

# MOTHER INDIA

Managing Editor:  
K. R. PODDAR

FORTNIGHTLY REVIEW

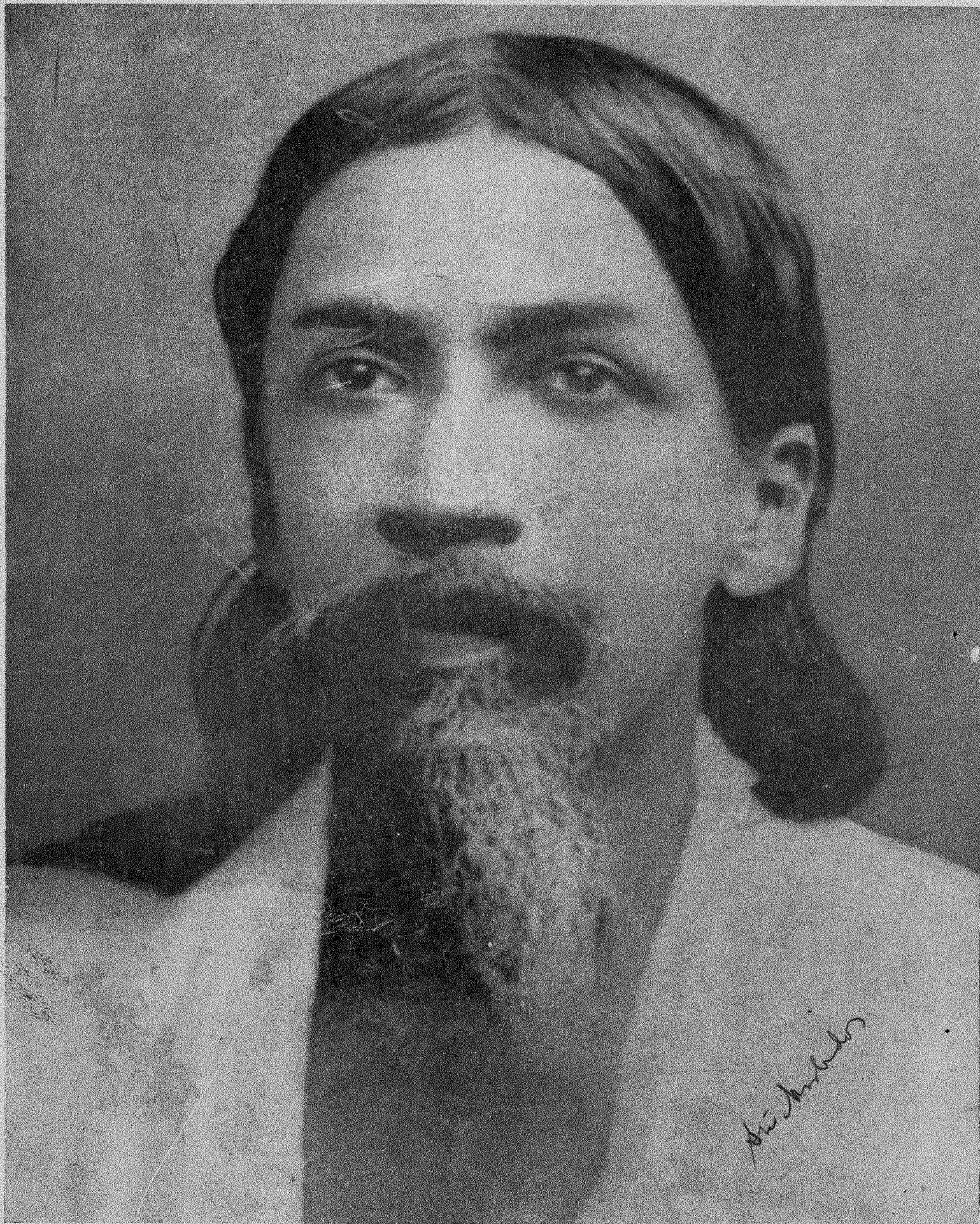
Editor:  
K. D. SETHNA

"GREAT IS TRUTH AND IT SHALL PREVAIL"

VOL. I. NO. 13.

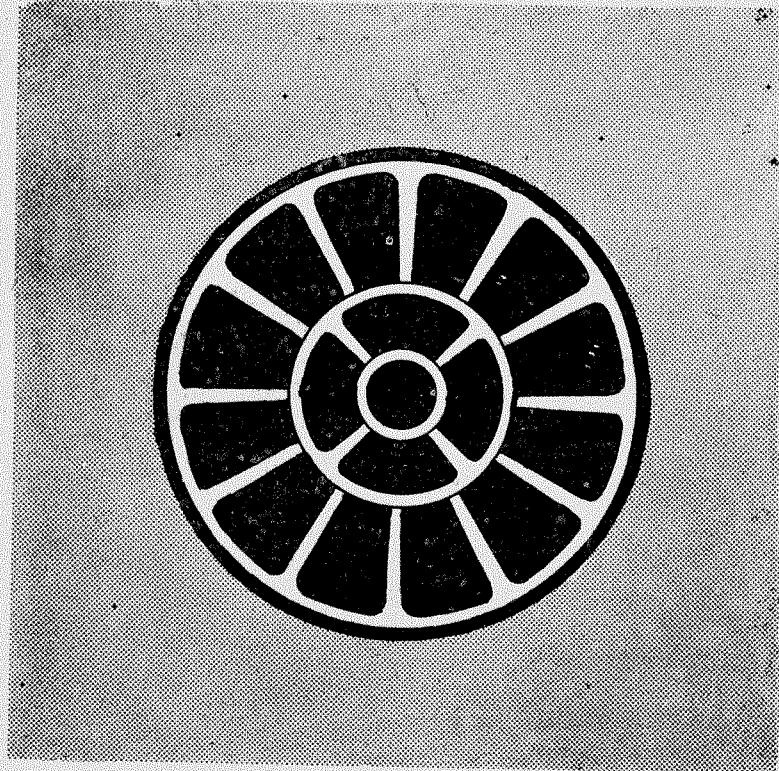
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SRI AUROBINDO

WITH WHOSE BIRTHDAY THE INDEPENDENCE DAY OF INDIA COINCIDES



**THE FLAG  
OF INDIA'S SPIRITUAL MISSION**

(See Second Editorial)



**BLACK**    *represents*    **GOLD**  
**GREY**    *represents*    **SILVERY BLUE**

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## THE MESSAGE OF AUGUST 15

It is a symbolic act of fate that India, the land known through the ages for her spirituality, is celebrating her Independence on the very date on which falls the birthday of her greatest living Master of Yoga, Sri Aurobindo. Sri Aurobindo will be 78 on August 15. He stands for that deepest and highest Independence, the freedom of the soul from the shackles of mortal ignorance, the liberation of the human into the Divine Consciousness. But it is worth remembering that he was once in the van of political life—the universally acknowledged leader of Bengal in revolt against Lord Curzon's scheme to partition that province. A close friend of Tilak's, a friend whom Tilak was always eager to consult, he shaped the nationalist mind of India at a critical period and the stamp he put upon it is still visible in spite of various changes that have taken place. Not once only, but three times during his political career he was charged with sedition by the British Government. Undaunted by the repressive governmental machinery, he kept in the forefront of the nationalist fight, until the call came to him for a greater and more revolutionary service.

Side by side with his political activity he had been practising Yoga for several years. A stage of development was reached when he felt that his mission was to strike out a new path of spiritual growth that would not only lead the mortal's consciousness to the Infinite and the Eternal but also bring a dynamic divinity to the world for completely transforming the world's life. He is no ascetic of the lonely Beyond: his aim is to effect a top-to-toe change in human nature, so that man the mental being may be henceforth a supramental one. The Ashram in Pondicherry that has sprung up around him is a scene of multifarious activity, a field for a hundred talents and aptitudes—men of diverse types developing by a series of inner Yogic experiences and by the expression of those experiences in outer life. The Ashram is a glowing focus of India's innate spirituality, fraught with immense possibilities of irradiating the entire life of the nation.

### The Eyes of the World on Sri Aurobindo

Eyes all over the world are awakening to this centre of light. The India Government's Ministry of External Affairs has been receiving enquiries from individuals and institutions abroad, especially from America, about the aims and activities of the Ashram in Pondicherry. Even arrangements are being discussed now for taking documentary films of the Ashram. And recently the Government ordered, for use in Indian Embassies in foreign countries, forty sets of Sri Aurobindo's *Collected Poems*

and *Plays* as well as his philosophical exposition of his Yogic vision of the world, *The Life Divine*, about which Aldous Huxley has remarked in a letter to Dilip Kumar Roy: "I consider it a book not merely of the highest importance as regards its content, but remarkably fine as a piece of philosophic and religious literature." Eager minds in both England and the U.S.A. are turning to the Aurobindonian thought: two universities in the latter—Stanford and Cornell—have prescribed *Essays on the Gita* and *The Life Divine* respectively as part of post-graduate study. In India, too, Benares University has put Sri Aurobindo on its syllabus. The move, in the West no less than the East, to suggest his name for the Nobel Prize is perhaps the intensest testimony to the growing recognition of him as a world-figure of far-reaching significance.

But there was, up to very lately, a tendency amongst us to confine the significance of Sri Aurobindo to the realm of Yoga and philosophy and literature. It was not sufficiently realised that his so-called retirement from public life or even his comparative aloofness at present in the midst of his own Ashram implies no renunciation of the world's labour. Of course, visitors to the Ashram could never harbour the delusion that Sri Aurobindo had cut himself off from all earthly occupations. But the country at large was too much engrossed in leaders who seemed in more apparent ways to concern themselves with secular affairs. Two whole years of Independence had to elapse before the sense kindled up that in the strange fact of the birthday of Sri Aurobindo coinciding with the day of India's liberation there lay the clear pointer to Sri Aurobindo's being by his spiritual *tapasya* not only the secret force behind our freedom but also the one personality with whom our free future is bound up and who alone can be the architect of our true greatness.

It was indeed a sign of the times that when Pandit Nehru was recently in Calcutta a bundle of leaflets was thrown into his car, demanding of him to bring Sri Aurobindo back to Bengal. A still more lively portent is the decision taken in Bengal to celebrate on an all-India basis the birthday of Sri Aurobindo. A strong reception committee has been formed with eminent men as members. The committee has appealed to all people as also to public institutions, clubs or associations to come forward and co-operate and make the celebration a success worthy of Bengal. Here is the first distinct articulation of a new tendency in the country, trying to bring about a break-away from old moorings. Here is the dawn promising a wonderful day if only we could bestir ourselves—the dawn of an authentic vision of Sri Aurobindo's position in India—the position of a Rishi, a seer

## The Message of August 15--Continued from previous page

of spiritual truth who brings to mankind the creative word that becomes flesh, a bearer of the mantra whose luminous power gives life the rhythm of a divine rapture.

### The Mission of a Master Rishi

The genuine Rishi is no mere poet of supernal mysteries: he lets loose upon the world through both his poetic utterance and his life-movement a spiritual force remoulding the world around him in the image of the Divine and reordering it into a harmony beyond the human. The Rishi is not the guru of just an enlightened coterie: he is the source of a whole people's culture and civilisation. Of course, he has always an intense nucleus of select disciples following the path of his yoga and without such a nucleus his work would never establish itself on earth; but his yoga is meant to take up all the departments of earth's life into its fiery heart and, goldening their motives and motions, make them serve in various manners the Light that is for ever. He extends his influence everywhere, disdains no function of the national being, shirks no responsibility of world-existence. He can be the leader in all the fields, give to each thing the right touch, set going each activity along the true line, lay the profound base and direct the lofty construction of every important scheme of secular growth.

Yes, Sri Aurobindo can be the nation's leader. But let us not commit the mistake of thinking that he must act like ordinary leaders, deliver an abundance of speeches, hurry from conference to conference. No doubt, a certain amount of ordinary leadership has to be accepted but we must leave a Rishi to act as he best knows how. Jayaprakash Narain once asked Sri Aurobindo to take Gandhiji's place. The request was reverent; yet when we ponder the magnitude of the Aurobindonian mission we see the incongruity of asking him to fill the gap left by anyone, no matter what the seriousness of the gap. This mission is unique and cannot be equated with any other: it is far deeper and higher and ampler, far more radically creative. It can do all that any other can, but with an entirely different orientation, and it does not stop short with the ideals set up by morality and religion. Sri Aurobindo does not wish to preach mere brotherhood and service and honest social behaviour. All these things are compassed by his work, but the power for them he transmits from a consciousness different from the one in which even the most moral and religious man lives. Nor is a finely cultured mind—the artistic and the contemplative intellect, the consciousness of the poet-philosopher—the ultimate fountainhead of the Aurobindonian influence. Sri Aurobindo is indeed a poet-philosopher of a rare order, bringing a balanced beauty, a vivid wisdom; and the effort of the moralist and the religious man at detachment from gross animals desires and egoistic motives finds fulfilment in him; yet are they not his all-sufficient ends—they are only the means of his master-passion. His master-passion is not mental brilliance or the triumph of a human virtue. It is the sheer surpassing of the human level, the continual union with the Supreme Being and the direct expression of that Being in all the ways of our nature.

### The Rishi's Threefold God-realisation

To get an inkling of the authentic Rishi's fountainhead of influence we must try to grasp what India's scriptures have meant by the Supreme Being. First and foremost the Supreme Being is a mighty transcendence of time and life, an infinite Consciousness and Bliss immutably seated above the waxing and waning of the world's years. A splendid stanza of the ancient Upanishads translated with revelatory force by Sri Aurobindo catches in words that sovereign status: "There the sun shines not and the moon has no lustre and the stars are blind; there these lightnings flash not nor any earthly fire. For all that is bright is but the shadow of His brightness and by His shining all this shineth." The Rishi who has attained union with the Transcendence carries, among things that fade, a smiling Eternity unbarred by appearances, unmarred by phenomena. To his realisation we cannot apply our measure of moments and confine it within an age of seventy-eight or any other. The Spirit's timeless plenitude that is his fundamental self grows not old as men grow old who live in the clutch of the passing and the mortal. But the Eternity that is above time and life is not utterly the opposite of the changing and the phenomenal. When the Upanishads chant, "By His shining all this shineth," they do more than trace the source of our cosmos in the Beyond. While opening our world-beglamoured eyes to the Truth whose infinity no light on earth equals, they do not cut off earth's light from that Truth. It is God who has emanated the world, the world is at bottom His own stuff of divinity: omnipresent, He pervades occultly all phenomena. The many-sided vision of the Upanishads no sooner found tongue in the splendid stanza about the supra-cosmic "There" than it followed up with another as splendid about the cosmic "Here" of the Divine. In Sri Aurobindo's vibrant and wide-sweeping English, this Sanscrit mantra runs: "The Eternal is before us and the Eternal is behind us and to the south and to the north of us and above and below and extended everywhere. All this magnificent universe is nothing but the Eternal." The Rishi is inwardly one with a Cosmic Consciousness supporting with a limitless peace a limitless activity, a

myriad variety of forms. Not the one body alone which we know as his makes the reality of him. It cannot circumscribe the far-stretching continuity of his being and his becoming. In all quarters he feels his own self at work. He overflows the span of an individual life. The march of the centuries is not alien to him, the rising and falling and rising again of the endless energy around us is part of him in the union he has achieved with the Beauty of ancient days that is ever new.

Nor, when we have seen Rishthood in its cosmic aspect as well as in its transcendence, have we said the last word about it. There is still another aspect—the individual. Our universe is not merely the occult omnipresence of the Divine: it is also intended to be His manifestation. The immense unity and the immense multiplicity are pressing forward to express in the cosmic formula a divine life developing from the individual soul-spark, the flame of the personal godhead, which is enshrined in creatures and which one of the Upanishads rendered by Sri Aurobindo sums up with intuitive intensity: "The Purusha that is within is no larger than the finger of a man; he is like a blazing fire that is without smoke; he is lord of his past and his future; he alone is today and he alone shall be tomorrow." An intricate evolution focussing itself in individuals and proceeding through rebirths of the individual soul is worked out from a beginning and a base that appear to be the opposite of everything divine. The Rishi is he who under the figure of his personality develops to the utmost the secret psyche around which mind and life-force and body are organised: he brings it to the fore, envelops all his movements with its sublimities and its sweetnesses, enters with its pure radiance into intimate ennobling relation with fellow-creatures. Moreover, he aspires to make the psyche a repository of the Transcendent Truth from which it has come and which is ultimately meant to be manifested by it. For in that Truth is the archetype, the pre-existent perfection of all that is here evolving; and the descent of this archetype into the psyche so that the mind and life-force and body organised around the soul may themselves become not only instinct with the soul's purity but also charged with the plenary knowledge and power and bliss whose delegate is the soul. The individual aspect of Rishthood is perhaps the most important of all, since in it the Divine's creativity is at its most potent for world-values. More than by any mystic in the past a stress is put upon it by Sri Aurobindo.

### The Aurobindonian Message

He declares that Rishthood in former ages did not sufficiently realise the meaning of evolutionary spirituality. To throw an aureole about life's hours and suggest the personal Godhead through the human figure is not enough. A bound has been felt by all mystics, an irreducible imperfection in our members that compels us finally to drop them and look for the end of our soul's journey in a plane that is supra-terrestrial—a Vedantic Brahmhaloka, a Buddhist Nirvana, a Vaishnavite Gokul or Heaven. But how then shall we satisfy the hunger that every part of us has for its own perfection? A divine mind, a divine life-force, a divine body—these are what our nature cries for: unless they are achieved, the evolutionary travail of the soul has no complete justification. Sri Aurobindo affirms that in the Transcendence there is a dynamic Consciousness waiting to incarnate on earth the ideality, the perfection, of all the parts of our complex being. Ever since man awoke to his own incompleteness and to a superhuman Presence behind or within phenomena the dream of a divine earth has haunted him. He has sought the *elixir vitae* along a multitude of paths. Disappointment has met him wherever he has searched; for, the right mode of searching has never been found by him. Even his spiritual masters have told him that though the terrestrial plane can admit the paradisaic lustre he cannot hope for an integral manifestation of it. But now comes Sri Aurobindo and proclaims to us after nearly forty years of indomitable increasing experiment in mysticism that the earth-scene would never have been set by the Divine except for an integral display and manifestation of Himself and that, however strange it may seem to us, a divine mind and life-force and body are a miracle inevitable in the Yoga he is practising today and imparting to those who dwell in his Ashram.

It may not be possible for all of us to be Aurobindonian Yogis and share with him to whatever degree his integral Rishthood. But we can surely keep in contact with his harmonious being, draw to us the revealing vision that he commands, feel the direction of his fatherly hand in our day-to-day gropings, whether in private or national existence, for the right gesture, the right deed. Even without his Integral Yoga he would stand forth amongst men, a versatile genius with a mighty record as poet and thinker, politician and nation-builder, living synthesis of the cultures of the East and the West. With his unique Yoga he raises to the *n*th degree of inspiration all his creative powers and if men could consciously establish rapport with him they would lift themselves and their country to sterling greatness.

Broad and bright as the sun the message for India is written in the twofold momentousness that marks August 15.

K. D. S.

# THE TRUE FLAG FOR INDIA

The flutter of our flag on high is answered by a flutter of joy in every Indian heart. Our flag is the symbol of our fulfilment. It is intended to hold aloft in victory all that is most dear in our national life. With absolute devotion we stand under its happy flying sign, and wherever it beckons we are prepared to follow. But our love for it does not imply that the pattern it bears is completely satisfying. No matter what the pattern, it can count upon our allegiance. And yet we have the right to question whether those who have designed it have dipped their imagination sufficiently into the true heart of our land.

