freely chose their life mates themselves, while the Smriti Shastras prescribe child marriages, thus bringing down the status of women in society.

## The Ideal To Go Beyond Shastras

Not only the Smriti Shastras cannot be binding for all times, the Indian spiritual ideal is to go beyond all Shastras, *sarvadharmam paritrayya*. The Shastras offer rules for guidance as long as men live in the ignorance and have not found the Self or the Divine within themselves. When one is consciously united with the Divine who is seated in the hearts of all creatures, he has not to follow any external rule or Shastra, but to follow the will of the supreme Divine expressed through his nature. The Gita even goes so far as to say that a man who is seeking union with the Divine goes beyond the *shabda brahman*, that is, the Vedas, not to speak of the Smritis which have a far less authority and sanction. But for the generality of men living in society some rules are necessary so that they may gradually prepare themselves for the practice of direct union with the Divine; and these rules have a relative and transitional value. Thus the Gita says that instead of following the impulses and desires of the lower nature one should follow the Shastra, that is, the laws prevalent in society at any particular time. But immediately the Gita goes on to say that if one feels that the Shastra is wanting or defective he can discard it and follow the best light within him.

The action controlled by Shastra "is the means to a step in advance, and therefore mankind must first proceed through it and make this Shastra its law of action rather than obey the impulsion of its personal desires. . . . But we see also that there is a freer tendency in man other than the leading of his desires and other than the will to accept the Law, the fixed idea, the safe governing rule of the Shastras. The individual frequently enough, the community at any moment of its life is seen to turn away from the Shastra, becomes impatient of it, loses that form of its will and faith and goes in search of another law which it is now more disposed to accept as the right rule of living and regard as a more vital and higher truth of existence. This may happen when the established Shastra ceases to be a living thing and degenerates or stiffens into a mass of customs and conventions. Or it may come because it is found that the Shastra is imperfect or no longer useful for the progress demanded; a new truth, a more perfect law of living has become imperative. If that does not exist, it has to be discovered by the effort of the race or by some great

and illumined individual mind. The Vedic law becomes a convention and a Buddha appears with his new rule of the eightfold path and the goal of Nirvana. . . . The Mosaic law of religious, ethical and social righteousness is convicted of narrowness and imperfection and is now, besides, a convention; the law of Christ comes to replace it. . . . And the human search does not stop there." (*Essays on the Gita XVIII* by Sri Aurobindo).

In his *Psychology of Social Development*, Sri Aurobindo has shown how human society passes through successive stages towards its goal of a divinised life on the earth—the symbolic, the typical and conventional, the individualistic and the subjective. The Vedic age was symbolic where everything in life was regarded as a symbol of a higher spiritual truth. Thus the four orders of society, the chaturvarnya represented to it the body of the virat Purusha. Then came the age of social types and conventions which we find depicted in the Shriti Shastras. Now those conventions have lost their original sense and force, thus the present caste system is a ghost, a caricature of the ancient chaturvarnya. All this has to be dissolved now in the crucible of the individualistic age so that humanity may be prepared for the subjective. In the West the subjective age has already begun. The characteristic turn of modern civilisation is towards subjectivism everywhere—in education, criminology, sociology. But as yet the subjectivism of the West is superficial, it is rather a false subjectivism. In the true subjective age man gets back to himself, back to the root of his living and infinite possibilities and such periods are most fruitful and creative. But in the West they have not gone sufficiently deep, they mistake the ego for the self, and the errors of such subjectivism were well illustrated in the rise of Nazism in Germany. It is for India to show how man can find his true self in which he is one with God and all other beings, and that is not the ego in which he feels himself different from all other beings and wants to aggrandise himself, dominating and devouring others. So that man may find his true self he must be given the fullest freedom to grow in his own way. This truth was recognised by our spiritual Shastras; and we find it well expressed in the Gita's formulation of swabhava and swadharma. "Every time the society crushes or effaces the individual, it is inflicting a wound on itself and depriving its own life of priceless sources of stimulation and growth. The individual too cannot flourish by himself, for the universal, the unity and collectivity, is his source and stock, it is that which he individually expresses and of which, he is the result, its depression strikes eventually at his own sources of life) by its increasing he also increases. The supreme Being is one in all, expressed in the individual and in the collectivity, vyasti and samasti—this is what a true subjectivism means, an old Indian discovery."