## The Flags that are Inspired

Only a few flags in the world seem to rise out of the depths of a nation's consciousness. The Union Jack is a true symbolic creation. When its lines are seen as running towards the centre, it finely expresses the meeting of many strands of race and culture that constitutes the being of England. And finely too the lines are shown as merged in the centre of a cross—emblem of the faith whose defender by title is the King. When they seem to run from the centre outwards they speak of the multi-directional, far-flung energy of the greatest empire-building country on earth. And the three colours—red, white and blue—which are present in the design utter the enterprising spirit, the ideal of Pax Britannica and the seafaring mood that have distinguished the history of England. An added appropriateness is in the blue colour serving as the background which bears the whole pattern; for it is the sea that more than anything else among material and visible influences has made England what she is.

The flag of France is equally true to the soul of that country. Here also are the three colours—blue, white and red. But they are put side by side, vertically, in a simple clear ordering. This ordering and that verticality are both typical of the French genius, logical yet visionary, enthusiast at once of "the Goddess of Reason" and Jeanne d'Arc. The three colours in this particular sequence are also symbolic of the modern France which came to birth with the Revolution. Blue gives the tint of liberty—it suggests the free spaces of the sky. White gives the tint of equality—the subdual of all shades of difference in a pure impartial light. Red gives the tint of fraternity—the warm blood of love and fellow-feeling and cordial communion.

The flag of the U.S.A. is another combination of the same colours in a significant scheme. The French ideals are also those of the United States, but with a different psychology. The United States is a continent as much as a country, it is full of diversity held together by a common spirit. The many white stars and the same single blue within which they are set are beautifully expressive of the various unified richness, no less than of the lofty dream of everlasting equality and never-ending liberty. The alternate white and red stripes in a long repetition voice too the association of the changing with the uniform, no less than a widespread desire for democracy and brotherhood. The lack of the red colour in the star-design and of the blue in the stripe-design and yet the presence of a common colour—the white—in both are a further symbolism of the multiple yet one race-entity that is the U.S.A. Here is also the symbolism of an insistent conviction that in spite of differences all men are equal.

Japan's flag is a fourth example of inspired creation. The scarlet sun spraying its rays around but most emphatically to the side away from the flag-pole, the outer side which signifies the rest of the world, is strikingly true to Japan's nature and activity. The sun is symbolic of the belief of the Japanese in being the heaven-born race, endowed with a high mission over the whole earth. And the sun as red light depicts the life-force thrilling at the same time with a bliss of beauty and a sense of all-conquering power: the predominant motives of the Japanese consciousness—the aesthetic and the martial motives—authentically shine out in the depiction.

In the red banner, with the hammer and sickle and star, the Soviet Union has impressively figured itself. The proletarian mood is evident in the hammer and sickle, but there is also evident the force that always beats down and the keenness that always cuts away—with an unchanging steely ruthlessness that has found its incarnation in a man like Stalin. The star is the creative touch of religious idealism that seems to have paradoxically and perversely become energetic irreligious materialism in the unspiritual and body-preoccupied faith and fervour filling the Marxist with a blind enthusiasm as if for a lofty cause that never should be questioned. The hammer, the sickle and the star are all of them yellow—meant to be felt as though charged with a power of enlightenment—but they are gripped, as it were, in a huge domineering uniform redness intense with a suggestion of intolerant and totalitarian violence whereby one fanatical all-merging class shall fight and destroy the opulent variety and diverse freedom of human mind and life.

## Our Flag is Constructed rather than Created

Turkey and Pakistan have less inspiration in their ensigns, but in the crescent and star upon a crimson background and the crescent and star upon a background that is green these countries give adequate though conventional voice to the Islamic spirit. Can we say even this much about India and her flag? No doubt, what we have designed is not without meaning; but it seems constructed rather than created. The three colours of green, white and saffron are said to represent generous production, balanced conservation and disciplined utilisation—processes implicit in the progress of a country. The wheel in the middle is said to urge by its round shape, blue colour and twenty-four spokes the perfect and equal running of these processes; the sea-wide and sky-wide—in short, universal—application of them to our life; their persistent day-in day-out all-the-year-round need and validity for national well-being. The wheel is declared also to be representative of the march of man towards a higher standard of living; it suggests the cart-wheel, the potter's wheel, the spinning wheel. All these interpretations have point; yet how little they strike one as bringing out the genius of India!

The flag appears to be an economist's vision, concerned with the outer life and its beneficial, its profitable ordering. Of course, the wheel comes from a pillar erected by Asoka and carries a religio-ethical association; we may, therefore, read in its message a strain of *satya*, *ahimsa* and *karuna*—truth, non-violence and pity. Still, the level of the vision is not much uplifted; rather, the religio-ethical association is pulled down for want of a genuine spiritual intuition irradiating it. Economics, however moralised and humanitarian, can hardly do justice to the destiny of India. Surely, India's *summum bonum* is not compassed by a vision of well ordered, peaceful and democratic outer life scrupulously achieved and vigilantly sustained. Even if we add more nuances of significance we do not bring out India's soul. For instance, we may say that the three combined colours stand for the unity of the main divisions into which the communities of the country fall—the Hindus who revere the sannyasi's saffron robe, the Muslims whose prophet favoured green, the Sikhs and Jains and Christians and Parsis who should get blended into a homogeneity like white which blends so many colours. Or else we make take green to be firmness and faith like the spontaneous clinging of green things to the soil, white to be probity and purity and harmlessness, saffron to be austerity and courage and sacrifice. And we may understand by the Asoka wheel the unerring and eternal law of karma which Buddha held to be the secret power in the interminable world-process. Even then the depths of India remain unexpressed.

## No Touch of the Mystical Realisation

There seems to be an attempt at embodying in the flag a thoroughly secular mood. No touch of the mystical realisation that lay at the sources of Indian history is allowed. The only sense in which India can be secular without ceasing to be herself—the rising above creed and caste into essential spirituality and the practising of spirituality with an eye turned not merely towards the Beyond but also towards the Here and Now—this sense is evidently overlooked. The inter-communal politico-religious tension of a particular period of our history has influenced overmuch the conception of our flag. And another exaggerated influence is the viewing of India in terms of the worker, the labourer, the poor toiling majority: naturally such terms bring the economic values to the fore and make us see our country's fulfilment in the right production, conservation and utilisation of outward life-resources. The choice of that Buddhist emblem, the Asoka wheel, is in keeping with both the secular mood and the labourer-emphasis. For, in the first place, Buddhism, by its denial of either a personal Godhead or a persistent soul and its refusal of metaphysical exploration and its insistence on a purely psychological approach to self-perfection, functions with a sort of agnostic spirituality, a negative mysticism, and appears to do away with religion while accepting morality. In the second place, it aims at being a rule of life for the common majority, it purports to offer a mystery-less religion, a non-esoteric revelation which all can accept. In the third place, it puts a premium on poverty and service and encourages a levelling down of social distinctions to a classless primitiveness. Buddhism is in tune also with the virtues underlined by Gandhiji whose personality powerfully colours the thought of our leaders—the virtues of non-violence and humanitarian fellow-feeling. The Asoka wheel is, therefore, considered most appropriate as an emblem of the Indian consciousness. But it is blissfully forgotten that the heart and core of Buddhism is none of these aspects of Buddha's message but the all-annulling all-transcending experience of Nirvana, an experience which throws away the entire universe as a trifle or an illusion, an experience intensely and immensely other-worldly and hence the absolute opposite of everything secular, everything connected with the outer life of mankind at large. It is also forgotten that Nirvana is so much above the head of the common man and so difficult of

## The True Flag For India—Continued from previous page

attainment that mankind at large can never have anything to do with it. Buddhism, in a very important sense, is as little democratic as it is secular.

### The Nature of the Indian Genius

It is, moreover, not fully in consonance with the Indian genius. That is why it is as good as defunct in the land of its birth. The genius of India can never be satisfied with a sort of agnostic spirituality and negative mysticism; nor with an endeavour at dissolving the variety and diversity of her mental and physical existence; nor, again, with setting at a discount the urge to realise a dynamic divinity, a spiritual and mystical light turned towards the flowering of noble and beautiful world-values. Non-violence and humanitarianism are also not the last word of the Indian ethical mind: a manifestation of God in humanity is the main ideal. Humanity is not a supreme value in itself, and non-violence and compassionate fellow-feeling are fine virtues but they are not the utter goal of the ethical life, the utter goal being nothing else than a general avatarhood, so to speak, which acts according to a spiritual and mystical truth within and which can even appear at times to be violent and ruthless, just as Sri Krishna appeared on the battlefield of Kurukshetra where humanity stood divided into an army of the Divine and an army of the Diabolic. Further, the Indian genius is not democratic in the superficial modern manner. The whole world is indeed to be embraced by the individual's consciousness and the good of mankind at large has indeed to be worked for by every member of organised society; but the foundation of this democracy is in realising the God who is the One Superhuman in all that is human, and ever to this high, rare, extraordinary realisation the common mind is to be called, and each altruistic action must spring from that luminously aristocratic experience. The true Indian democracy, therefore, must lay stress not on the mere common man, not on mankind as it is in the majority: it must lay stress on the man of God, the Saint and the Seer, mankind as it is in the finest few and as in the majority it ought to be.

In the light of the above considerations we cannot help feeling that the true flag of India is yet to be found. This does not mean we should fail to respect and love the ensign we have before us. The ensign is set up with the purpose of drawing our thoughts to the wonderful being of our country and when we lift our eyes to its flight above our heads we look not so much at its pattern as at its general figuration of the triumphant spirit of our motherland. "Jai Hind" or "Vande Mataram" is what our hearts cry out, and through the green and white and saffron and through the Asoka wheel we move really towards that spirit. For the sake of that spirit which the flag-makers sought to catch and keep like a beacon for the Indian multitudes, we must always give the most fervent response of patriotism even though the pattern may be inadequate to our country's inner greatness. But the flow of our devotion must not drown the fact that extremely desirable is a pattern with deeper significances, with more inspiration from the soul of this country whose life-breath has been the Divine and the Infinite.

### What the True Flag of India Should Be

Luckily, in our opinion, we do not have to cast about for the right pattern: we already possess it in the symbolisation made of India's spiritual mission by the greatest spiritual figure we have amongst us. The symbolisation by Sri Aurobindo uses a simple yet subtle combination of the three colours that we associate most with the overarching heavens—blue, silver and gold. It uses also the most beautiful and ancient Indian emblem of divine revelation, the lotus, but with a stylisation of it into a circle to create the impression of fullness and completeness; and there is a further packing of significances by making this circle concentric with two others within it of different dimensions, the innermost circle having nothing inside it while the middle has four divisions like petals and the outermost has twelve petallic divisions. Golden—suggestive of luminous sovereignty—against a background of silvery blue is the lotus here. The Seed-Shakti of the Divine Mother, creatrix of all, is pictured by the small centre in which all things seem to be held secretly concentrated. Out of this, four primary creative powers are shown as breaking: these are Maheshwari, Mahakali, Mahalakshmi, Mahasaraswati—goddess-personalities of wisdom, puissance, harmonious beauty, flawless organisation. These personalities are then depicted as putting forth twelve manifesting powers that work within the periodic time-process. The supreme infinity that is the all-containing and all-supporting Spiritual Self, the foundational mystery from which the Divine's creative and manifesting marvel stands out, is the background of silvery blue, in the centre of which the three-tiered lotus is placed. This silvery blue background is a square piece, each side of the square bearing to the diameter of the lotus the ratio of 6:12:5. This ratio gives the right balance: the four equal sides suggest a perfection of being, an omni-competence for a world-structure that can face and meet all demands.

Here is a flag charged with India's authentic mission, the mission of rendering victorious the Divine Mother, the Infinite Self and Shakti. In this flag we have the suggestion not only of a sky with an ethereal lotus poised in it, but also of a stretch of water with an earthly lotus afloat. The ever-existing ideality above and the secret wonder that is to be revealed below are both compassed in a satisfying symbolism. The full-blown circular lotus with two rows of petals seems to be the true inspired emblem which was hovering, so to speak, in the nation's inner mind but which through an insufficiently receptive imagination our leaders miscaught as Asoka's wheel. Here too is a wheel-like design, but suffused with a superb meaning attuned to the Rig-Veda which is hidden in the heart of man and which the Indian consciousness has heard down the ages. Foremost here of all suggestions by the wheel-like design is the Presence of God as intuited by our country's Seers and Saints—the Presence of God within a lotus-chakra that is the centre of a luminous life on every level of the profound recesses of our subliminal and supraliminal being. In the colours, too, though we may see several implications pertaining to our outer existence, the master implication by virtue of this particular pattern remains the Infinite and the Divine.

In Sri Aurobindo's flag of Mother India and her spiritual mission we have also the promise of India's unity. For, the genuine indefeasible unity can come only of a sense in all men of the one God within, the God in whom alone are eternal liberty, equality and fraternity, the three grandest ideals that a country can pursue, the sole ideals that can make one harmonious country of all the countries constituting the world. If India wishes to be great by fulfilling her true genius and if she wishes to be the missionary of a world-union, no flag but this can ever be the symbol of her victorious emergence as an independent nation.

K. D. S.

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## SALUTATION TO SRI AUROBINDO POET AND PRIEST OF INTEGRAL FREEDOM

We salute you, Sri Aurobindo, Poet and Prophet of Integral Freedom. Yours was the first clarion-call of awakening that shook the somnolent skies of India. Sri Aurobindo, we salute you.

You made the mantra of "Vandemataram" vibrate in the very cells of the country and baptised the nation in the fire of Mother-worship. Sri Aurobindo, we salute you.

You proclaimed out of the pregnant hush of your spiritual life that India is rising not for herself but for humanity and that the Light she holds in herself is the Light which shall illumine the world. Sri Aurobindo, we salute you.

You have evolved out of your own unique spiritual experiences and the experiences of the past the Integral Yoga for the integral being of man and promised to him an integral union with the Divine. Sri Aurobindo, we salute you.

Your Supramental Light has dissipated the mists of illusionism and escapism and vouchsafed to mankind the glorious ideal of the Life Divine upon earth. Sri Aurobindo, we salute you.

You have affirmed the ideal of human unity and paved the way for its fulfilment. Humanity shall live, as the supreme gods live, in perfect unity and harmony and peace—this is your message of God's decree. Sri Aurobindo, we salute you.

You have given us the certitude of an integral freedom—freedom of the soul and freedom of nature, to which the political freedom of the country is but a prelude and a preliminary. Sri Aurobindo, Poet and Priest of the Integral Freedom, we salute you!

RISHABHCHAND.

# ★ POEMS OF HOMAGE ★

## On the occasion of Sri Aurobindo's Seventy-seventh Birthday on August 15

### O Lone Emperor . . .

O lone Emperor of the deathless Inane,  
Enthroned on thy golden altitudes,  
Eyeing the blind march of fallen earth  
Through the wayless gulf of time! . . .  
Grey flickers of prayer-flame uplift  
To the untremored sky's indifference  
And the masked gloom-titans of the abyss  
Who await, with chaos, to deluge the world . . .  
Descend, a diamond scimitar of the Supreme,  
Lord of unchecked continents of power,  
Unleashing all thy ivory steeds of light  
And the overwhelming majesty of thy eagle-mind,  
A lightning-blaze of undaunted master-will,  
To smite the veiled giant of the dark  
And burn the all-pervading seed of death  
And awaken the nocturnal cliffs of sleep  
And release man's yearning for the vast.  
O thou limitless conqueror and king,  
Reveal the apocalypse of thy visage-sun!

ROMEN

### India's Sacrificial Fire . . .

India's sacrificial fire  
In your high self has found its shrine:  
The moveless brow of the universe  
Implores your signature divine.

Earth's fuel of blood upflamed in you  
Nevermore to be quenched again  
And its light soared higher day by day  
Which gods from out the blue sustain.

In this dim land you came to pave  
The swift white path to liberty  
And the world its freedom shall attain  
And kiss your feet in ecstasy.

The past dawns never trammelled your feet  
Nor halted your march to the Future's noon,  
And the whirl of Shiva's delivering dance  
Imparts its rhythm to you alone.

Dauntless breaker of outworn moulds!  
You slay the night like a sword of morn:  
To raze tradition's mountain-walls  
You, blaze of sun, to us were born:

An emblem of the heavenly dare,  
A wielder of thunder none could tame:  
The darkening maws of Fate's abysm  
Were closed in fear when you, Lord, came.

O ocean of glow, life's fiery flood!  
How shall Time's prison encincture you  
To whom the cell was a trysting-place,  
Where Krishna came your soul to woo!

Through Time you won to Timelessness  
And temples flashed where dungeons fell  
And there upheaved hearts' hymns as you  
Burnt aeoned glooms of tyrant Hell.

Hark, conchs are loud and light's in spate—  
Behold, upon our soil of pain  
The King of Kings descends at last  
With the Queen of Queens for ever to reign!

O Ind, whose destiny's leader is hailed  
As the Leader of the universe!  
Thy dust we hug and bring to the Twain  
Our radiant homage a gleam with stars . . . . .

NISHIKANTO

Translated by Dilip Kumar Roy from the Bengali

### Thy Countrymen Bow to Thee . . .

Thy countrymen, O Soul's warrior, bow to thee,  
O Sage, who camest our despot gloom to reclaim  
With thy flame-mantra of Light and Liberty,  
Kindled by the prowess of Sun no cloud could tame.

We know: the globe-wide darkness will dislimn  
Since thou art come with thy New Dawn's guarantee,  
If we disown our fear and sing the hymn  
To the Spirit which through thy self burns radiantly.

O Poet of Ind who chantest like a King of kings:  
"Over earth's shadows and Time's fool interludes  
And life's frustrations and destiny's fatal flings  
An Inviolable Being of deep compassion broods.

"The powers of hate and chains of lust and pride  
And the ego's demon sway and Falsehood's lures,  
Entailing the lunacy of suicide,  
Are phantoms: only the love of God endures

"Who never has forsaken the land of Ind  
But leans evermore her holy dust to bless  
With His all-transfiguring touch, and humankind  
Shall wake once more to the thrill of His caress."

If we had but faith in Immortality  
Thy voice would waft us echoes from the heights,  
Whose luminous Grace, thy swift epiphany,  
Spurred us to freedom and then to fierier flights.

DILIP KUMAR ROY

### Majesty Dawns Across the Skies

Majesty dawns across the skies,  
Suns of Truth invade our night—  
Over the curve of darkness flies  
Regulus, star of golden light.  
Trance-held on horizons of Time  
Inviolable gods aid now The Birth,  
Heaven is silent, not a chime  
Awakes the sleepiness of earth;  
Even the birds are silent now  
Under the magic spell of Dawn—  
Reflected on His mighty brow  
Radha's kiss to earth is born.  
Dawn the golden mantle wearer  
Opens worlds of Light and Bliss.  
Inly and forever nearer  
Bounds the Sun-god's fiery kiss:  
Vision of beauty, of rapture, of love!  
Into Thy arms earth's spirit flies,  
Into Thy Light that shines above  
Nature stands captured in the skies.  
Night is banished, Nescience slain!  
Dawn proclaims Her victory—  
Eternity rules our lives again:  
O King, O Queen of Divinity!\*

NORMAN DOWSETT.

\* The first letters of alternate lines, from the first, spell MOTHER DIVINE; those of alternate lines, from the second, spell SRI AUROBINDO.

# THE INDIAN SPIRITUAL IDEAL AND ITS APPLICATION TO LIFE

BY SRI AUROBINDO

Here, within a short compass, is a clear and complete survey of the fundamental temper and motive of Indian culture in their effective relation to the work of building a full and manifold life in the world. Indian spirituality, not only leading with a careful gradation the deep soul in man, but also subtly pervading, organically governing, variously evolving into its own high and wide consciousness and power his rational, ethical, aesthetic, hedonistic, social and political endeavour and thereby fulfilling that whole endeavour—this is admirably shown by Sri Aurobindo. Sri Aurobindo is eminently fitted to give the Indian nation an inspired lead, because the grip of his genius is both on life's inner springs and its outer manifestations. In the following essay which is part of a "Defence" made some years ago in his monthly, ARYA, in reply to an attack, by a foreign writer, on India's culture, we have the broad lines and significant pointers of a vision which is our vital need in the dawn of our Independence.

Indian culture recognises the Spirit as the truth of our being and our life as a growth and evolution of the Spirit in man. It sees God as the Supreme and as the All and it sees man as a soul and power of the being of God in Nature. The progressive growth of man into Self, into God, into spiritual existence by the development of our natural into our divine being is for Indian thinking the significance of life and the aim of human existence. That deeper and more spiritual idea of Nature and of existence is, I may add, though stated in however new and modern a language, the thing towards which a great deal of what is strongest and most potential of fruitful development in recent European thinking already turns with a growing impetus. Whether this turn is a relapse to "barbarism" or the high natural outcome of her own increasing and ripened culture is for Europe to decide; but always to India that idea of Self, God, Spirit and the moulding of man into that have been the fundamental power of her philosophy, religion, civilisation. The formal turn and the rhythmic lines of effort of this culture have grown through two complete external stages. The first was the early Vedic in which religion took its formal stand on the natural approach of the physical mind of man to the Godhead in the universe, but the initiates guarded the sacrificial fire of a greater spiritual truth behind the form of outward religious worship and conception. The second was the Purano-Tantric in which religion took its outward stand on the deeper approach of man's psycho-physical mind to the Divine in the universe, but a greater initiation opened the way to the most intimate truth and living of the spiritual life in all its profundity and infinite possibility of uttermost sublime experience. A third stage has been long in preparation, its idea often cast out in limited or large, quiet or striking spiritual movements and potent new disciplines and religions, but not successful yet, because the circumstances were adverse and the hour not come, which will call the community of men to live in the greatest light of all and to found their whole life on some fully revealed power and grand uplifting truth of the Spirit. Not until that third enlarging movement has come into its own,—a thing not so easy as the religious reformer, the purist of the reason or the purist of the spirit constantly imagines and by that too hasty imagination falls short in his endeavour, can Indian civilisation be said to have discharged its mission, to have spoken its last word and be fully *functus officio*, crowned and complete in its office of mediation between the life of man and the Spirit.

## Twofold Association of the Natural with the Spiritual

The past dealings of Indian religion with life must be more particularly judged according to the stages of its progress and in each age of its movement on its own basis. But throughout it has consistently held to two perceptions of great wisdom. First, it saw that the approach to the Spirit cannot be sudden, simple and immediate for all individuals or for the community of men, but must come ordinarily or at least at first through a progressive training, an enlarging of the natural life accompanied by an uplifting of all its motives, a growing hold upon it of the higher rational, psychical and ethical leading up to the highest spiritual law. But it saw too at the same time that in order that its greater aim might be fruitful and the character of its culture imperative, there must throughout and at every moment be some kind of insistence on the spiritual motive, which for the mass of men means some kind of religious influence. That was necessary in order that from the beginning some power of the universal inner truth, the real truth of our existence might cast its light or at least its sensible if subtle influence on the natural life of man and lead it to flower naturally, but at the same time with a wise nurturing and cultivation, into its own profounder spiritual significance. Therefore Indian culture has worked always by two co-ordinated, mutually stimulating and always interblended operations. First, it has laboured to lead upward the enlarging life of the individual and the community through the natural to the spiritual existence, and, secondly, it has striven to keep that highest aim before the mind and throw its influence on each circumstance and action of the human being.

In the plan of the first aim it comes nearer to the highest ancient

culture of mankind in other regions, though in a type and with a motive all its own. The frame of it was the synthesis and gradation of the fourfold object of life,—desire and enjoyment, interest, right and law, spiritual liberation,—the fourfold order of society with its economical functions and cultural, ethical and spiritual significances, and the fourfold scale and succession of the stages of life: student, householder, forest recluse and free super-social man. This frame, these lines of a noble training subsided in their purity, their fine effectiveness, their grand natural balance of austerity and accommodation, only during the later Vedic and heroic age of the civilisation. But the tradition, the idea, some large effect of the power and some figure of its lines endured throughout the whole period of cultural vigour, however deflected they might have been, however mutilated and complicated for the worse; only in the decline do we get the slow collapse, the degraded and confused mass of conventions which still labours to call itself, but in spite of relics of glamour and beauty, survivals of spiritual suggestion, a residue of the old high training, is far from being the ancient and noble Aryan system. But the turn of the other more direct spiritual operation is of a still greater importance, because it is that which, always surviving, has coloured permanently the Indian mind and life and remained the same, behind whatever change of forms, throughout all the ages of the civilisation.

This second side of the cultural effort, its direct spiritual operation, took the form of an endeavour to cast the whole of life into a religious mould and to multiply means and devices which would help by their insistent suggestion and opportunity and their mass of effect to stamp a Godward tendency on the entire existence. Indian culture founded itself on a constant religious conception of life which the individual and the community drank in at every moment by the training and turn of the education, by the atmosphere and social surroundings and by the whole original form and hieratic character of the culture. They felt the near idea of the spiritual existence as the highest ideal, bore always the pressure of the notion of the universe as a manifestation of divine Powers and a movement full of the presence of the Divine, of man himself as a soul in constant relation with God and these divine cosmic Powers, the continued existence of the soul as a pilgrimage and evolution from birth to birth, the human life as a summit of the evolution, every stage of that life as a step in the pilgrimage and every single action as having its importance of fruit whether in future lives or in the worlds beyond the material existence. But Indian religion was not content with the general pressure of these conceptions, with a training, with an atmosphere, with a stamp on the culture. Its persistent effort was to impress the mind at every moment and in each particularity with the religious influence. To do this the more effectively and by a living and practical adaptation, it took its idea of the varying natural capacity of man, *adhikara*, and provided in its system means by which each man high and low, wise and ignorant, exceptional and average might feel in the way suitable to his nature and stage of development this pressure and influence and be allured and helped to grow in his religious and spiritual being.

Besides, each part of the human nature and its characteristic turn of action was given a place in the system, surrounded with the spiritual idea and religious influence and provided with steps by which it might rise towards its own spiritual possibility and meaning. And finally, the highest spiritual significance of life was not only set on the summits of each evolving power of the human nature but put everywhere indicatively or in symbols behind the whole system so that its impression might fall in whatever degree on the life and, as far as possible, increase in pervasion and take up the entire culture of the being. This was the aim and to a great extent, considering always the imperfections of our nature and the difficulty of the endeavour, it achieved an unusual measure of success. It has been said that for the Indian the whole of life is a religion. That was true of the ideal and to a certain degree and in a certain sense in the fact and practice; for no step could he take in his inner or outer life without being reminded of a spiritual



## THE INDIAN SPIRITUAL IDEAL—Continued from previous page

existence, of something beyond the moment in time, beyond his individual ego, exceeding the needs and interests of his vital and physical being. That gave its tone and turn to his thought and action and produced the subtler sensitiveness to the spiritual appeal and the greater readiness to turn to the spiritual effort which are even now distinguishing marks of the Indian temperament. That readiness is in fact what we mean by the spirituality of the Indian people.

### Provision for Differing Capacity and Nature

The idea of the *adhikara* has to be taken into careful account if we would understand the peculiar character of Indian religion. In most other religious systems we get a high-pitched spiritual call and a difficult ethical standard which is made imperative on all, but to which very evidently only the very few are able to give an adequate response. There are presented to our view as our whole picture of life the extremes of the saint and the worldling, the religious and irreligious, good and bad, souls accepted and souls rejected, the sheep and the goats, the saved and the damned: all between is a confusion, a tug of war or an uncertain balance. This too crude and summary classification is the foundation of the Christian system of an eternal heaven and hell,—though the Catholic religion more humanely interposed a precarious chance of purgatory between that happy and this dread alternative. But Indian religion did not go about its work in that summary fashion. Rather all human beings are portions of the Divine, evolving souls, and sure of an eventual salvation by knowledge, love or works, and all must feel, as the good in them grows, the ultimate touch and call of their highest Self, Spirit, Divinity. But actually in life there can be drawn a general distinction, not to be ignored, between three principal types which vary in their openness to the religious or spiritual appeal, influence or impulse. And practically this distinction may be said to come to a gradation of three stages of the growing human consciousness—one crude, ill-formed, still outward, still vitally and physically minded; another which is more developed and capable of a stronger and deeper psycho-spiritual experience, a riper make of manhood gifted with a more conscious rational, aesthetic and ethical power of the nature; a third, the most developed of all, is ready for full spirituality, fit to receive the pure highest truth of God and of man's being and to tread the summits of divine experience\*. To meet the need of the first type or level was provided all that suggestive mass of ceremony, ritual, strict outward rule and injunction, all that pageant of attracting and compelling symbol with which Indian religion is so richly and profusely equipped, forming and indicative things which work upon the mind consciently and subconsciently and prepare it for an entry into the significance of the greater things that lie behind them. And for him too, for the vitally minded being, is all in the religion that calls on man to turn to a divine Power or powers for the satisfaction of his desires and his interests, but subject to the right and law, the Dharma. For him in the Vedic times the outward ritual sacrifice and at a later period all the religious forms and notions that clustered visibly around the rites and imagery of temple worship, festival and ceremony. These things seem to the developed mind to belong to an ignorant or a half awakened, half ignorant religionism, but they have their truth, their psychic value and are indispensable to this stage of the development of the human being.

The second stage or type starts from these things, but gets behind them and is capable of understanding more clearly and consciently the psychical truths, conceptions of the intelligence, the aesthetic indications, the ethical values and directions which Indian religion took care to place behind its symbols and vivify with them the outward forms of its system. This nobler type can go inward to a more deeply psycho-religious experience, grapple with the difficulties of the relations between the spirit and life, satisfy the rational, aesthetic and ethical nature, lead them upward towards their own highest heights and train the soul and the mind for the full spiritual existence. This ascending type of humanity claims all that large and opulent middle region of philosophic, psycho-spiritual, ethical, aesthetic and emotional religious seeking which is the larger, more significant portion of the wealth of Indian culture. At this stage intervene the philosophical systems, the subtle illumining debates and inquiries of the thinkers, the nobler reaches of devotion, the higher, ampler, austerer ideals of the Dharma, the psychical suggestions and urgings in the religion which draw men by their appeal and promise towards the practice of Yoga. But all these things opened and climbed to the luminous grandeurs of spiritual truth and its practice was kept ready and its means of attainment provided for the third and greatest type of human being, the third loftiest stage of the spiritual evolution. The complete light of spiritual knowledge when it emerges from veil and compromise and goes beyond all symbols and middle significances, the absolute and universal divine love, the beauty of the All-beautiful, the noblest dharma of unity with all beings, universal compassion and benevolence calm and sweet in the perfect purity of the Spirit, the upsurge of the psychical being into the spiritual unity or the spiritual ecstasy, these divinest things were the heritage of the human being ready for divinity and their way and call were the supreme significances of Indian religion, and

\* The Tantric distinction is the animal man, the hero man, the divine man, *pashu*, *vira*, *deva*. It may also be graded according to the three *gunas*, the tamasic or rajaso-tamasic, the rajasic or sattwo-rajasic, and the sattwic man ready to complete and transcend the scale.

yoga. He reached by them the fruits of his perfect spiritual evolution, an identity with the Self and Spirit, a dwelling in or with God, the divine law of his being, a spiritual universality, communion, transcendence.

But distinctions are lines that can always be overpassed in the infinite complexity of man's nature and there was no sharp and unbridgeable division, only a gradation, since the actuality or potentiality of the three powers co-exist in all men. Both the middle and the highest significances were near and present and pervaded the whole system, and the approaches to the highest status were not absolutely denied to any man, in spite of certain prohibitions; but these prohibitions broke down in practice or left a way of escape to the man who felt the call; the call itself was a sign of election. He had only to find the way and the guide. But even in the direct approach the principle of *adhikara*, differing capacity and varying nature, *swabhava*, was recognised in subtle ways, which it would be beyond my present purpose to enumerate. One may note as an example the significant Indian idea of the *ishta-devata*, the special name, form, idea of the Divinity which each man may choose for worship and communion and follow after according to the attraction in his nature and his capacity of spiritual intelligence. And each of the forms has its outer initial associations and suggestions for the worshipper, its appeal to the intelligence, psychical, aesthetic, emotional power in the nature and its highest spiritual significance which leads through some one truth of the Godhead into the practice of Yoga. The disciple has to be led through his nature and according to his capacity and the spiritual teacher and guide is expected to perceive and take account of the necessary gradations and the individual need and power in his giving of help and guidance. Many things may be objected to in the actual working of this large and flexible system. But the principle of it and the main lines of the application embody a remarkable wisdom, knowledge and careful observation of human nature and an assured insight into the things of the spirit which none can question who has considered deeply and flexibly these difficult matters or had any close experience of the obstacles and potentialities of our nature in its approach to the concealed spiritual reality.

### Attention to the Scientific and Philosophical Spirit

This carefully graded and complex system of religious development and spiritual evolution was linked on by a process of pervading intimate connection to that general culture of the life of the human being and his powers which must be the first care of every civilisation worth the name. The most delicate and difficult part of this task of human development is concerned with the thinking being of man, his mind of reason and knowledge. No ancient culture of which we have knowledge, not even the Greek, attached more importance to it or spent more effort on its cultivation. The business of the ancient Rishi was not only to know God, but to know the world and life and to reduce it by knowledge to a thing well understood and mastered with which the reason and will of man could deal on assured lines and on a safe basis of wise method and order. The ripe result of this effort was the Shastra. When we speak of the Shastra nowadays, we mean too often only the religio-social system of injunctions of the middle age made sacrosanct by their mythical attribution to Manu, Parasara and other Vedic sages. But in older India the Shastra meant any systematised teaching and science; each department of life, each line of activity, each subject of knowledge had its science or Shastra. The attempt was to reduce each to a theoretical and practical order founded on detailed observation, just generalisation, full experience, intuitive, logical and experimental analysis and synthesis, in order to enable man to know always with a just fruitfulness for life and to act with the security of right knowledge. The smallest and the greatest things were examined with equal care and attention and each provided with its art and science. The name was given even to the highest spiritual knowledge as in the Upanishads, but for intellectual comprehension in system and order,—and in that sense the Gita is able to call its profound spiritual teaching the most secret science, *guhya-tamamsastram*. This high scientific and philosophical spirit was carried by the ancient Indian culture into all its activities. No Indian religion is complete without its outward form of preparatory practice, its supporting philosophy and its Yoga or system of inward practice or art of spiritual living: most even of what seems irrational in it to a first glance has its philosophical turn and significance. It is this complete understanding and philosophical character which has given religion in India its durable security and immense vitality and enabled it to resist the acid dissolvent power of modern sceptical inquiry; whatever is ill-founded in experience and reason, that power can dissolve, but not the heart and mind of these great teachings. But what we have more especially to observe is that while Indian culture made a distinction between the lower and the higher learning, the knowledge of things and the knowledge of Self, it did not put a gulf between them like some religions, but considered the knowledge of the world and things as a preparatory and a leading up to the knowledge of Self and God. All Shastra was put under the sanction of the name of the Rishis, who were in the beginning the teachers not only of spiritual truth and philosophy,—and we may note that all Indian philosophy, even the logic of Nyaya and the atomic theory of the Vaisheshikas, has for its highest crowning note and eventual object spiritual knowledge and liberation—but of the arts, the social, political and military, the physical and

## THE INDIAN SPIRITUAL IDEAL—Continued from previous page

psychic sciences, and every instructor was in his degree respected as a *guru* or *acharya*, a guide or preceptor of the human spirit. All knowledge was woven into one and led up by degrees to the one highest knowledge.

### Development of the Ethical Life

The whole right practice of life founded on this knowledge was in the view of Indian culture a Dharma, a living according to a just, understanding and right view of self-culture, of the knowledge of things and life and of action in that knowledge. Thus each man and class and kind and species and each activity of soul, mind, life, body has its Dharma. But the largest or at least most vitally important part of the Dharma was held to be the culture and ordering of the ethical nature of man. The ethical aspect of life, contrary to the amazingly ignorant observation of a certain type of critics, attracted a quite enormous amount of attention, occupied the greater part of Indian thought and writing not devoted to the things of pure knowledge and of the Spirit and was so far pushed that there is no ethical formation or ideal which does not reach in it its highest conception and a certain divine absolutism of ideal practice. Indian thought took for granted,—though there are some remarkable speculations to the contrary,—the ethical nature of man and the ethical law of the world. It considered that man was justified in satisfying his desires, since that is necessary for the satisfaction and expansion of life, but not in obeying the dictates of desire as the law of his being; for in all things there is a greater law, each has not only its side of interest and desire, but its dharma or rule of right practice, satisfaction, expansion, regulation. The Dharma, then, fixed by the wise in the Shashtra is the right thing to observe, the true rule of action.

First in the web of Dharma comes the social law; for man's life is only initially for his vital, personal individual self, but much more imperatively for the community, though most imperatively of all for the greatest Self one in himself and in all beings, for God, for the Spirit. Therefore first the individual must subordinate himself to the communal self, though by no means bound altogether to efface himself in it as the extremists of the communal idea imagine. He must live according to the law of his nature harmonised with the law of his social type and class, for the nation and in a higher reach of his being—this was greatly stressed by the Buddhists—for humanity. Thus living and acting he could learn to transcend the social scale of the Dharma, practise without injuring the basis of life the ideal scale and finally grow into the liberty of the Spirit, when rule and duty were not binding because he would then move and act in a highest free and immortal dharma of the divine nature. All these aspects of the Dharma were closely linked up together in a progressive unity. Thus, for an example, each of the four orders had its own social function and ethics, but also an ideal rule for the growth of the pure ethical being, and every man by observing his dharma and turning his action Godwards could grow out of it into the spiritual freedom. But behind all dharma and ethics was put, not only as a safeguard but as a light, a religious sanction, a reminder of the continuity of life and of man's long pilgrimage through many births, a reminder of the Gods and planes beyond and of the Divine, and above it all the vision of a last stage of perfect comprehension and unity and of divine transcendence.