The provisions in the Hindu Code Bill mark the transition from the narrowly and mechanically conventional to the individualistic period preparatory to the subjective. We demand freedom for women, as for all, not for giving them a license to indulge in the movements of the lower nature but to prepare the only conditions under which they can develop their personality to the full and find the Divine within themselves as well as in all beings, things and events. The Gita which is a great synthesis of Aryan spiritual

culture expressly gives the same status to all human beings, "Those who take refuge with Me, O Partha, though outcastes, born from a womb of sin, women, Vaishyas, even Shudras, they also attain to the highest goal." (9/32). The doors of the temple of God are equally open to all, why should we make distinctions of case, creed or sex and raise artificial barriers?

## The Orthodox Hindu Mind

Mr. Ramalinga Iyer gives up his whole case against divorce by supporting child marriage. His views are worth considering in detail as he typically expresses the orthodox Hindu mind. Thus he says: "Now, about the present popular system of marriages. A grown-up girl or young man wants to select for herself or himself a suitable partner. Being young and attracted by each other, they decide upon an alliance. No detailed enquiry into antecedents is made. After, say, 2 or 3 years of happy married life, differences arise. Some incompatibility of temper, or mutual unsuitability, makes their life unhappy. For such a marriage the Hindu Code Bill is quite right in providing for divorce, and divorce is a necessity. The selfless love, the intention to give and take, the spirit of sacrifice is absent here. But not so in child-marriage which has a background of mutual and super-sensual love, inviolability and permanency." But as adult marriage is already law, therefore on Mr. Iyer's own admission legislation allowing divorce is now a necessity and should no longer be delayed. There is even a tendency to raise the marriagable age farther; in Madras it has recently been raised to fifteen in the case of girls. Thus it is proved that such a law has become necessary under modern conditions. You cannot repeal the Sarda Act, so you must make provision for divorce.

But is child marriage really conducive to happiness? Love cannot be manufactured by binding together children in marriage. The truth is that in India vitality is poor, life has been suppressed by social customs and conventions, hence the present married life is possible. Children are given in marriage and they somehow carry on in life. In Western countries such marriages would prove disastrous in every case. We do not say that adult marriages lead to love.

In ordinary married life, even in the West where adult marriage is prevalent, there is no love, there is only a pretence. There is the bond of common interests, the material life is so organised as to be conducive to joint life, and so husband and wife continue to carry on a joint life, but there is no love. When even this arrangement fails and for some reason or other, the joint life becomes intolerable, there should be no impediment to the dissolution of the marriage. That would be the best arrangement even for the children, if there be any, for there is nothing so detrimental to the child as an unhappy home.

It is argued that, in India, indissoluble marriage has been upheld since Vedic times. We have already pointed out that this was not a fact, dissolution of marriage was permitted under specific circumstances. The Vedic mantras of marriage, no doubt, envisage a permanent marriage, but they express nothing more than a prayer and an aspiration. The married couple start with the resolve that they will unite their hearts and minds and souls in true love and they pray for the blessings of the gods. But, in the ignorance in which men are now living, such aspirations and prayers are not often fulfilled, and in such a case it must be considered that the marriage has failed, judged by the Vedic standard which envisages a true union of souls and minds and hearts.