### Recognition of the Aesthetic and Hedonistic Being

The system of Indian ethics liberalised by the catholicity of the ancient mind did not ban or violently discourage the aesthetic or even the hedonistic being of man in spite of a growing ascetic tendency and a certain high austerity of the summits. The aesthetic satisfactions of all kinds and all grades were an important part of the culture. Poetry, the drama, song, dance, music, the greater and lesser arts were placed under the sanction of the Rishis and were made instruments of the Spirit's culture. A just theory held them to be initially the means of a pure aesthetic satisfaction and each was founded on its own basic rule and law, but on that basis and with a perfect fidelity to it still raised up to minister to the intellectual, ethical and religious development of the being. It is notable that the two vast Indian epics have been considered as much Dharma-shastras as great historico-mythic epic narratives, *itihayas*. They are, that is to say, noble, vivid and puissant pictures of life, but they utter and breathe throughout their course the law and ideal of a great and high ethical and religious spirit in life and aim in their highest intention at the idea of the Divine and the way of the mounting soul in the action of the world. Indian painting, sculpture and architecture did not refuse service to the aesthetic satisfaction and interpretation of the social, civic and individual life of the human being; these things, as all evidences show, played a great part in their motives of creation, but still their highest work was reserved for the greatest spiritual side of the culture, and throughout we see them seized and suffused with the brooding stress of the Indian mind on the soul, the Godhead, the spiritual, the Infinite. And we have to note too that the aesthetic and hedonistic being was made not only an aid to religion and spirituality and liberally used for that purpose, but even one of the main gates of man's approach to the Spirit. The Vaishnava religion especially is a religion of love and beauty and of the satisfaction of the whole delight-soul of man in

God and even the desires and images of the sensuous life were turned by the vision into figures of a divine soul-experience. Few religions have gone so far as this immense catholicity or carried the whole nature so high in its large puissant and many-sided approach to the spiritual and the infinite.

### Organisation of the Outer Life

Finally, there is the most outwardly vital life of man, his ordinary dynamic, political, economical and social being. This too Indian culture took strenuously in hand and subjected its whole body to the pressure of its own ideals and conceptions. Its method was to build up great shastras of social living, duty and enjoyment, military and political rule and conduct and economical being. These were directed on one side to success, expansion, opulence and the right art and relation of these activities, but on those motives, demanded by the very nature of the vital man and his action, was imposed the law of the Dharma, a stringent social and ethical ideal and rule—thus the whole life of the king as the head of power and responsibility was regulated by it in its every hour and function,—and the constant reminder of religious duty. In later times a Machiavellian principle of statecraft, that which has been always and is still pursued by most governments and diplomats, encroached on this nobler system, but in the best age of Indian thought this depravation was condemned as a temporarily effective, but lesser, ignoble and inferior way of policy. The great rule of the culture was that the higher a man's position and power, the larger the scope of his function and influence of his acts and example, the greater should be the call on him of the Dharma. The whole law and custom of society was placed under the sanction of the Rishis and the gods, protected from the violence of the great and powerful, given a socio-religious character and the king himself charged to live and rule as the guardian and servant of the Dharma with only an executive power over the community which was valid so long as he observed with fidelity the Law. And as this vital aspect of life is the one which most easily draws us outward and away from the inner self and the diviner aim of living, it was the most strenuously linked up at every point with the religious idea in the way the vital man can best understand, in the Vedic times by the constant reminder of the sacrifice behind every social and civic act, at a later period by religious rites, ceremonies, worship, the calling in of the gods, the insistence on the subsequent results or a supraterrrestrial aim of works. So great was this preoccupation, that while in the spiritual and intellectual and other spheres a considerable or a complete liberty was allowed to speculation, action, creation, here the tendency was to impose a rigorous law and authority, a tendency which in the end became greatly exaggerated and prevented the expansion of the society into new forms more suitable for the need of the spirit of the age, the *Jugadharmas*. A door of liberty was opened to the community by the provision of an automatic permission to changed custom and to the individual in the adoption of the religious life with its own higher discipline of freedom outside the ordinary social web of binding rule and injunction. A rigid observation and discipline of the social law, a larger nobler discipline and freer self-culture of the ideal side of the Dharma, a wide freedom of the religious and spiritual life became the three powers of the system. The steps of the expanding human spirit mounted through these powers to its perfection.

### Final and Complete Fulfilment

Thus the whole general character of the application of Indian ideals to life became throughout of this one texture, the constant, subtly graded, subtly harmonised preparation of the soul of man for its spiritual being. First, the regulated satisfaction of the primary natural being of man subjected to the law of the Dharma and the ethical idea and besieged at every moment by the suggestions of religion, a religion at first appealing to his more outward undeveloped mind, but in each of its outward symbols and circumstances opening to a profounder significance, armed with the indication of a profoundest spiritual and ideal meaning as its justification. Then, the higher steps of the developed reason and psychical, ethical and aesthetic powers closely interwoven and raised by a similar opening beyond themselves to their own heights of spiritual direction and potentiality. Finally, each of these growing powers was made on its own line of approach a gateway into his divine and spiritual being. Thus we may observe that there was created a Yoga of knowledge for the self-exceeding of the thinking intellectual man, a yoga of works for the self-exceeding of the active, dynamic and ethical man, a Yoga of love and bhakti for the self-exceeding of the emotional, aesthetic, hedonistic man, by which each arrived to perfection through a Self-ward, spiritual, God-ward direction of his own special power, as too a Yoga of self-exceeding through the power of the psychical being and even through the power of the life in the body,—Yogas which could be practised in separation or with some kind of synthesis. But all these ways of self-exceeding led to a highest self-becoming. To become one with universal being and all existence, one with the Self and Spirit, united with God completed the human evolution, built the final step of man's self-culture.

# A GOD'S LABOUR

by Sri Aurobindo

From POEMS PAST AND PRESENT

I have gathered my dreams in a silver air  
Between the gold and the blue  
And wrapped them softly and left them there,  
My jewelled dreams of you.

I had hoped to build a rainbow bridge  
Marrying the soil to the sky  
And sow in this dancing planet midge  
The moods of infinity.

But too bright were our heavens, too far away,  
Too frail their ethereal stuff;  
Too splendid and sudden our light could not stay;  
The roots were not deep enough.

He who would bring the heavens here  
Must descend himself into clay  
And the burden of earthly nature bear  
And tread the dolorous way.

Coercing my godhead I have come down  
Here on the sordid earth,  
Ignorant, labouring, human grown  
Twixt the gates of death and birth.

I have been digging deep and long  
Mid a horror of filth and mire  
A bed for the golden river's song,  
A home for the deathless fire.

I have laboured and suffered in Matter's night  
To bring the fire to man;  
But the hate of hell and human spite  
Are my meed since the world began.

For man's mind is the dupe of his animal self;  
Hoping its lusts to win,  
He harbours within him a grisly Elf  
Enamoured of sorrow and sin.

The grey Elf shudders from heaven's flame  
And from all things glad and pure;  
Only by pleasure and passion and pain  
His drama can endure.

All around is darkness and strife;  
For the lamps that men call suns  
Are but halfway gleams on this stumbling life  
Cast by the Undying Ones.

Man lights his little torches of hope  
That lead to a failing edge;  
A fragment of Truth is his widest scope,  
An inn his pilgrimage.

The Truth of truths men fear and deny,  
The Light of lights they refuse  
To ignorant gods they lift their cry  
Or a demon altar choose.

All that was found must again be sought,  
Each enemy slain revives,  
Each battle for ever is fought and refought  
Through vistas of fruitless lives.

My gaping wounds are a thousand and one  
And the Titan kings assail,  
But I cannot rest till my task is done  
And wrought the eternal will.

How they mock and sneer, both devils and men!  
"Thy hope is Chimera's head  
Painting the sky with its fiery stain;  
Thou shalt fall and thy work lie dead.

"Who art thou that babblest of heavenly ease  
And joy and golden room

To us who are waifs on inconscient seas  
And bound to life's iron doom?

"This earth is ours, a field of Night  
For our petty flickering fires.  
How shall it brook the sacred Light  
Or suffer a god's desire?

"Come, let us slay him and end his course!  
Then shall our hearts have release  
From the burden and call of his glory and force  
And the curb of his wide white peace."

But the god is there in my mortal breast  
Who wrestles with error and fate  
And tramples a road through mire and waste  
For the nameless Immaculate.

A voice cried, "Go where none have gone!  
Dig deeper, deeper yet,  
Till thou reach the grim foundation stone  
And knock at the keyless gate."

I saw that a falsehood was planted deep  
At the very root of things  
Where the grey Sphinx guards God's riddle sleep  
On the Dragon's outspread wings.

I left the surface gods of mind  
And life's unsatisfied seas  
And plunged through the body's alleys blind  
To the nether mysteries.

I have delved through the dumb Earth's dreadful heart  
And heard her black mass' bell  
I have seen the source whence her agonies part  
And the inner reason of hell.

Above me the dragon murmurs moan  
And the goblin voices flit;  
I have pierced the Void where Thought was born,  
I have walked in the bottomless pit.

On a desperate stair my feet have trod  
Armoured with boundless peace,  
Bringing the fires of the splendour of God  
Into the human abyss.

He who I am was with me still;  
All veils are breaking now.  
I have heard His voice and borne His will  
On my vast untroubled brow.

The gulf twixt the depths and the heights is bridged  
And the golden waters pour  
Down the sapphire mountain rainbow-ridged  
And glimmer from shore to shore.

Heaven's fire is lit in the breast of the earth  
And the undying suns here burn;  
Through a wonder cleft in the bounds of birth  
The incarnate spirits yearn

Like flames to the kingdoms of Truth and Bliss:  
Down a gold-red stair-way wend  
The radiant children of Paradise  
Clarioning darkness's end.

A little more and the new life's doors  
Shall be carved in silver light  
With its aureate roof and mosaic floors  
In a great world bare and bright.

I shall leave my dreams in their argent air,  
For in a raiment of gold and blue  
There shall move on the earth embodied and fair  
The living truth of you.

# LET ENDURANCE BE YOUR WATCHWORD

This is a talk given by the Mother of Sri Aurobindo's Ashram to some disciples. But it has a general relevance and all can derive inspiration from it. It sheds light, in a simple, direct and dynamic way, on a matter which must concern all who have the ideal of ridding common human nature of its crude desires and shallow arrogances. It conveys also the momentousness of the spiritual work that is quietly going on in the Pondicherry Ashram of Integral Yoga.

Let Endurance be your watchword: teach the life-force in you—your vital being\*—not to complain but to put up with all the conditions necessary for great achievement. The body is a very enduring servant, it bears the stress of circumstance tamely like a beast of burden. The vital being it is that is always grumbling and uneasy. The slavery and torture to which it subjects the physical is almost incalculable. How it twists and deforms the poor body to its own fads and fancies, irrationally demanding that everything should be shaped according to its whimsicality! But the very essence of endurance is that the vital should learn to give up its capricious likes and dislikes and preserve an equanimity in the midst of the most trying conditions. When you are treated roughly by somebody or you lack something which would relieve your discomfort, you must keep up cheerfully instead of letting yourself be disturbed. Let nothing ruffle you the least bit, and whenever the vital tends to air its petty grievances with pompous exaggeration just stop to consider how very happy you are, compared to so many in this world. Reflect for a moment on what the soldiers who fought in the last war had to go through. If you had to bear such hardships you would realise the utter silliness of your dissatisfactions. And yet I do not wish you to court difficulties—what I want is simply that you should learn to endure the little insignificant troubles of your life.

## Ask for the Light and the Truth

Nothing great is ever accomplished without endurance. If you study the lives of great men you will see how they set themselves like flint against the weaknesses of the vital. Even today, the true meaning of our civilisation is the mastery of the physical through endurance in the vital. The spirit of sport and of adventure and the dauntless facing of odds which is evident in all the fields of life are part of this ideal of endurance. In science itself, progress depends on the countless difficult tests and trials which precede achievement. Surely, with such momentous work as we have in hand in our Ashram, we have not any less need of endurance. What you must do is to give your vital a good beating as soon as it protests; for, when the physical is concerned, there is reason to be considerate and to take precautions, but with the vital the only method is a sound "kicking". Kick your vital the moment it complains, because there is no other way of getting out of the petty consciousness which attaches so much importance to creature comforts and social amenities instead of asking for the Light and the Truth.

One of the commonest demands of the vital is for praise. It hates to be criticised and treated as if it were of little importance. But it must be always prepared for rebuffs and stand them with absolute calm; nor must it pay attention to compliments, forgetting that each movement of self-satisfaction is an offering at the altar of the lords of falsehood. The beings of the subtle world of the life-force, with which our vital is connected, live and flourish on the worship of their devotees, and that is why they are always inspiring new cults and religions so that their feasts of worship and adulation may never come to an end. So also your own vital being and the vital forces behind it thrive—that is to say, fatten their ignorance—by absorbing the flatteries given by others. But you must remember that the compliments paid by creatures on the same level of ignorance as oneself are really worth nothing, they are just as worthless as the criticisms levelled at one. No matter from what pretentious source they derive, they are futile and empty. Unfortunately, however, the vital craves even for the most rotten food and is so greedy that it will accept praises from even the very embodiments of incompetence. I am reminded of the annual occasion of the opening of the Arts Exhibition in Paris, when the President of the Republic inspects the pictures, eloquently discovering that one is a landscape and another a portrait, and making platitudinous comments with the air of a most intimate soul-searching knowledge of Painting. The painters know very well how inept the remarks are and yet miss no chance of quoting the testimony of the

\*Indian spiritual knowledge distinguishes three principles in man's nature, each connected with a world of its own: the physical, the vital, the mental—and, behind these three and secretly guiding their evolution, it sees the true soul or the psychic principle, through the instrumentation of which our being can ascend to the Divine and the Divine's consciousness be brought into our nature.

President to their genius. For such indeed is the vital in mankind, ravenously fame-hungry.

What, however, is of genuine worth is the opinion of the Truth. When there is somebody who is in contact with the Divine Truth and can express it, then the opinions given out are no mere compliments or criticisms but what the Divine thinks of you, the value it sets on your qualities, its unerring stamp on your efforts. It must be your desire to hold nothing in esteem except the word of the Truth; and in order thus to raise your standard you must keep Agni, the soul's flame of transformation, burning in you. It is noteworthy how when Agni flares up, you immediately develop a loathing for the cheap praises which formerly used to gratify you so much and understand clearly that your love of praise was a low movement of the untransformed Nature. Agni makes you see what a vast vista of possible improvement stretches in front of you, by filling you with a keen sense of your present insufficiency. The encomiums lavished on you by others so disgust you that you feel almost bitter towards those whom you would have once considered your friends; whereas all criticism comes in as a welcome fuel to your humble aspiration towards the Truth. No longer do you feel depressed or slighted by the hostility of others. For, at the least, you are able to ignore it with the greatest ease; at the most, you appreciate it as one more testimony to your present unregenerate state, inciting you to surpass yourself by surrendering to the Divine.

## Feel a Joy in the Process of Realisation

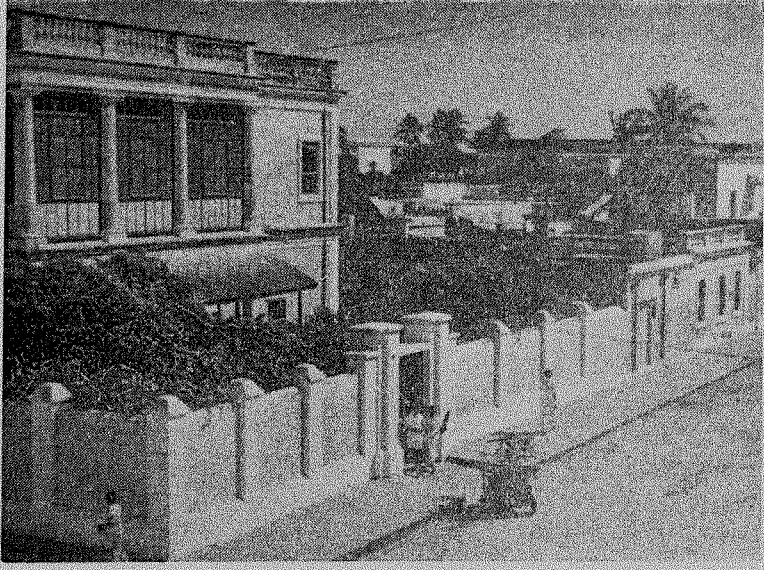
Another remarkable sign of the conversion of your vital, owing to Agni's influence, is that you face your difficulties and obstacles with a smile. You do not any more sit in sackcloth and ashes, lamenting over your mistakes and feeling utterly crest-fallen because you are not at the moment quite up to the mark. You simply chase away depression with a smile. A hundred mistakes do not matter to you: with a smile you recognise that you have erred and with a smile you resolve not to repeat the folly in the future. All depression and gloom is created by the hostile forces who are never so pleased as when throwing on you a melancholy mood. Humility is indeed one thing and depression quite another, the former a divine movement and the latter a very crude expression of the dark forces. Therefore, face your troubles joyously, oppose with invariable cheerfulness the obstacles that beset the road to transformation. The best means of routing the enemy is to laugh in his face! You may grapple and tussle for days and he may still show an undiminished vigour; but just once laugh at him and lo! he takes to his heels. A laugh of self-confidence and of faith in the Divine is the most shattering strength possible—it disrupts the enemy's front, spreads havoc in his ranks and carries you triumphantly onwards.

The converted vital feels also a joy in the process of realisation. All the difficulties implied in that process it accepts with gusto, it never feels gladder than when the Truth is shown it and the play of falsehood in its lower nature laid bare. It does not do the Yoga as if carrying a burden on its back but as if it were a very pleasurable occupation. It is willing to endure the utmost with a smile if it is a condition of the transformation. Neither complaining nor grumbling, it endures happily because it is for the sake of the Divine that it does so. It has the unshakable conviction that the victory shall be won. Never for an instant does it vacillate in its belief that the mighty work of Change taken up by Sri Aurobindo is going to culminate in success. For that indeed is a fact: there is not a shadow of doubt as to the issue of the work we have in hand. It is no mere experiment but an inevitable manifestation of the Supramental. The converted vital has a prescience of the victory, keeps up a will towards progress which never turns its back, feels full of the energy which is born of its certitude about the triumph of the Divine whom it is aware of always in itself as doing whatsoever is necessary and infusing in it the unfaltering power to resist and finally conquer its enemies. Why should it despair or complain? The transformation is going to be: nothing will ever stop it, nothing will frustrate the decree of the Omnipotent. Cast away, therefore, all diffidence and weakness, and resolve to endure bravely awhile before the great day arrives when the long battle turns into an everlasting victory.

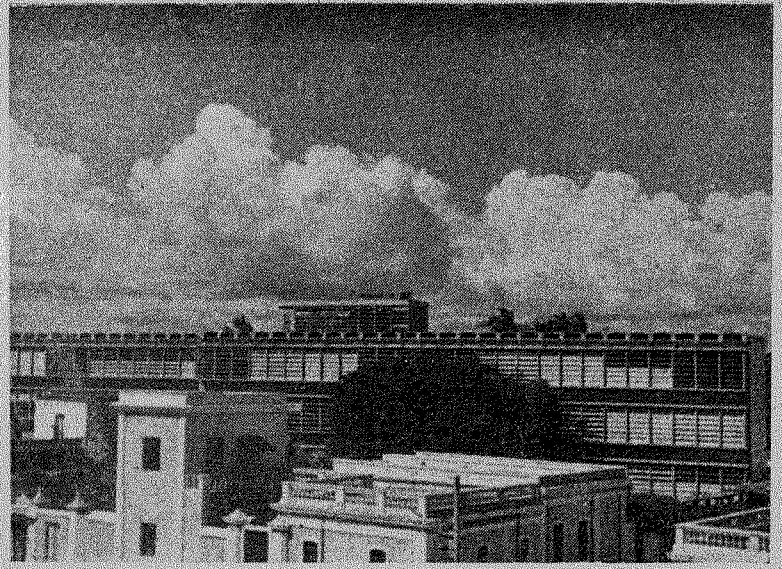


## THE MOTHER

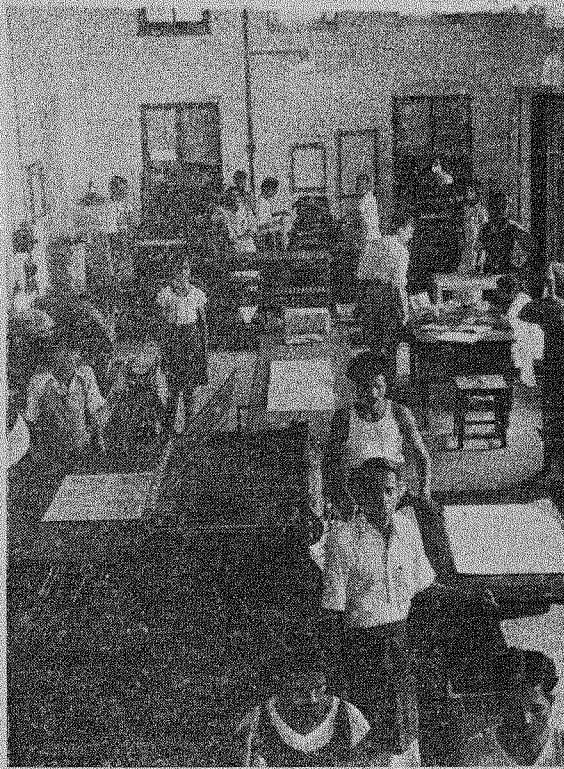
WHO WITH HER SPIRITUAL INSIGHT, COMPASSION  
AND CREATIVITY PRESIDES OVER SRI AUROBINDO'S ASHRAM



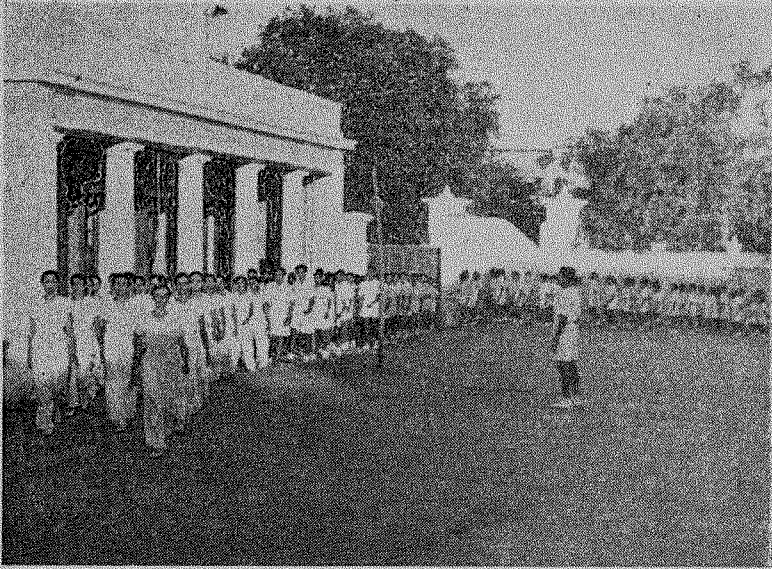
**Main Entrance to the Ashram**



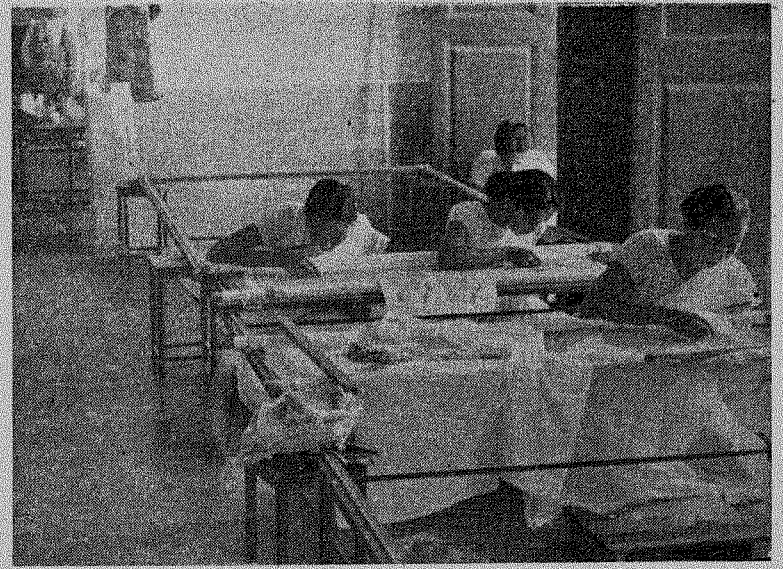
**Golconda: Residence for Visitors**



**The Press: Machine Room**



**Drill March**



**Embroidery Class**



**Workshop**

# SRI AUROBINDO'S ASHRAM

## A PICTURE OF ITS AIMS AND ACTIVITIES

BY GABRIEL MONOD-HERZEN

For the classical Indian Yogas, the liberation of the human being is a victory won by the consciousness over nature; it is an escape from the circle of natural ties and presupposes a separation of our consciousness from our material, vital and mental personality as complete as the preservation of our physical life will allow.

Sri Aurobindo, on the contrary, puts liberation as the very goal of the natural evolution of the being; it is the condition requisite for a transformation of the personality by a penetration of the spiritual force into its most material depths.

This new message does not deny the value of the classical Yogas; rather it completes them. It takes their results as valid, but transforms their character and gives to the whole of life a new sense and a new value. The old Yogas aimed at the liberation of the consciousness from the bondage of material nature; Sri Aurobindo seeks a more complete victory, since his aim is to transform nature integrally by the descent of the Spirit into it.

And this result instead of being conceived as an act opposed to the movement of nature is on the contrary regarded as the very expression of the spiritual evolution.

In thus setting as the aim of our existence the ideal of a perfection to be realised in our material life, an ideal which in fact underlies our whole life and sustains it and makes it inwardly worthy of being loved, Sri Aurobindo gives once more a nobility to all the elements of our being, including our social tendencies.

### The Ashram and the Mother

It has been often said that man is a social animal and in fact human groups organise themselves quickly enough into unities whose tendencies are revealed by their structure. Sri Aurobindo's disciples have not escaped from this law.

To say the truth, when Sri Aurobindo settled at Pondicherry in 1910 with four companions of past days, he had no desire to be a Guru, a spiritual teacher and had therefore no intention of creating an Ashram.

But his firm resolution was to follow whatever the path he found in the course of his Yoga to be the right one and to leave nothing in it undone. New-comers joined little by little the first companions. From four the number rose to ten and then to twenty-five. And the passion of patriotism which had moved the first of these men was transformed into an ideal of human perfection to be lived.

In 1920 a French lady who had found a need on her part to see spiritual perfection express itself in the material life came to live close to this group. Under her influence, the life around Sri Aurobindo organised itself and began to reflect the ideal animating him. In 1925, the disciples who were living in separate houses, found their life organising itself into something like a family grouping and in less than a year Sri Aurobindo decided to withdraw from all direct participation in the life of the community and entrusted his disciples to her who thenceforth became the Mother. Thus the Ashram was formed.

### Many-Faceted Freedom and Fulfilment

An Ashram is a community grouped around a teacher with a view to live according to a certain spiritual ideal. It is neither an association nor a monastery. An Ashram has no need of statutes and regulations; the directions of the teacher take their place. This could be dictatorship, but it is not, since everyone while accepting the rules which make of him a part linked harmoniously to the whole, retains nonetheless all his inner freedom.

This freedom manifests itself very strongly in the Ashram of Sri Aurobindo. It is a characteristic element of the atmosphere which is proper to it. Indeed, where the ideal is a renunciation of the world to the sole profit of the spirit, a certain uniformity takes shape among those living a diminished life. But here the ideal is a fulfilment in the very heart of the material being, an irradiation that must enter into every act. The personality, far from being reduced to a mere support, has to grow and become a more and more perfect expression of the spirit animating it.

When we compare, after an absence of some years, the life and attitude of the disciples of the Ashram at Pondicherry, what strikes us most

is the growth that each personality has undergone according to its own nature. And this has happened in every field, that is to say, for almost every aspect of life; for the 600 and odd disciples of Sri Aurobindo who live in the 80 houses scattered about in the town form more than a village. Almost all the professions are represented there: cultivators, smiths, poets, mechanics, musicians and writers, artists and accountants. All is found there and everyone, as in an ideal republic, pursues his activities with joy.

### The Joy of the Ashram Life

This joy is an essential character. It is so true, so strong that even when one passes a disciple in the street, one is struck by it. They are happy people.

There are certainly several causes for this joy, of which some are wholly internal, but among others two are predominant. First of all, this activity is not paid. The disciple receives everything from the Ashram, that is to say, from his teacher to whom he has given all when he came in. So there are no longer any "professions" in the ordinary sense of the term. There is an activity worked out because it has to be worked out and one endeavours to work it out perfectly, for perfection is the expression of the Divine; "Yoga", says the Gita, "is skill in works." (II.50).

In the second place, everyone carries out an activity which corresponds to his true nature, to the law of his own being. It is not rare to see a newly arrived disciple change his calling. One who was a singer becomes an accountant, the bourgeois a musician, the professor a poet, the official a peasant. These changes are never the result of tests, aptitude examinations, but always the fulfilment of an inner desire, of an urge which is the way of the true being seeking to harmonise its external activities with its own deepest reality. This harmony is a condition for happiness—the experience of the Ashram proves it. It shows also that Sri Aurobindo is right when he sees in the simplest and most general tendencies of the human being, his desire for happiness and perfection, a crude and awkward expression of possibilities, that is to say, of the future stages of the evolution.

### Inclinations, Ideals and Activities

This multiplicity of activities poses numerous technical questions and the Ashram solves them in a manner contrary to what is done normally. For instance, it is the normal way for us first to establish a laundry and then to look for a laundryman, but here it is done just the other way round. It is because a disciple shows a pronounced inclination towards an activity that a scope is given to it.

In this way, the Ashram has started, one after another, workshops for carpentry and furniture-making, for mechanics, a smithy, a bakery, a laundry, a farm, a press. In each and every one of these enterprises the work of management and supervision is entrusted to disciples. It is they also who form a good part of the labour, the rest being taken from workmen outside. However, it is the disciples alone who are allowed to look after all that concerns food.

In a climate like that of India, questions of food take a primary importance. The Ashram has come to fix upon a diet at once simple, substantial and perfectly healthy. It is prepared with not only a rigorous cleanliness but also as much scientific efficiency as circumstances permit.

This is a point which distinguishes Sri Aurobindo's Ashram from most other similar communities. In that of Mahatma Gandhi, for example, the simplicity of means, their purely Indian character in each activity, were traits deliberately willed. Here on the contrary, one sees the opposite tendency finding expression: machinery is gladly accepted and every technical progress is utilized as soon as that becomes possible.

### A Unique Building Enterprise

One day the Ashram had a magnificent opportunity of constructing a building. It must be said that the growing number of disciples in a town as populated as Pondicherry creates a chronic housing problem. So the idea of lodging some fifty disciples in a large single house was enthusiastically welcomed when the generosity of a donor made possible the enterprise. It was decided to name the building Golconda.

The building, planned by the architect Antonin Raymond, consists of

## Sri Aurobindo's Ashram Continued from previous page.

two storeys on a raised ground floor; it is wholly built in reinforced concrete. It contains no glass panes, no windows, even no walls on either of its long fronts. These are made of venetians with ferro-concrete blades one metre long and capable of any inclination whatever. One can therefore regulate at will the lighting and ventilation of the rooms. These are, of course, separated from the front on one side by a corridor, but the partition between the corridor and the room is made of teak batons alternately fixed on the two sides of a frame, so that air can pass through, but one cannot see through them.

This building contains an installation for toilette with lavabos and washing places for clothes, complete with hot water whose temperature is regulated automatically; there is a place for drying clothes on the roof.

The furniture is made wholly in the Ashram workshops and consists of what is really necessary and nothing more: cupboards, book-cases, brackets, chairs, tables and cots. Every item of furniture was specially studied in view of its use in a hot country, sometimes damp, always infested with insects, and every one of them is a success.

These pieces of furniture, perfect as they are, have been the cause of great difficulties. The building was completed during the war. But at the moment hard wood was requisitioned by the army and the work of furniture-making was so delayed that a portion of Golconda remained vacant.

It did not remain so for long. Peace brought back to the wood market its normal activity and inmates have not been lacking. As a matter of fact, the number of Ashram inmates shot up all on a sudden from the day when children began to be admitted.

### Children, Schools and Physical Culture

For years children had been entirely excluded. The quiet insistence of life, however, in the end opened to them an entry. Parents came who could entrust their children to none else and one day (it was during the last war) a school was started to give them education and a house arranged to lodge those who could not remain with their parents.

The Ashram School has not been made for the children to get degrees; like all other activities of the disciples the work here too brings in nothing, nothing but the flowering of the being. The Ashram School has been made for children and the children love it.

Two features dominate it: the importance given to sports and to education proper. The sports whether in the form of games or of gymnastics are practised by everybody, by girls as well as boys. The idea of feminine sport is quite foreign to the classical programme of education in India and the Ashram School is the only institution at Pondicherry where it is practised. It is also the one in which masculine sport has the best part. I mean by that that it is really sportive, that it tends to develop in the youth not the sense of competition but the sense of team work, of free discipline. That certainly is due to the quality of the instructors, but the quality of the children and the general atmosphere go far to contribute something to it. It is very remarkable, for example, to have succeeded in training up boxers who oppose but do not fight.

This is a sign of the importance given in the School to education of character. What is sought here is above all to make men and women of a high quality. In this work, instruction has a share and an important share but it remains subordinated to the whole and the results obtained till now largely justify this point of view.

School work and physical culture, besides, are but a part of the life of the youth of the Ashram. The school admits only children of Sri Aurobindo's disciples: they are from 4 to 18 years of age. The youngest ones pass their day at School, they are so happy there that it is not rare to find a little brother or a little sister left at home surreptitiously slipping into the class in the midst of his or her elders and refusing to go out.

We know of the excellent results obtained in certain schools by occupying the elder students with manual work, such as carpentry, book-binding etc. At the Ashram School children between 14 and 18 pursue truly a vocation. Some are mechanics, some cultivators, a good number of young girls work at the Printing Press. It is an innovation which has remarkable consequences.

First of all, no notion of social hierarchy as between the various vocations can develop among these youths. Their school comrades pass a part of the day with them, other hours are given to other activities; equality is not disturbed, for there is no question of a salary which would fix different values on different forms of works.

Next, the depreciating idea of a vocation considered as an imposed

task does not exist among these students. It is a normal and pleasant part of life. This too is a teaching.

### The Natural Flowering of Inner Divinity

With regard to the programme of study, it is striking because of the part (played in it by several languages) and because of the absence of all religious or philosophical teaching. The works or the thought of the Teacher of the Ashram are not expounded nor commented upon.

It is the same with regard to the rest of the Ashram. That is a fact which surprises some of the visitors very much. These disciples of one and the same Master do not attend any common lectures nor follow a common programme of teaching.

It is because everyone of them has to discover and follow his own rule, to determine the kind of study which suits him best. Every disciple has daily the opportunity to be in the presence of the Mother. By letters addressed to the Mother every disciple can ask for the help he needs. Thus he follows his path in perfect liberty.

Inner life and outer activity—two faces of the same single life—are thus different for different people and no hierarchy marks externally the stages of the path traversed.

Towards the end of every month, everyone informs by means of a note written to the Mother his material necessities for the following month. And on the first of the month, everyone receives, with the Mother's blessings, what she considers truly necessary for him. But as the Indian custom requires that one should always have an offering in one's hand when approaching the Teacher, everyone offers flowers to the Mother before he receives his requirements.

Flowers play a great part in the life of the Ashram. They are there in all the houses, whether in pots in the garden, or in the bouquet on the table. They offer their beauty and their fragrance every moment and imbue life with their symbol of the offering of the best of oneself.

For the great secret of the spiritual life is a complete self-giving to the Divine, not only in the silence of meditation but also in all the activities of a life which seeks to participate in all His modes of manifestation.

*Translated from the French by Nolini Kanta Gupta.*

## Sanctuary

My dream-city of blanched flat roofs!—

When the gigantic equatorial moon

Comes out from her portals like a priestess queen

And stills the aching flesh to an incensed swoon . . . . .

I sit in a corner of the sun-baked courtyard

That is mercifully wrapt in the cool coming night,

And the candle that is lit in the depth of my heart

Revives its flame in the absence of light.

Though wide awake, I sleep in my being —

Plumb deeper and deeper that cavernlike space . . . .

The bare floor hurts me with a limitless joy,

And the eyes, trance-burdened, are sealed in my face.

My limbs feel heavy with a peace-numbed languor,

As if turned to stone in a timeless relief;

Yet the body is sundered by a subtle knife

And a pouring consciousness boundless though brief.

MINNIE N. CANTEENWALLA.



# TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE

## THE WORLD'S URGENT NEED TODAY

BY KENNETH WALKER

In this specially written article of deep significance the famous author of *MEANING AND PURPOSE* and *THE DIAGNOSIS OF MAN* underlines the grave danger with which mankind is faced and impartially considers what can truly bring to the world the salvation for which the best minds at present are anxiously seeking.

I accept the invitation to contribute a short article to *Mother India* with pleasure. It gives me the opportunity of expressing my appreciation of that paper and of the great work being carried on in India of which it is an expression. But what happens in India may, and I trust, will, have effects that extend far beyond the frontiers of that country.

### India's Spiritual Riches and Responsibilities

The time and the place for the launching of a Crusade against the materialistic philosophy of the day are singularly well chosen. India has taken her place in the Commonwealth of Nations and she can speak with an authority that it would have been difficult for her to have assumed a decade or two ago. And there is no country in the whole world that has so just a right to speak with authority, for was not India in possession of a culture at a time when the nations of Europe were in a state of barbarism? She has a magnificent spiritual heritage that, like all wealth, brings with it special responsibilities in her dealings with other nations. Up till now, the traffic in ideas has all been in one direction, from the West to the East. Britain has carried to India, in the past, much of her possessions in the way of scientific, economic and political knowledge, and India has profited from these materially. But India has possessions of much greater value than scientific knowledge, of which the whole world now stands in great need—spiritual knowledge and experience. It is to be hoped that in these critical years, when the future of mankind seems to be trembling in the balance, that traffic of ideas will be seen moving in the opposite direction, from the East to the West. But in order that this should occur, one thing is essential; that India should not succumb, as the West has succumbed, to the glamour of scientific and technical achievement, but should remain loyal to her ancient traditional knowledge. The secularization of Indian thought would be a world disaster.

### Can the Catholic Church Save Mankind?

In his book, *The Crisis of the Modern World*, René Guénon attributes the present chaos in the Western world to its having lost all connection with "traditional knowledge", and by this term he means such knowledge as is contained in the Vedas, the Tao and in the esoteric forms of Christianity and Mohammedanism. Knowledge of this kind overflows the artificial boundaries imposed by nationalism and creeds and serves the needs of the whole of humanity. Many people in the West acknowledge the truth of what Guénon has proclaimed, that it is only by a return to this traditional knowledge that mankind can be saved, but although they speak of the urgent need for a spiritual revival, they are unable to say how this can be brought about.