Indeed it is wrong to hope that one will get real happiness in married life; love is rare, and where there is no love, there is no happiness. The world as it is now is not a lace for happiness, *anityam asukham lokam*. To search after happiness here through marriage is to run after a mirage. Marriage can be accepted only as a discipline, as a step; thus the Srimad Bhagvat, XI.V.II, says: "Marriage is necessary to prevent men from leading a life of recklessness and promiscuity." If romiscuity be allowed, man will never rise above the level of animals; after tasting the pleasures of married life and realising its futility, man can ultimately turn his mind to the Divine, to a spiritual life where alone true love and happiness can be realised. If we understand this, then dissolution of marriage under certain circumstances would not appear as disastrous. There is nothing sacred or inviolable in human marriages. As a sage has put it, "Marriage is a necessary evil."

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## A GREAT PIONEER OF YOGIC POETRY

Continued from page 3

rung on a simple movement and style as in *The Outcast*:

Sometimes when alone  
At the dark close of day,  
Men meet an outlawed majesty  
And hurry away.

They come to the lighted house;  
They talk to their dear;  
They crucify the mystery  
With words of good cheer.

When love and life are over,  
And flight's at an end,  
On the outcast majesty  
They lean as a friend.

The seeds of this modulated simplicity, like those of the variegated richness of other poems of AE's old age, were not absent in his period of youthful sowing, but they were less perceivable because the tendency then was towards transfiguring by sheer subtlety and depth of feeling a steady run of iambs or trochees, the modulations occurring chiefly with an anapaest touch now and again to obtain some particular effect. In *The Unknown God*, however, mere anapaests do not sway the metre: many deft unexpected modulations of two and three and, if we count the feminine endings, even four syllables combine in a suggestion of lovely star-flicker as well as of ecstatic heart-beat:

Far up the dim twilight fluttered  
Moth-wings of vapour and flame:  
The lights danced over the mountains,  
Star after star they came.  
The lights grew thicker unheeded,  
For silent and still were we;  
Our hearts were drunk with a beauty  
Our eyes could never see.

It is not easy to reward such a gem with adequate praise—the intuition is so perfectly kindled and with the most economical elegance. Indeed AE is always a wizard when he faces poetically his favourite hour of dayfall: masterpiece on miniature masterpiece issues from his pen as one by one the planets flower into sight, and I believe that though men can no longer see the intense and far-visaged form that moved among them for a while, their hearts will be drunk to the end of time with the song-creative beauty of his soul.

## UNITED ASIA

PEACE NUMBER

AUGUST 1949

The UNITED ASIA believes; that war as a recurring phenomenon in life carries with it the presupposition of a purpose, which may be moral or economic; that the obvious way to peace must therefore lie in a fulfilment of that purpose by other means than war; that the discovery of those other means and the practice thereof should thus be among the first tasks of peace.

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I M P O R T A N T  
ANNOUNCEMENT

A Special Enlarged Number of MOTHER INDIA—As. 12 for non-subscribers—will be published in celebration of August 15 which is at the same time the Independence Day of India and the Birthday of Sri Aurobindo.

It will have an Art Paper cover with Sri Aurobindo's photograph. There will also be a reproduction of the Mother's photograph, the Flag of India's Mission (in two colours) and pictures of the Ashram of Sri Aurobindo.

Many specially written articles, by authors abroad no less than in India, on various important topics will be featured. Two of the high lights are:

**WORDS OF THE MOTHER**—an unpublished illuminating talk given to Sri Aurobindo's disciples.

**MY LAST WEEK WITH GANDHIJI** by Dilip Kumar Roy, famous Bengali musician, poet, novelist and disciple of Sri Aurobindo—published at full length for the first time—over 7,000 words.

Kenneth Walker, well-known author of "Meaning and Purpose" and "Diagnosis of Man" is also contributing a special article.

There will be no issue on either August 6 or August 20: the next issue after the Special Number will be on September 3.

## The Owl's Banquet

BY "MINERVA"

In this Age of Penicillin and Plastic Surgery we hardly think any non-western method of doctoring can be of use. But of curious interest is the Chinese faith in "punctures." It is not injections that are meant by this term. The Chinese believe that there are a thousand places on the human body which may be punctured to the benefit of specific illnesses.

During his apprenticeship the student of this art gains experience on a life-sized figure in which there are numbered holes, some deep, some shallow. Every conceivable puncture is marked, even those in the eyes. At examination the model figure is covered with paper and the student is asked to make fifty punctures without error; the process is further complicated by the fact that he has thirteen needles to choose from, ranging from 2 to 18 cm. in length, and he has to know which punctures require the use of red-hot needles. Sterilisation consists of wiping the needles on a woollen rag.

Oddly enough, these punctures are effective. It has been reliably reported that a man who had lost the power of speech was cured after two punctures beneath the tongue! And recently there was the case of an old Chinese missionary who told the following tale. As a young man he had been stationed in a remote district. He developed raging toothache, and as a trip to Shanghai or Tientsin was out of the question his converts persuaded him to visit a Chinese doctor. The old man punctured both lower and upper gums. "In future," said he, "you will have no more toothache and your teeth will decay no longer; they will fall out of themselves in the fullness of time." His teeth did not decay, nor did he suffer from toothache. And as he grew old they came loose and fell out as easily as the hairs of his head.

\* \* \*

"Black" medicine—the medicine of native African doctors—has also some strange results to show. Charles Grosse, broadcasting in the BBC'S Regional Programme for South Africa and Rhodesia describes how a native corporal under him was bitten on the temple by an eight-foot mamba. "Within a

matter of twenty minutes or so," he says, "it became very obvious to me that my poor corporal was dying of the snake's bite.

Pitifully and impotently, I watched paralysis set in. It started in the face and neck, and extended to the arms and hands. Only a very, very laboured heart-flutter and the expression in his eyes showed that he was still alive.

At that moment, the native doctor arrived.

He stood over the corporal, shaking his old head, and murmuring. Then, leisurely, he squatted, and hauled up over his shoulder, from where it was hanging down his back, his little bag of tools.

He unknotted the corners of a disreputable piece of cloth, and produced a dozen or so little parcels, wrapped in filthy *limbo*. Then he called to an *umfaan* to bring him a leaf.

Selecting this packet, passing over that one, with the casual air of a skilled dispenser, he shook out varicoloured powders—black, white, grey, orange—on to the leaf; then, folding the leaf, he ate it himself.

His old jaws worked rhythmically as he delved into a wallet on his belt, and produced the horn of a small buck, which, with the point cut off, made a rough tube. The mixture, in his mouth being reduced, presumably, to the required consistency, he leaned over the patient and forcibly plunged the tube into the incisions I had made on his temple.

Putting his mouth to the tube, he blew with energy half the mixture he had chewed into the wound. Removing the tube, he put it between the patient's teeth, and blew the other half down his throat.

Then he re-packed his bag and shuffled off without a backward glance.

In a short while the corporal's colour had improved, and the heart-flutter, faint but unmistakable, had returned. Within an hour, he could move his hands and feet. Four days afterwards, he walked sixty miles back to camp. He returned later to the village, sought out the witch-doctor, and gave him twelve shillings and six pence."



# SPACES—NATURE'S GREAT HEALERS

BY NORA SECCO D'SOUZA

What a relief it is to break away from the clamouring crowd to the wide open spaces where, save for the distant voices of villagers, the happy song of a bird, the chatter of a brooklet and the care-free whistle of the wind, all is peace, all is quiet. The setting sun has left its far-calling colours in the western sky, and only one solitary little star keeps sentinel in the lonely heavens. There is contentment and beauty brooding in the stillness of the twilight hour and, forgetting the struggle and strife of a mechanical and materialistic world, you allow yourself to dream and walk slowly with Time rather than try to outrun him.