Guénon himself seems to place some hope in a resurgence of the Catholic Church, but there are many who believe that if a spiritual revival should occur in the West, it will start outside, rather than inside, the Church. By her lack of true catholicism, the Catholic Church has discouraged many who otherwise would have looked to her for leadership. Those who, like myself, have taken part in the activities of the World Congress of Faiths, have noted that more difficulty is experienced in finding representatives of Catholicism for that body than representatives of any other

religion. There is an exclusiveness and a rigidity in the views of that particular church that makes it difficult for me to believe that the Catholic faith will be the means of the Western world regaining contact with "traditional knowledge".

### Will Science, Democracy and "Rational" Religion Suffice?

But it must not be assumed that those who feel that disaster can only be averted by a spiritual revival are as yet anything but a minority. The idea that mankind is marching along the high road of progress has been shattered by recent events and we in the West no longer believe in Wells' prophetic dreams of a millenium a few centuries ahead of us. We have been disillusioned and we realize that all is not well with our world. But although we have diagnosed illness, our opinions differ as to the cause of the illness and the best means of healing it. There are some who are convinced that what the rest of us consider to be the cause—our blind worship of science and economics—should now be applied as a medicine. What the world really needs, they say, is to be properly organized and administered by the scientists and economists. There is another group that has implicit faith in an infallible elixir called democracy, and yet others who prefer a mixture of these two remedies, labelled "Science in the service of Democracy". Let us plan a new world, they say, in which everybody will be equal and in which there will be no want. Religion has had its day and it has utterly failed us. It is for man to create for himself what he needs.

There are a few scientists who believe that amongst those needs religion still has some place, but it must be a man-made religion that appeals to his head. Julian Huxley is one of these and in *Religion without Revelation* he describes what sort of "religion" is needed to fit in with man's scientific requirements. As Akbar once called together a number of scholars and with their help concocted a synthetic religion, so would the writer of this book gather together a number of scientists, psychologists, musicians and poets and produce a satisfactory rational religion. It is likely that the result of this ersatz religion would be similar to that which followed the manufacture of a faith by Akbar.

I do not write this for the sake of irony and banter, but in order to emphasize how urgent is the Western world's need for that traditional knowledge from which it is now severed. The times are difficult and there are many who are inclined to lose hope, but there exists at least this favourable feature, that an increasing number of thoughtful people in the West are realizing our true state. They see that man cannot live by science and political institutions alone but that he also needs nourishment for the spirit. They know that world unity will never be brought about by treaties but that it must rest on a common basis of religion. And by religion they do not mean the more superficial trappings of rituals and formal creeds—both of which serve a purpose—but the great truths that meet the spiritual needs of all mankind, the truths that are embraced by the term traditional knowledge. It is for this reason that I look with hope at the work being done in Pondicherry and read with something more than interest my copies of *Mother India*.

## Still Far Beyond

Beyond the beauteous veils of dew,  
Open thy eyes, adream, aswoon,  
Where new translucencies move through  
The secret spaces of the moon.

Beyond the Silence's covering,  
The unborn purities await —  
Each folded in its angel-wing —  
Dawn-bugles from the doors of Fate.

The blue vaults of the heavens divide,  
Dream spirits pass in, one by one,  
Earth radiances arise and glide  
Into the kingdoms of the Sun.

But thou must pass still far beyond,  
Above the terraced truths, and free  
Thy tranced soul from its last dream-bond  
Into the ringed Eternity.

TEHMI.

## Mukti

What deep dishonour that the soul should have  
Its passion moulded by a moon of change  
And all its massive purpose be a wave  
Ruled by time's gilded glammers that estrange  
Being from its true goal of motionless  
Eternity ecstatic and alone,  
Poised in calm plenitudes of consciousness—  
A sea unheard where spume nor spray is blown!

Be still, oceanic heart, withdraw thy sense  
From fickle lure of outward fulgencies.  
Clasp not in vain the myriad earth to appease  
The hunger of thy God-profundities:  
Not there but in self-rapturous suspense  
Of all desire is thy omnipotence!

K. D. SETHNA.

# MY LAST WEEK WITH GANDHIJI

BY DILIP KUMAR ROY

This vivid and moving article, published now for the first time at full length, was written to complete the renowned author's pen-portrait of Gandhiji in his book **AMONG THE GREAT** which is going to be reprinted in an enlarged edition in America this year, along with a new interview (in 1943) with Sri Aurobindo.

## Some Revealing Letters

After 1938 I had no occasion to meet Mahatmaji for nearly a decade. But I liked to write to him from time to time as he invariably answered my letters in his characteristic vein—genial, transparent and informal. Now that he is no more I will append a few of his letters by way of sample. In one dated 8-4-34 he wrote:

"My dear Dilip,

I am surprised that you have not received my letter. I wrote to you almost immediately after hearing from you and it was a fairly long letter I sent you. Your book 'Anami' I did glance through but the best use, I thought, I could make of it was to send it to Mahadeva who knows Bengali and who is, besides, a poet. I am not. But that does not prevent me from reading whatever you write. What you told me about the activity there in your Ashram interested me deeply and the information that X had become a changed man in Pondicherry. I would like you to send me his poems. I hope you are keeping well and still singing. I often meet your pupils who sing to me and always remind me of the beautiful *bhajans*\* that you used to sing for me.

Yours sincerely, M. K. Gandhi."

In another dated 21-2-34 he wrote:

"Dear Dilip,

It was a great grief to me that though I was in Pondicherry I was not able to see any of you. Ambalal Sarabhai gave me your letter of October only yesterday. It had gone with Bharati to Oxford. I wrote to you about your book when I received it. I hope you have got that letter. Do please write whenever you feel like writing. I am glad X is there. Has he given up drink altogether?

Yours sincerely, M. K. Gandhi."

In 1936 I wrote to him asking him to comment if he could on some letters of Srimati Raihana Tyabji, a mystic poet and composer and a devotee of Krishna. These letters with my replies I published later, along with the comments of Sri Aurobindo and Sri Krishnaprem. I wrote to Mahatmaji that as he too was a devotee of Krishna I hoped he would be interested in such discussions, especially as these were by no means of a merely academic interest for us, seekers. But for once I failed to draw him out, for he wrote, in his reply, dated 17-6-36:

"My dear Dilip,

Mahadev sent me your letters and enclosures only yesterday. I glanced through the very interesting correspondence between you and Raihana. I have perhaps a theory of my own about Krishna. I need not discuss it here as it is of no consequence. My opinion, however, is that the publication of the correspondence will make confusion worse confounded. I hope, with you, that we should meet some day. Then one can usefully discuss Krishna and many other things of common interest. And of course I should like once more to hear your music.

Love, M. K. Gandhi."

In another dated 17-6-1945 he wrote:

"My dear Dilip,

Your letter is tempting. The recollection of your voice tempts me, but I must resist all temptation and keep to the strait and narrow path as conceived by me.

I would have written to you in Hindi as I do generally but I forbear for obvious reasons.

Love, Bapu."

I don't quite know what he meant by "obvious reasons," but it is probable that he had come to know of my opposition to Hindi as the one language for inter-provincial intercourse. I never concealed from him my dissidence whenever I happened to be out of sympathy with his views. I held that it would be a great disaster for India if Hindi replaced English in our schools and colleges. There were many who misrepresented to him the motives behind my candid criticism of his outlook on life and things, but he never changed towards me, far less let such temperamental difference mar his kind affection for me with all my obvious limitations.

But the most interesting letter I ever received from him—and also the most revealing was in answer to a long letter of mine in which I conveyed to him my pained surprise—surprise because I felt that he could not see what was so obvious, and pain because it did pain me genuinely to see him peter out as a political leader. In my letter I had suggested that since his political mantras—like the spinning-wheel, vicarious fasts

etc.—had contributed more confusion than relief he might retire from politics for a while to practise Yoga (under a real Guru who had vision and knowledge) till he could see his way a little clearer. I humbly pointed out to him—what most people felt though few ventured to express—that he had come to give us a wrong lead in politics because it was not his *métier*, *swadharna*: his line was social service, equipped as he was with all the great qualities that went to the make-up of a noble social reformer. I stressed his lack of real knowledge—*jnana*—of the Divine Reality and the vitiating movements of the human ego which were responsible for his signal failure as a true leader of the multitude. To illustrate what I meant I quoted the following passage from Sri Aurobindo's *Synthesis Of Yoga*:

"In the world we act with the sense of egoism; we claim the universal forces that work in us as our own; we claim as the effect of our personal will, wisdom, force, virtue the selective, formative, progressive action of the Transcendent in this frame of mind, life and body. Enlightenment brings to us the knowledge that the ego is only an instrument; we begin to perceive and feel that these things are our own in the sense that they belong to our supreme and integral Self, one with the Transcendent, not to the instrumental ego. Our limitations and distortions are our contribution to the working; the true power in it is the Divine's. When the human ego realises that its will is a tool, its wisdom ignorance and childishness, its power an infant's groping, its virtue a pretentious impurity, and learns to trust itself to that which transcends it, that is its salvation." "Besides," I wrote, "why not turn whole-heartedly to *sannyas*†—the real *sannyas* I mean—in order to achieve self-realisation since you believe in 'asceticism' which you once described to me as the 'highest art'—remember? *Sannyas*, though not an ideal way for people of the activist temperament, did often help some who failed to see things in the proper perspective because of their constant activity without respite."

It was like him not to have resented the suggestion—surely not one of the least endearing traits of his character—and to reply in his usual tolerant way in a letter dated 16-7-1934:

"My dear Dilip,

I have your letter and enclosures. The letter came into my hands only yesterday. It had gone first to Bombay and there by oversight remained with one of my helpers for some days.

My difficulty is fundamental. I do not believe that my present activity is less conducive to self-realisation or merger in the Divine than abstention would be. *Sannyas* is not cessation of all physical activity. It means to me cessation of all activity, mental or physical, that is *selfish*. If I could be convinced that cessation was the better way for me, I should adopt it at once.

Yours sincerely, M. K. Gandhi."

## Benign and Baffling Bapu

Although I travelled a great deal, somehow I never had an opportunity of meeting him again till it came suddenly in 1947, and in this way:

When India won its long-sought freedom on the 15th of August, 1947—an especially momentous day for us as it coincided with Sri Aurobindo's birthday—I longed to have an opportunity of discussing with Gandhiji the significance of this remarkable coincidence. Of course we knew that it was no chance coincidence. We knew that Sri Aurobindo had been working for India's political emancipation, sleeplessly, with his great occult powers. But people outside his aura were mostly sceptical of the reality of such powers. I felt that Gandhiji as a believer in mysticism was likely to understand something of such powers. For had he not, more than once, referred some seekers who approached him for information about Yoga and occultism to Sri Aurobindo and had not he himself sought an interview with Sri Aurobindo in 1934? I wanted to see him also for another reason: I had composed the music for the famous song "Vande Mataram" but rumour had it that Pundit Jawaharlal was going to foist on us a lesser song as the "national song" of India. We had all taken this bitterly to heart and so I wanted to secure, if I could, Gandhiji's approval of this great song set to my new tune which could be easily sung in chorus. So I wired him from Ahmedabad on 26-10-1947 requesting that he permit me to sing this song in my new tune at his prayer-meeting on the 28th evening. Our plane, however, reached Delhi just too late. So I rang him up and was given an appointment with him on the next morning at Birla House where he was staying.

I was in a curious psychological state on that unforgettable morning. Nearly a decade had elapsed since our last meeting. I wondered if he

† I used the word *sannyas* in the modified sense of quietism, not in the sense of complete cessation from all activity. For instance, Shankaracharya or Vivekananda or Dayananda were *sannyasis* of this type, I pointed out.

\* Devotional songs.

## MY LAST WEEK WITH GANDHIJI—Continued from previous page

would receive me as cordially as he used to of old. My heart misgave me because I no longer felt towards him as I had in the days gone by, and I knew that he knew of my changed outlook and orientation away from his own.

But the moment I saw him sitting there my fears were assuaged. He gave me his smile of welcome, the old, heart-warming smile which he knew how to use as a magician knows how to use his wand. I felt moved and forgot my ideological antagonism to much that he had lately been prescribing as infallible. I took a long look at him. He had indeed grown slightly older but he looked still as fresh and guileless as a full-blown rose. The same friendly interest in a friend and admirer, the same disarming laughter, the same glance of spontaneous trust and warm welcome!

A young lady was massaging his feet when I entered his living-room. He lay stretched on a mat. On seeing me he got up into a sitting position. I made him my obeisance in glad reverence and was a trifle surprised because not only could I find not a trace of constraint anywhere within me, but it almost seemed to me as if his unfortunate lead in politics of late were of very little importance! Also, he put me so utterly at my ease with a mere laugh that I felt as if there had been no hiatus of a decade since I had met him last; it was almost as though I had met him only yesterday. In fact I was, if anything, a little more drawn by his baffling personality, and that also in a new way. For I realised, as never before, what a magic power he had of getting under the skin of others to feel the pulse of things. Let me give an instance.

I said, in passing, that I was so grateful because he had revised my talks with him and authorised me to publish them in my book, "Among the Great," which had, as a result, made some impression in India and abroad. He assumed at once his old mock-solemn tone and said, in kind irony: "Do you insinuate that it was *my* giant frame which did the trick?" And he burst out laughing at his own joke or, shall I say, chuckled with a child-like glee. Although I knew well his ways I was taken unawares by his manner of using the verb 'insinuate'. I mumbled something helplessly and forgot all that I had rehearsed so carefully to break the ice. His eyes twinkled in evident amusement. But he went off at a tangent once again.

"Your book has made an impression," he said kindly, "because it has value—not because I figured in it."

This made me pull myself together and I made bold to counter it.

"But surely, Bapuji," I answered, "it's *you* who are play-acting at modesty now, not poor Dilip, since you can't be nearly so unimaginative as to be unaware that you are a theme that would glorify any tune."

His repartee came quick enough.

"Wrong again," he laughed, "for you made me into your pet theme to set your music to. You drew me out till I sang about music and art and asceticism and God knows what else, for it's long ago and I have clean forgotten."

We laughed out in chorus. That was Gandhiji all over, at once tempting and baffling one when one went out to take his measure. Unfortunately, however, the fates were against me this time and we could not continue in this care-free vein much longer since he had to go and see Lord Mountbatten to discuss about Kashmir. So I asked him whether I could sing the "Vande Mataram" and "Hindustan Hamara" that evening at the prayer-meeting. He smiled and said:

"Yes, I had your telegram from Ahmedabad. But you gave me no time to wire back; so I could not have it conveyed to you that I have made it a rule to have only *bhajans* sung at my prayer-meeting. And that's why," he added, to make light of it, "I was praying last evening at the prayer-meeting: 'O Ram, may Dilip not heave into sight *now* of all times.'" And he chuckled once more in glee.

As I laughed with him I admired how cleverly he had baulked me even of my right to disappointment. I said: "I quite understand, Bapuji; but what about my singing them here?"

"Here?" he asked as his eyes held mine. "You mean, just now?"

I nodded. "It won't take more than ten minutes, I assure you."

His face brightened. "Oh then it will suit me to perfection," he said; then with a warning smile: "but there's one condition: you'll allow me to hear you while I lie stretched, for she hasn't finished massaging my feet yet."

"A bargain," I answered, laughing. And I sang the two songs....

He listened with rapt attention which more than compensated me for all the pains I had taken to thrust myself on him. I felt very grateful to him for his warm response and was delighted when he said:

"Your voice has improved very much. It was always rich with deep overtones but today it has gained a new vibrancy of appeal—especially in the bass notes."

I flushed and tried hard, though in vain, to look modest (I suppose once a hero-worshipper always a hero-worshipper!) when he smiled very kindly at me and went on: "And you look the same as ever—not a day older since I saw you last ten years ago." Then he looked at his watch and added: "You'll come to the prayer-meeting this evening, won't you?"

"But haven't I prayed for that privilege already?"

"Yes, but that was for 'Vande Mataram'. I want you to sing to me your beautiful *bhajans* there. I haven't heard them for a long time, remember."

"And I haven't inflicted myself on you for an equally long time, remember," I returned. And we both laughed.

As I returned home I caught myself wondering why he had made no comment on my tune of "Vande Mataram". Had he missed in it the true ring? I was a little chilled. Little did I realise how amply he was going to make amends the same evening!....

### An Ominous Prayer-Meeting and a Prophetic Vision

I arrived at the prayer-meeting a few minutes before time. The gold of the setting sun lay tenderly on the green lawn. The rostrum stood at the end of the lawn remote from the house and I was given a seat near it a few yards from the microphone which Mahatmaji used while addressing the audience. This was daily broadcast by the Delhi Radio later the same evening at eight. I stood scrutinising the audience. I had never been to any of his prayer-meetings before and so I did not wish to miss anything if I could help it. Also I wanted to imbibe the receptivity of the audience deep into me so as to deepen my own.

Women and children, numbering about two hundred, squatted in the forefront. They sat, pell-mell, a motley group: men, boys, youths, workmen, journalists, businessmen, soldiers and last, though not least, that dauntless crew, the curious, whom no science known to mortals or angels could ever isolate and render innocuous. At the far end hummed an equal number standing and turning now and again to stare at Mahatmaji's rooms ready to shout "Gandhijiki jai" at the first sign of his appearance.

Suddenly the audience got restless like waves visited by a chance gust. All eyes were focussed at once on the other end where we could see the frail giant emerge down a corridor, with a young lady on each side, on whose shoulders he leaned affectionately as was his wont when he came to his prayer-meetings.

As he drew near, everybody stood up in reverence. A hush succeeded the growing hum. When he approached me I made him my obeisance. He smiled radiantly. "So, you have come, I'm glad!"—his eyes spoke with their language of twinkles. As he took his seat on the rostrum I felt very tender towards him, the more as he coughed intermittently. I almost forgot that I did not hold with his post-war politico-religious ideology.

I mention this not to assert myself gratuitously, but only to stress the strange magnetism of his incalculable personality which drew me to him in spite of myself in a way I found it difficult to account for. But at the same time I was conscious of vibrations in the air that made me feel a deep malaise. The reason was this. Some years ago somebody in our Ashram had seen a prophetic vision which I soon after discussed with some of my dear friends whom it equally alarmed. The vision was not concocted after the event: it had been published in the 'twenties in a well-known book entitled "Unapanchasi" whose author, a celebrated writer and a quondam disciple of Sri Aurobindo, is noted as a man of keen intellect and great integrity of character. He had escaped being hanged, in 1908, by the skin of his teeth and had to serve a sentence of twelve years as an exile in the Andamans. The vision he had recorded was that directly after the liberation of India from the foreign yoke a very eminent man in "white homespun" would be shot dead in a public meeting. As I heard Gandhiji's address I could not dismiss the vision. And it weighed on me still more on the second day—how and why, I shall relate in due sequence. Let me now get through what happened on the first day.

After Gandhiji had taken his seat on the rostrum the two young ladies who had accompanied him recited verses from the Gita and the Quran. As they recited the Quran verses I could feel the air getting tenser. There were some sitting in front who instantly hung their heads. A few Sikhs glared and fidgeted. I wondered if any real good was being done through such procedure which the bulk of the audience, who were Hindus, not only resented openly as an insult but abhorred as an abomination. However, to proceed.

When the recitation was over the two ladies sang a *bhajan* together. Then Mahatmaji gave me a meaning look and I sang a famous *bhajan* of Kavir of which I give below the English translation:

Nor fires devour nor tempests swamp  
Nor robbers hurt that devotee  
Who in the Lord's inviolate Grace  
Is havened everlastingly.  
For this saviour boon of boons implored Him  
Men like gods, who won His Light:  
Blessed are they on earth who reach  
His Midnight Sun beyond the Night.  
Ponder, O King, the irony:  
Thine is vainglory's carnival,  
While Kavir's is the immortal bliss  
Of tramping with the Lord of all!