But you must forsake the high-roads and use the footpaths if you wish to leave behind your everyday scenes and catch Nature's elusive charms. The country-side that looked dull and uninteresting from a car, discloses some hidden glamour from every angle when explored afoot. Small trees that appeared unfriendly and offered no shade when seen from a distance, spread out inviting lacy green patterns against the sky when you stand below them. A babbling brook gurgles and winds its long, lazy way through crofts and cottages. Past this spot, where nothing erstwhile appeared to happen, come moving pictures beautiful in colour and form. Creatures that looked awkward and ungainly when being driven through towns, or when scattering slowly before road traffic, assume an easy grace here in their natural surroundings. The dull coats of cattle look rich and warm against a background of green, as the beasts move slowly along in search of food and drink. Flocks of sheep that look lovely even on the road are perfect here, with their cream fleece and black heads reflected in the stream, with the sunshine playing upon their backs, the shadows around their feet. Here you find freedom indeed, and begin to realise what the birds of the air must feel as they soar higher and higher in a blue immensity.

## New Vision

All the while a part of your lonely undisturbed subconscious mind has been working away. You see things so much more clearly and confess to yourself that it is true that far too many times you have mistaken tinsel for gold. Futile enthusiasms have disappeared; so also have certain equally futile bitternesses—not all bitternesses, of course, because there are some that lie too deep for words or for expulsion. I mean just those silly little irritations and angers which inflame the over-detailed, overworked mind. Everything seems to fall into place and you suddenly see why Mr. X thought it wise to do such and such a thing years ago. Yes, it is good to be absolutely alone, away from the wireless and the papers, as well as away from other people, to be able to understand and judge them better. You will find that (quite apart from the rest you get) your mind, untroubled and released from the nagging details of your own life and the great world, can produce from its depths so many things which illumine and instruct.

There are great healing properties in the wide open spaces that appeal to one and all, stirring the imagination and emotion. Almost every creative genius has been acutely alive to Nature's tender call and touch. When oppressed by mental stress, black moods and fits of temper, the four walls of a room seem to suffocate one; but go out into the vast out-of-doors, and gradually you will find the discord melting away and harmony stealing in. The cool breezes play against your face and seem to remove the cares from your being. The towering courage and inspiration of the trees takes posses-

sion of you; and hope, forgetfulness and peace come in subconsciously where despair and chaos reigned. If we refer to psychology we see that it advocates that one should keep a few minutes each day to relax completely both mentally and physically, as one of the best ways of counteracting the perpetual strain imposed by the excitement and rush of modern life which is most responsible for shortening our mundane span. Besides the lighter distractions life offers us, we must not forget the quieter, yet more worthwhile things. It is only by forgetting our cares and giving ourselves some time to "stand and stare" that we can really live a full and well balanced life.

How can that mysterious essence of our being—call it the spirit if you will, or the soul, or, merely an aspect of the mind—how can it ever develop or create if it is burdened under and given no time to be free of the fetters of purely mechanical intellect? Would the world ever have progressed, or would any of our great men, whether scientists, musicians, artists, poets, philosophers or authors have made such discoveries, created such beauty, attained to such truths or produced such literature, if they had not realised the import of solitude and meditation? How did Newton discover the law of gravity? By sitting below an apple-tree, contemplating. How did Beethoven create such music as the "Moonlight Sonata?" From an inspiration born of an imagination quickened by deafness. Wordsworth believed that inspiration came only to a receptive mind, responsive to the influence of nature, and Tagore's principle in Shantiniketan was that students should imbibe knowledge not only from books and teachers but by dwelling in close contact with nature's glories.

## Sustenance from Nature

I have often watched with a kind of fascination the women who work on the soil. They have an air of contentment and well-being which the idle rich and the inhabitants of the dark, dismal poor houses lack. Their sturdy limbs, browned to a deep mahogany, would thrill the heart of any physical-culture enthusiast. They carry themselves erect even when grey hairs appear, and live their lives with a care-free abandon, not worrying about the morrow nor the troubles it might bring. Nature and her wide open arms have nurtured and built them what they are and satisfied their physical and spiritual needs. Subconsciously, the beauty of their surroundings has penetrated to their souls and looks out of their clear eyes as they walk fearless beneath the tranquil, star-studded sky in the evening of their lives. Well might one envy them their peace of mind and that utter content, which is the result of a simple and honest life shared with Nature. Their little world has never seemed over-crowded, noisy, envious and malignant and, if they have never known the pleasures of society or the sublime heights one can reach through knowledge, culture and power, they are as blissfully ignorant of the heartaches and disillusionments.