Then Mahatmaji proved once more, for the millionth time, that he was, if anything, even more incalculable than a lightning flash. For he began, to my delight, by commenting on the singer instead of the song. As I

## MY LAST WEEK WITH GANDHIJI—Continued from previous page

heard the speech once more broadcast by the Delhi Radio the same evening I feel my report will be fairly trustworthy. This is how he started:\*

"You have heard a very sweet song. But you ought to know something about the singer. His name is Dilip Kumar Roy. I met him first, years ago, in the Sassoon Hospital at Poona where I was convalescing after an operation for appendicitis. He then sang two *bhajans* accompanying himself on a *tambura*. This morning, too, he sang to me two famous national songs: the 'Vande Mataram' and 'Hindusthan Hamara' set to his own music. I liked them very much, especially the first one whose music, I felt, was very fitting to the spirit of the noble anthem. He has, as the saying goes, retired from the worldly life to practise Yoga at the feet of his great Guru, the *Rishi*† Aurobindo to whose Ashram he, and many others besides, have dedicated all they had in order to follow the spiritual life enjoined by their Guru. You should know that at Sri Aurobindo Ashram there is no distinction of caste or creed, race or religion. I heard this from the lips of the late Sir Akbar Hydari himself who told me that he used to go there every year as on a pilgrimage. Naturally Dilip Kumar is a chip of the old block, having no prejudices, religious or sectarian. And though I am no connoisseur of music I may, I think, make bold to claim that very few persons in India—or rather in the world—have a voice like his, so rich and sweet and intense. And today his voice struck me as having grown even sweeter and richer than before. But I want now to draw your attention to the message of his song which you would do well to ponder deeply. For the song emphasises that the wealthy may possess everything on earth—wealth, glory, pomp and equipage—and yet remain intrinsically poorer than the pauper who has his all in all in and through possessing God whom we only call by different names to be able to quarrel with one another more effectively. If you will all take a leaf out of this Book of Supreme Wisdom you will be able to shed all prejudices that must mar the harmony of peace and happiness through brotherhood."

He then went on to dwell at some length on the unhappy war that was being waged in Kashmir and wound up with: "Let us all lay to our hearts the refrain of the *bhajan* which has been sung just now: that we all derive from one God who resides in us all, no matter by what name we choose to worship Him."

When, after the meeting, I conveyed to him my grateful appreciation, he beamed on me with his lovely smile and said: "You'll come tomorrow, won't you?"

"Well, Bapuji, I'd love to, you know," I faltered out, "but—er—it's like this: I have already booked a seat on a plane and my friends expect me at Lucknow tomorrow afternoon."

"That's a pity," he said making a wry face, "for I wanted to hear you sing the song '*ham aise deshake vasi*' which you taught Sucheta Kripalani."

That decided me. "How can one refuse you?" I laughed.

"That's the stuff to give to the likes of us," he returned at once as we all laughed out in chorus with him.

I had to stay in Delhi nearly a week.

The stenographer who took down his discourses daily called on me next morning and told me that when he had submitted to him his report the previous night Mahatmaji had reprimanded him for having written "Sri Aurobindo" instead of "Rishi Aurobindo" and then personally inserted the epithet "Rishi" before the Sage's name. This, naturally, made a deep impression on me and I wondered how I might best testify to him my deep gratitude. I cancelled my visit to Lucknow.

Next evening I arrived at Birla House a good quarter of an hour before time. The audience was a little bigger than on the evening of my first visit but the atmosphere was somewhat disquieting. I was told that a Sikh had registered an objection to Quran verses being inflicted on a predominantly Hindu audience and so it was on the cards that Gandhiji might not be holding the prayer at all. They pointed out to me the troublemaker: it was a Sikh stalwart with white beard and sombre face. As I fixed him with my gaze, he looked up and our eyes met. Instantly he hoisted himself out of his seat and almost ran up to me in a breathless state.

"Sir!" he roared angrily. "You are a *sadhu* and so must adjudicate. I appeal to you on bended knees to be fair. Tell me, is it right, can it be right, to foist on us, Hindus, verses from the scriptures of those who have massacred us ruthlessly, desecrated our homes, outraged our women—yes, *sadhuji*, who are not men but monsters, I say. Won't it be a slur on our honour and our manhood to have to listen after all this to this abomination—"

I restrained him in the middle of his fiery speech.

"But be quiet, my kind sir," I demurred, "for after having come here you shouldn't—"

"But why shouldn't I?" he flashed back. "I came here to hear Mahatmaji, not those Quran verses."

"But you knew he insisted on reading the Quran verses. So the better course for you would have been to stay away since you feel as you do. In any case do sit down and let him come. It's for him to adjudicate

for it's *his* meeting, not mine." Then placing my hand on his shoulder I added: "You'll at least hear me sing the name of God, won't you?"

"I'd loved to, provided you didn't bring in the Muslim God."

I couldn't help but laugh and answered: "But there's only one God, you know."

"I do," he returned, "but countless Satans whom *they* worship".

"Calm yourself, my friend," I replied helplessly; then I asked him to take his seat adding that I was going to sing of Krishna.

His face brightened. "Splendid!" he cried. "And I'll listen the whole night, for He is an authentic God." And he went back to his seat. It was not a moment too soon. For directly he had taken his seat they all rose: Gandhiji had just emerged into view flanked by the two ladies.

I knew Mahatmaji wanted me to sing the *bhajan*, "*Ham aise deshake vasi*". But as I looked down from the rostrum on the gathering I wondered whether any good purpose would be served by singing such a song in such an atmosphere of pent grievance. I could clearly see the excited face of the Sikh who had violently objected to the Quran verses and it was obvious to all but the wilfully blind that he was but a mouthpiece of the common run who had suffered so grievously and that with the ineradicable feeling that Mahatmaji was a friend of the Muslims and not of the Hindus. And seeing it so clearly (probably because I lived far away from the turbid atmosphere of the work-a-day world, the political world of feuds and strifes and irremediable misunderstandings) I could not but feel that it was worse than useless to attempt what was exceedingly difficult—the reconciling of irreconcilables—by a means which almost guaranteed failure. Anyone who could feel the pulse of the country knew—which the newspapers tried vainly to hide—that people had been growing restive all over India among the Hindus. Also I wondered how Mahatmaji could have lost sight of this simple fact that where love was intense it turned into hatred almost overnight when frustrated or even thwarted. It was evident that those who had come to hear him loved him, but that was precisely why they all felt so bitter against him for having let them down for no reason *they* could discover! So I decided it would be folly to sing "*ham aise deshake vasi*" in such an atmosphere of rankling hatred. For the song spoke exultantly of the Promised Land of bliss and love beyond the dualities—a veritable Nature's cornucopia which to the destitute must sound like cruel irony. So I decided on another which, I thought, would be more acceptable to the audience especially as it invoked the name of Krishna. Here is the translation:\*

*House in thy soul the flickerless lamp of love;  
O way-lost dupe, relume the angel flame  
In the wistful temple of dream: nurse in faith's grove  
The memorial rose of peace no thorn may shame.*

*Delivered from thy passions' lurid gleams  
And shadowing greeds, foes in the guise of friends,  
Know: in the deep of hush the soul redeems:  
She is the vanguard morn to darkness sends.*

*Her children in gloom, thy Motherland mourns and sighs,  
Play Beauty's flute like Krishna: thou art He.  
If thou wilt wake—the world, a-quiver, shall rise  
And mitred priests of love sing on with thee.*

*Hate never pays, though sorrows purify;  
Be poised in thy Self of love—incarnate, free.  
If love resign who shall reveal the sky?  
Soul's night is doom: her dawn—sure victory.*

*Be pledged to noble ways of the ancient Sun;  
If lose thou must, let it be life—not love.  
Shall clouds besiege thy star-dominion?  
"Up! time is fleeting!"—the bugle calls above!*

While I was singing the fourth verse I could not keep back a deep upsurge of sadness. It was not through such preachings and sermonisings that the world is likely to be regenerated. How to stave off the inevitable: love resigning? How can a creature like man win through, here and now, to citizenship of the Promised Land, a creature who—to quote from Sri Aurobindo's epic, *Savitri*—is still but

*A link between the demi-god and the beast,  
He knows not his own greatness nor his aim;  
He has forgotten why he has come and whence;  
His spirit and his members are at war;  
His heights break off too low to reach the skies,  
His mass is buried in the animal mire,*

and, above all, he

*Would guide the world, himself he cannot guide,  
He would save his soul, his life he cannot save.*

A sense of darkness crept upon me relentlessly which made me close my eyes till I partially succeeded in putting myself into the song, and in the third verse in particular, improvising on the flute of Krishna regenerat-

\* The gist of this speech was given in all the papers next day.

† A Sage who is a Seer.

\* From the Hindi song of the Poet Abul Hafiz Jalandhari.

## MY LAST WEEK WITH GANDHIJI—Continued from previous page

ing the unhappy world. When I opened my eyes I saw the eyes of the Sikh glistening with tears as he lifted them to mine. But to proceed.

Gandhiji spoke once more but in a sadder tone dropping his voice occasionally when it dwindled down to a whisper which even the microphone failed to amplify into audibility. He said:

"You have heard again a beautiful *bhajan*. But although its tune is simple, the trained voice of the gifted singer has imported into it a sweetness all his own. The message of the song has it that the true devotee's inner being should be converted into a veritable temple where the object of adoration should be love of all as incarnations of the Divine. This is necessary, for not till the heart is finally purified can come to us the vision which reveals the One in all and all in the One. So it is of the most urgent importance that you remind yourselves that till your minds and hearts have achieved this purity nothing has really been achieved since not till then will our souls have become so many temples where true worship can be offered to the Supreme."

The meeting broke up and I walked slowly in line with Mahatmaji with a crowd following us. The old Sikh overtook me and made me his obeisance and thanked Mahatmaji warmly. The latter gave him a long look but it was a sad look he bestowed. When those in attendance on Mahatmaji shook off the others he halted and turned to me. "But you didn't sing that song," he said in a tone of gentle reproach.

"Surely you know why I didn't?" I answered. Then as he only nodded I went on apologetically: "I thought the one I sang was a more apposite song in the circumstances."

He lifted his eyebrows in his characteristic way.

"And didn't I drive its message home?" he laughed. Then as we moved on, he added: "In one sense I am glad you didn't sing it this evening. In another I am sorry because you may be set on flying to Lucknow to-morrow and then I shall have missed hearing it from you."

I laughed and said: "But I have cancelled my Lucknow trip."

He gave a chuckle. "Do you know I wished fervently that this might happen?"

"And how could anything not happen in our country which you wish to happen?"

He dropped his eyes and said: "How I wish what you say in irony were true!"

I hastened to answer: "I only meant, Bapuji, that your wanting to hear me sing again did the trick. For after that I felt I simply couldn't leave before singing once more to you—the more because," I added, "I couldn't leave without having expressed to you my deep gratitude for having referred to Sri Aurobindo and his Ashram with such appreciative reverence; and I must thank you especially for having gone out of your way to pay your homage to one who is a glory to India and is still so often grievously misunderstood."

He appraised me for a few seconds, his eyes raining kindness, then answered: "But how could I have done otherwise—not to give one so great his bare due?" He laughed and blessed me as I made him my parting deep bow. I experienced an exaltation, and yet I felt a profound sadness.... The catastrophic vision recurred to me again and again...relentlessly.

### \* \* \* \* \*

#### Sense of Frustration and Inner Loneliness

When I arrived at the prayer-meeting next evening I met my old Sikh friend who came up almost running, his face glowing with enthusiasm.

"But tell me," I said, waving his compliments aside, "you will behave tonight, won't you?"

"I promise, Sadhuji.....what songs...."

But I was unimpressed. For as he went on I became absent-minded and wondered whether it wasn't merely wishful thinking. For did music really help? Wasn't human nature in the mass too deeply infected with the virus of the ego to be appreciably healed by such superficial nostrums?—

*The light his soul has brought his mind has lost;  
All he has learned is soon again in doubt;  
A sun to him seems the shadow of his thoughts,  
Then all is shadow again and nothing is true....\**

If this be so, I brooded, why must I sing what I was going to sing tonight:

*The land where lies our home of homes  
Is a land of blooms without a thorn:  
Fear's grisly forests grow no more,  
Pain's harvest there is never borne.  
Love's rivulet ripples blue and long,  
Creation is a thrilled delight,  
Heaven's vision there redeems the earth  
And Time flows timeless day and night.  
There every prayer is self-fulfilled,  
None bargains when he gives away,*

*There life is fashioned in moulds of Truth  
And none is pawned in illusion's play.*

*Outlawed are selfish clamours there,  
Exiled the sense of thine and mine,  
No owner rules, no slave obeys,  
Nor heat ever dogs the Light Divine.*

*'Tis not a poet's fairy tale,  
This world of blissful fantasy:  
It waits in every heart to be won,  
Our last incredible victory.*

But I had to sing it all the same when, after the prayer, Gandhiji made me a sign. While I sang, my sadness gave place little by little to resignation if not joy. But the respite was brief, for the upsurge of my melancholy drowned my exaltation at one sweep as soon as I came to the end of my song. Gandhiji must have surmised it, somehow, for he did not give me his usual look of greeting after the song. This made me sadder still as I had a feeling that with all his brave attempt to hide it he was weary to the bones...world-weary and...longing for sleep. Wasn't that the deeper reason why he had such a rooted predilection for such a 'fairy tale' song? Do what I would, I simply could not attend to what he said while commenting on the song. So I can but quote it here from a press report of his address:†

"The prayer, therefore went on as usual. Sri Dilip Kumar Roy sang the *bhajan*, whose first line, Gandhiji said, meant that the devotees belonged to the land where there was neither misery nor sorrow. Gandhiji explained that in his opinion it had a double meaning. The one was that they belonged to a country—that is, India—in which there was neither misery nor sorrow. He could not recall a time when there was neither misery nor sorrow in India. The first meaning, therefore, was an aspiration of the poet. The second meaning, had reference to the soul and to the body which was its abode. Thus the soul inhabited a body which was, in the language of the *Gita*, the abode of true religion and not the abode of fleeting passions. The condition attached to the success of the pursuit was that the owner of the abode was free from the six noted enemies whose names were anger, malice, greed, passion etc. The blissful state was capable of attainment by everyone. And if that happened on any appreciable scale, the poet's dream about India would be quickly realised...."

After the meeting I made him my last obeisance on the lawn. He looked at me tenderly with his gentle sad eyes and said:

"It was good, that song."

"I know you had a special liking for it."

He sighed. "When do I hear you next? Tomorrow?"

"I regret, Bapuji," I said apologetically, "but you have kept me for nearly a week. I must leave tomorrow for Calcutta."

He smiled. "Well, well! If you must, you must and there's an end of it. But I will miss you tomorrow evening at my prayer-meeting."

When I left him, my eyes were moist with tears. I was moved by him as never before. And though I tried hard, I could not shake off the suggestion that I would never see him again. But although this thought made me feel more for him, I knew it had nothing to do with the overwhelming impression he had made on my mind, and the fact that I could not account for my being swept off my feet in spite of myself only added to the sum total impression he had left on me. For I could not truthfully deny that I was irrevocably out of sympathy all along the line with his political lead during the last few unhappy years of his life and that I had gone out of my way to visit him with a definite motive. I remembered also that I had done so rather conscience-stricken lest paying him a personal homage at the present time—and particularly at his prayer meeting—should betoken a kind of insincerity. Furthermore, I had feared to catch the contagion of his political ideology. Nevertheless, had he not charmed away my gnawing sense of guilt by a mere touch of his magic personality and even put me under a deeper debt by being kinder to one who was finding it difficult not to judge him more adversely with time? He was too sensitive by nature not to have missed my spontaneous ardour of old and yet here he was more ready than ever to lavish his abiding affection on one who had definitely grown recalcitrant! This was indeed somewhat of a startling experience for a born egoist like myself and it made me see him in an entirely new light, as it were, which not only enhanced the value of his personality in my eyes but made me feel a profound sympathy with his growing sense of frustration and inner isolation accruing from his deepening disenchantment. No wonder he loved the fairy tale song despite his inability to see in it any gospel save that of an individual salvation here and there. As I reclined musing in the aeroplane I recaptured as in a clear vision his frail figure. I saw his face, lonely and wistful, caught the echo of his laughter fraught with pain, and as I visualised him thus from a new perspective a unique line of the great Bhavabhuti recurred again and again to my mind: *Bajradapi kathorani mriduni kusumadapi:*

*Harder than the trump of doom  
Yet softer than an opening bloom!*

\* \* \* \* \*

Continued on next page

\* From *Savitri*—Book III, Canto IV—Sri Aurobindo.

† Printed subsequently in "Delhi Diary" . . . pp. 127-8.

# THE PROBLEM OF PROBLEMS

BY RISHABHCHAND

If India is not to drift upon the flood of time or toss about in the cross-currents of contemporary ideologies, she must decide once and for all what is the *raison d'être* of her soul and how best she can fulfil it. For, she has, indeed, a soul, an inmost core of existence, which is indestructible and which has been seeking to manifest itself through the long centuries of her eventful history. It is this soul that has kept her alive even in the dark periods of discomfiture and decay. Conquered, despoiled, humiliated, even half-converted, she has persisted with an invincible faith and patience till her ageless culture and her exhaustless vitality have asserted themselves in a splendid burst of new creation. A chequered career has been hers, through many a trial and vicissitude, many an advance and recoil; but there has always been behind her efforts and ordeals, if we have vision to perceive, an ineluctable destiny, a firm but flexible purpose which has been progressively fulfilling itself through all the changes and chances of her existence.

## India's Aspiration and Quest

What is that destiny and that purpose? The purpose was voiced and the destiny outlined in the ringing words of a Yogini ages ago—"What shall I do with that which will not make me immortal?" That has been the constant cry of the soul of India, its unfailing aspiration and quest. It does not necessarily imply a renunciation of the world and its objects and a turning of one's back upon life and its activities, but it means a probing by that soul, of the depths of its own being and discovering there the truth which makes life meaningful and the world a promising field of self-fulfilment. The truth, the reality, the essence, the substratum, the ultimate sense and significance first, and then the study of the self-deployment of that reality in Time and Space and the development of its significance and the accomplishment of its purpose—this has been the invariable trend of the thought and feeling of the true children of India. Even in the days of decline when, their vision dimmed, they have run after the ephemeral objects of the world and coveted the pinchbeck prizes of life, they have always reverted, perhaps with the exaggerated ardour of a recovered faith, to the master passion of their national existence—the truth, the reality, the eternal essence. Politics, society, education, culture, everything has been accepted and developed, but only to express this fundamental urge or the inner experience resulting from it. This irrepressible urge of the soul of India is the truth of its *swabhava* and the key to its life-fulfilment.

Today when there is a country-wide convulsion following the first flush of freedom, a heaving and ferment in the national body politic and much hope and confused seeking, it is imperative that the captains of the nation should veer round to the right perspective and steer the barque in the right direction. For if a wrong direction is taken out of sheer ignorance, impatience or intellectual perversity, the freedom that has been won may well turn out to be a new bondage. The triumphs and achievements of the present may not all be a sure index to the rightness of the vision and the impeccability of the policies followed in the government of the country. It is not unoften that they flare up and flash for a moment only to be followed

by an engulfing gloom of defeat and despair. A strong hand, a masterful action is, of course, the secret of political success, but if the action done has not sprung from a clear knowledge or a calm reflection and harmonious feeling, but is a result of muddled thought and momentary impulse, the success achieved may sometimes prove worse than a failure. Nothing is more delusive than the plaudits of the world and it will be suicidal to read in them the rightness of one's judgment and action.