It does seem ironical that, in spite of all the wide open spaces India possesses, the charitable institutions, welfare and "uplift" movements, the smiling philanthropists that are not wanting in this land, there should be a certain class of the poor who still remain longing for a breath of pure, clean air and the sight of green fields, because their tiny tenements have never seen the sun and they have almost forgotten how lovely Nature can be. There are several societies for the prevention of cruelty to animals and yet there is not a single one to prevent human beings from living like animals. I was forced to hold my nose while visiting a dirty narrow poor quarter in Bombay where the houses were as closely threaded as beads upon a string and one had to strike a match to find a way out. The sun had never been allowed to shine here. These were the homes of those numerous inhabitants to whom space was a luxury; here they cooked, washed and slept, brought fresh lives into the world and eventually quitted it all when their life's task was done. Tuberculosis is India's most deadly disease and, in spite of the efforts to fight it, still continues to take its annual toll of tender lives, leaving its footprints in these same, dirty, sunless hovels. To conquer this scourge there is but one way—to destroy the slums, distribute the population and make them live where the sun and fresh air, Nature's own health-promoting factors, can give to each of these unfortunate individuals his birthright—the blessing and gift of perfect health. How we pay attention to building luxurious cinema palaces, clubs, monuments in marble and ornate houses of prayer and forget we are closest in touch with the Infinite amongst the things He alone can create and satisfy the longings in the human heart!

## Light from Loneliness

Perhaps this "Get-away-from-it-all" gospel I am preaching may seem something impossible, as only a minute fraction of us are lucky enough to travel places or be sent to the remote parts of the earth. But few men and women are so pressed that now and again they cannot get a day or two off, and they can find their heaven as well in their own garden as they can by going to Tumbuctu. Instead of trying to cram into your free days as much excitement and experience as you can by smoking the greatest number of cigarettes, attending all the clubs in town, seeing the most pictures, try the unique and inexpensive pleasures of loneliness. Now,

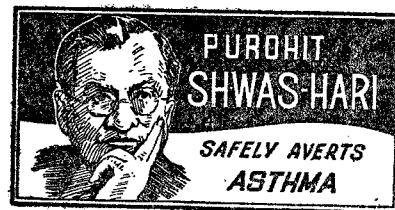
when the world is rushing forward at such a rate, this is more than ever delightful and necessary. You will find, even if only for a few hours, such an experience, delightful and soothing; and if we have to be grateful to a thoughtful Creator, it is for those beautiful wide open spaces that contribute towards that "peace that passeth understanding". The gods themselves realised the significance and purifying influence of the Kingdom of Silence and loved and sought solitude and tranquillity, in which great truths were revealed to them. Jesus of Nazareth replenished his spiritual strength in lonely places under the starry heavens while He spent the day busy in preaching the love of God and curing the deaf, blind and the lame. Buddha loved to meditate for hours in perfect silence underneath the canopy of trees. The Yogis meditated in their mountain-caves on the eternal mysteries of life. If we want to preserve our life and energy for doing something worthwhile as a nation, let us show greater reverence for Nature and the healing balm of her open spaces which will not only develop our creative instincts but also increase our spiritual strength.

## THE WEST IN SEARCH OF A METAPHYSICS

Continued from page 8

meetings consists in personal contacts and that what will be remembered are the wonderful receptions in the Rijksmuseum (with Rembrandt's newly cleaned "Night-watch" and the pictures of the Alte Pinakothek, Munich) and in the Municipal Museum (with a Van Gogh exhibition), and a boat trip through Amsterdam and its harbour.

We concluded our journey with a visit to Rijnsburg. In the small and modest Spinoza house, in his two rooms, one containing his library and the other his optical instruments, there were no crowds of philosophers, but memories of a great man who in his solitude worked out a system which the Dutch regard as their greatest contribution to philosophy.



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