## The Character of Our Greatest Leaders

The one outstanding fact of resurgent India is that the great pioneering and dynamic personalities born during the last 150 years or so have been invariably men of unquestionable religious and spiritual calibre. If these illustrious sons of India are the heralds of her destiny, then the nature of that destiny can very well be known by a close study of their thoughts and activities. They are the landmarks in the history of the country.

Rammohan Roy who awoke India and shook her out of her age-long lethargy and distraction, was an inspired man with spiritual vision and power. The world knows only of his outer efforts and achievements, but little of his inner life which was nourished on the honey-dew of divine communion. The spirit of the Upanishads shaped and sustained the lofty idealism of this intrepid social and religious reformer who had also in him a strong vein of Tantricism and an apostolic fervour.

Keshav Chandra Sen was an ardent devotee, brimming over with spiritual emotion and eclectic idealism, and, can, by no manner of means, be called a realist or rationalist.

Ramkrishna Paramhansa was a towering spiritual genius who proclaimed the pre-eminence of the Spirit and never concealed his disgust of the worldly pursuits un consecrated to the Divine. He came as an epitome of all that was potent and productive in the highest cultural traditions of the country.

Swami Vivekananda, the virile mouthpiece of Ramkrishna, laid down the large lines of the Indian renaissance and may be justly called the father of most of the progressive movements of modern India. His whole personality was steeped in the aroma of the Spirit, and if there has ever been, since the time of the Buddha, a man whose every accent breathed the freedom of his soul and every action the purity and intensity of his patriotism, it was Swami Vivekananda.

Dayanand Saraswati, an indomitable Sannyasi and social reformer, drew all his strength and missionary zeal from the Vedas and infused a new revivalist spirit into the hearts of his countrymen.

Then came Sri Aurobindo who first made the voice of the Spirit ring out in the midst of the clamours of politics and taught anew the love and worship of India as the Mother. Politics was at once electrified and nationalism exalted into a sacred creed. But even that was not enough to unseal the heart of India and set flowing the light and force of a new creation. Something more was needed, something more positively, potently, directly, dynamically spiritual; and in pursuit of it, Sri Aurobindo retired from politics and has since been labouring to canalise its descent upon

*Continued on next page*

## MY LAST WEEK WITH GANDHIJI—Continued from previous page

### The Far Call

I was invited by the post-graduate students of the Calcutta University to give a lecture-demonstration under the aegis of the Vice Chancellor. The subject was: "Points of Contact between Indian and Western Melodies"; the date: January 30, 1948. I had just sung a German Wiegensong of Curschmann:

*So schlaf' in Ruh! so schlaf' in Ruh!  
Die Sterne leuchten hell und klar.  
Es kommt von dort der Engel-schar  
Die Äuglein zu,  
Mein Kindlein du!  
Nun schlaf' und schlaf' and schlaf' in Ruh!*

I then proceeded to describe how close in spirit this melody was to the plaintive and other-worldly vein so grateful to the Indian soul when, suddenly the news came, a bolt from the blue, that Gandhiji had just been shot dead in Delhi by a Hindu. The meeting was dissolved and a boy went hysterical. Gloom descended on us all.

On my way back home I was struck by a coincidence: the song I had composed and was going to sing was a mystic duologue between Mother and Child:

*"I will now sleep in thy love's deep  
And toy no more with things that pall.  
I have at last heard thy far call:*

*Without thy dream naught will redeem  
Nor hearts sing like a waterfall."*

*"O come to me: I'll croon for thee  
My coral cadenced lullaby  
And heal thine ail with rain of sky.  
For thee I wait at Heaven's gate  
For which I made thee pine and cry."*

*"I never knew—thou wouldst endue  
My life of dust with thy star-shine  
And shower thy boons, O Mother mine!  
I only cried when none replied  
And deemed remote thy Grace Divine."*

*"But I know still what thou must will,  
And so I lingered day and night  
To help thee home—my way-lost sprite!  
When darks now loom thou cleave the gloom,  
O hail!—reclaim thy deep birth-right!"*

I had fever that night and heard myself singing again and again in my dream:

*When darks now loom thou cleave the gloom,  
O hail!—reclaim thy deep birth-right....  
Deep birth-right....deep birth-right....*

# THE LANGUAGE PROBLEM AND INDIA

BY NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

I

English and French are the two languages that hold and express today the culture of humanity at its best and at its largest. They are the two international languages recognised as such and indispensable for all international dealings: and although to be internationally minded one would do better to possess both, still as things stand at present, they appeal to two different groups, each in its own way and each has its hemisphere where it is prevalent, almost as a second mother tongue. Geographically, America and the British Commonwealth (including India) belong to the English sphere, while the European continent, South America and a good half of Canada are more at home in French. In Asia, the eastern part looks more to English, while the western part (Turkey, Syria, even Persia and Afghanistan) seems to lean more towards French.

Almost till the end of the last century French was the language of culture all over Europe. It was taught there as part of liberal education in all the countries and a sojourn in France was considered necessary to complete the course. Those who were interested in human culture and wished to specialise in *belles lettres* had to cultivate a more or less intimate acquaintance with the Gallic Minerva. English has since risen to eminence, owing to the far-flung political and commercial net that the nation has spread; it has become almost an indispensable instrument for communication between races that are non-English and even far from England. Once upon a time it was said of an European that he had two countries, his own and France: today it can be said with equal or even more truth that a citizen of the modern world has two mother-tongues, his own and English.

Even then, even though French has been ousted from the market-place, it holds still a place of honour in the cultural world, among the élite and the intelligentsia. I have said French rules the continent of Europe. Indeed even now an intellectual on the Continent feels more at ease in French and would prefer to have the French version of a theme or work rather than the English. Indeed we may say in fact that the two languages appeal to two types of mentality, each expressing a characteristically different version of the same original truth or fact or statement. If you wish to have your ideas on a subject clear, rational and unambiguous, you must go to French. French is the language *par excellence* of law and logic. Mental presentation, as neat and transparent as possibly can be is the special aid French language brings to you. But precisely because it is intellectually so clear and neat, it has often to avoid or leave out certain shades and nuances or even themes which do not go easily into its logical frame. English is marvellous in this respect, that being an illogical language it is more supple and pliant and even rich and through its structural ambiguities can catch and reflect or indicate ideas and realities, rhythms and tones that are supra-rational. French, as it has been pointed out by French writers themselves, is less rich in synonyms than English. There each word has a very definite and limited (or limiting) connotation and words cannot be readily interchanged.

English, on the other hand, has a richer, almost a luxuriant vocabulary, not only in respect of the number of words, but also in the matter of the variation in the meaning a given word conveys. Of course, *double entendre* or suggestiveness is a quality or capacity that all languages that claim a status must possess: it is necessary to express something of the complexity or "polyphonism", as it is sometimes termed, of the human consciousness. Still in French that quality has a limited, if judicious and artistic, application; in English it is a wild growth.

French expresses better human psychology, while metaphysical realities find a more congenial home in the English language. This is not to say that the English are born metaphysicians and that the French are in the same manner natural psychologists. This is merely to indicate a general trait or possible capacity of the respective languages. The English or the English language can hold no candle to the German race or the German language in the matter of metaphysical abstruseness. German is rigid, ponderous, if recondite. English is more flexible and has been used and can be used with great felicity by the mystic and the metaphysician. The insular English with regard to their language and letters have been more open to external influences; they have benefited by their wide contact with other peoples and races and cultures.

The stamp of mental clarity and neat psychological or introspective analysis in the French language has been its asset and a characteristic capacity from the time of Descartes—through Malebranche and Voltaire and the Encyclopaedists—right down to Bergson. The English are not by nature metaphysicians, in spite of the Metaphysicals: but greatness has been thrust upon them. The strain of Celtic mysticism and contact with Indian spiritual lore have given the language a higher tension, a deeper and longer breath, a greater expressive capacity in that direction.

But French seems to have made ample amends for this deficiency (in the matter of variety of experiences especially in the supra-rational regions) by developing a quality which is peculiar to its turn of psychological curiosity and secular understanding—a refined sensibility, a subtle sensitiveness, an alert and vibrant perception that puts it in contact with the inner (even though not so much the higher), almost the hidden and occult movements of life. That is how mysticism—*la mystique*—comes by a back-door as it were into the French language.

It seems natural for the English language to dwell on such heights of spiritual or metaphysical experience as AE gives us:

*A spirit of unfettered will  
Through light and darkness moving still  
Within the All to find its own,  
To be immortal and alone.*

—(Endurance).

Continue on next page

## THE PROBLEM OF PROBLEMS—Continued from previous page

earth. When Sri Aurobindo retired, Mahatma Gandhi stepped into the field of politics. He claimed no spiritual vision and power, but his eclectic ethics and extraordinary earnestness and will-power brought into the stuffy and turbid atmosphere of politics a strong, bracing air of self-discipline and fearlessness. If the country made colossal strides towards freedom and won it under his leadership, it was due not so much to the force and subtlety of his politics as to the magnetism of a moral idealism which informed it and the fire of sacrifice which imparted to it a rare glow and intensity. But since his departure, much as India has forged ahead on many fronts, in her heart of hearts she is confused and vacillating. Evidently she is casting about for a more seeing leadership and a more determined direction on the lines of her individual genius.

This uninterrupted stream of spiritual or religious inspiration illustrates the native trend of the national soul and we have learnt our history in vain if we have failed to take stock of it. Wave after wave of foreign cultures has rolled over India, submerging much of her surface existence, but not one has been able to touch the immortal core which has ever remained immune, impregnable, unsullied.

### Tendencies Today and the True Direction

Today there is a strong tendency, here and there articulate, but mostly implicit, among the political leaders of India, to fight shy of spirituality, run down religion and proclaim India a secular state ready to march shoulder to shoulder with the sister states of Europe and America towards the harmony, peace and prosperity of a socialistic Utopia. Spirituality has become sus-

pect in its own home and religion is flouted as a rank fomenter of fanatical excesses. It is asserted time and again that India has a great part to play in international culture and politics and particularly in the general awakening of the Asiatic peoples, but what is that part, what does India's leadership of the Eastern nationalities precisely mean and what will be her distinct contribution to the world-culture of tomorrow?—these are some of the most momentous questions which very few people care to consider. Indian politics today is a mere mouthing of Western theories and an aping of Western ways. Life is seen through the spectacles of the European or American politician and a drastic intellectual denationalisation is regarded as a sign of modernism and cultural catholicity. It is high time the Indian intelligentsia awoke to the delusion of this exotic modernism and turned its attention to the values and verities for which India has stood through the ages and for the vindication of which, not only in her own life but also in the life and culture of the world, she is rising again.

This is the problem of problems confronting every thinker and national worker in India today—how to sweep away the gewgaws of materialistic rationalism and reinstate the eternal values of the dynamic Spirit, upon which alone a stable unity and harmony can be broad-based in human society. This will not mean being obscurantist and insular, as many wrongly suppose, but recognising fully the principle of diversity in unity and the inviolability of the self-law of every individual and communal integer. And it is Indian spirituality alone that can lift mankind out of the morass of a mechanical uniformity in which it is fast sinking and lead it to the richly diversified unity of the self-manifesting spirit.

# THE LANGUAGE PROBLEM AND INDIA—Continued from previous page

It can dare even such mystic summits as Sri Aurobindo discloses:

*Earth is now girdled with trance and Heaven is put round her  
for vesture.*

*Wings that are brilliant with fate sleep at Eternity's gate.  
Time waits, vacant, the Lightning that kindles, the Word that  
transfigures:*

*Space is a stillness of God building his earthly abode.*

—(Collected Poems II. p. 363)

But French too in her own inimitable way gives us glimpses of a beyond and elsewhere, as in these well-known lines of Baudelaire:

*Il est des parfums frais comme des chairs d'enfants,  
Doux comme les hautbois, verts comme les prairies,  
—Et d'autres, corrompus, riches et triomphants,  
Ayant l'expansion des choses infinies\* . . . . .*

—(Correspondances).

or this exquisite passage reverberating with the sense of awe and intimacy in the presence of the infinite unknown:

*O Conscience immobile et sereine, Tu veilles aux confins du monde  
comme un Sphinx d'éternité. Et pourtant à certains Tu livres Ton  
secret. Ils peuvent devenir Ton vouloir souverain qui choisit sans  
préférer, exécute sans désirer.†*

—Prières et Méditation de la Mère.

In other words we can say in a somewhat crudely general manner (*in grosso modo*) that if English soars high, French dives within: if English is capable of scaling the heavens of the Spirit, French enters as easily into the intimacies of the soul (*âme*). It is these intimacies or soul touches that form as it were the inner lining to the mental clarities that give French its external structure; while in English as a counterpart to its spiritual altitudes we meet on the hither side a luxuriant objectivity of sense perception. Thus the two languages are in a way strangely complementary, and in a perfect human culture both have to be equally attended to, given equal importance, if completeness or integrality is our aim.

## II

French and English being given the place of honour, now the question is with regard to the vernacular of those who do not speak either of these languages. We have to distinguish two categories of languages: national and international. French and English being considered international languages *par excellence*, the others remain as national languages, but their importance need not be minimised thereby. First of all, along with the two major international languages, there may be a few others that can be called secondary or subsidiary international languages according as they grow and acquire a higher status. Thus Russian or an Asiatic, even an Indian, language may attain that position, because of wide extension or inherent value or popularity or for some other reason. Indeed, a national language cultivated and enriched by its nationals can force itself upon the world's attention and fairly become a world language. One Tagore was able to give that kind of world importance to the Bengali language.

It may be questioned whether too many languages are not imposed on us in this way and whether it will not mean in the end a Babel and inefficiency. It need not be so and it is not going to be so. We must remember the age we are in, its composite structure, its polyphonic nature. In the ancient and mediaeval ages, the ages of separatism and exclusiveness, of clans and tribes and regions, even in the later age of states and nations, the individual group-consciousness was strong and sedulously fostered. Languages and literatures grew and developed more or less independently and with equal vigour, although always through some kind of give and take. But the modern world has been made so inextricably one, ease of communication and free interchange have obliterated the separating boundaries, not only geographical but psychological. The modern consciousness has so developed and is so circumstanced that one can very easily be bilingual or even trilingual: indeed one has to be so, speaking and writing with equal felicity not only one's mother tongue but one or more adopted tongues. Modern culture means that.

Naturally I am referring to the educated or cultured stratum of humanity, the élite. This restriction, however, does not vitiate or nullify our position. The major part of humanity is bound and confined to the soil where they are born and bred. Their needs do not go beyond the assistance of their vernacular. A liberal education, extending even to the masses, may and does include acquaintance with one or two foreign languages, especially in these days, but in fact it turns out to be only a nodding acquaintance, a secondary and marginal acquisition. When Latin was the

*lingua franca* in Europe or Sanskrit in India, it was the élite, the intelligentsia, the Brahmin, the *clerc*, who were the trustee and guardian of the language. That position has virtually been taken in modern times, as I have said, by English and French.

The cultivation of a world language need not mean a neglect or discouragement of the national or regional language. Between the two, instead of there being a relation of competition, there can be a relation of mutual aid and helpfulness. The world language can influence the local language in the way of its growth and development and can itself be influenced and enriched in the process. The history of the relation of English and the Indian languages, especially Bengali, is an instance in point. A question has been raised with regard to the extent of that influence, involving a very crucial problem: the problem of Indian writers in English. It is said Indians have become clever writers in English because of the English domination. Now that India is free and that domination gone, the need of English will be felt less and finally it may even totally disappear from the Indian field. What has become of the Persian language in India? There were any number of Indian writers in Persian, but with the disappearance of the Muslim rule the supremacy, even the influence, of that imperial language has disappeared. At the most, English may remain as the necessary medium for international affairs—that is to say, just learnt by a comparatively few for the minimum business transaction. The heart of the country cannot express itself in that foreign tongue and no literature of the Indo-Anglian type can grow permanently here.

But this is judging the present or the future by the past. Mankind is no longer exclusively or even mainly national in its outlook; it cannot remain so if it is to progress, to take the next step in evolution. We say, if mankind overpasses the nationalistic stage and attains something of the international consciousness and disposition, it would be possible and even natural for a few at least among the educated to express themselves in and through the wider world language, not merely as an instrument of a business deal, but as a vehicle of literary and aesthetic creation.

There are certain external—social and political—circumstances in existence today and will be more and more in evidence perhaps with the lapse of time which tend to corroborate and strengthen that possibility. A language learnt for commercial or diplomatic transaction cannot remain limited to that function. Those who intend merely to learn may end very probably by cultivating. And then it has been suggested that in the march of evolution towards world unity, there is likely to be an intermediate stage or rung where nations with special affinities or common interests will group together, forming larger collectivities: they will be free associations of free nations, the Commonwealth as it has been termed. If India is to link herself specially to the English-speaking group, the English language will not cease to be an acquaintance but continue to be or develop into a very good friend.

It may be urged that a foreign language, in order that it may be the medium of literary expression even for the few, must have some living contact with the many, the people themselves. Some kind of atmosphere is needed where the few can breathe and live the language they adopt. Even for an individual when he takes to a foreign tongue, it is necessary

in order to be perfectly at home and master in that language that he should live some time (seven years is the minimum given by a French critic) in the country of the language adopted. In India, now that the British are gone, how can that atmosphere or influence be maintained? English letters may yet flourish here for a few years, because of the atmosphere created in the past; but they are sure to dwindle and fade away like flowers on a plant without any roots in a sustaining soil. Indeed English was never a flowering from the mother soil, it was something imposed from above, at best grafted from outside. Circumstances have changed and we cannot hope to eternalise it.

Against this argument we repeat what we have suggested, a national language flowers in one way, an international language flowers in another way. The atmosphere, if not the soil, will be in the new international consciousness, the inner life of mankind. That will become a more and more vivid, concrete and active reality. And minds open to it, soaked in it, will find it quite natural to express themselves in a language that embodies that spirit. In this way, English, even though it might have lost a good deal of its external dominion in India, can still retain psychologically its living reality there, in minds that form as it were the vanguard of a new international age, with just the minimum amount of support needed from external circumstances and these are and may be available. And it would not be surprising, if not only English but French too in a similar way finds her votaries from among the *international set* in our country.

All this, we repeat again, need not be and will not be at the cost of the national language or languages, rather the contrary.



# THE WORLD CRISIS AND INDIA

BY  
"Synergist"

## XI. TOWARDS A NEW WORLD

### (a) INDIA'S SPIRITUAL CULTURE

We saw in the last essay that ours is a problem of ends and purposes; it is certainly not one of merely finding the right means to attain an end supposed to be self-evident to all. We are as ignorant of ends and purposes as of the means we employ to realise what we think to be the right ends, and it is this ignorance of ends which makes us pursue false ends. If we could have a true vision and knowledge of the real goal of life, we would be able to co-operate with the underlying purpose of existence and create a better world. It is this end that will determine the means we shall employ to attain it. We therefore came to the conclusion that the metaphysic needed for creating a new world-view must be one which can show this purpose. We then saw that such a metaphysic could only be a spiritual metaphysic—one created upon the foundation of a spiritual realisation and consequently having its very roots in Reality\*, and not any intellectual metaphysical system merely based upon the findings of physical science and biology; only such a spiritual metaphysic can give rise to a living religion and a true ethic.

We have so far seen in bare outline the kind of non-anthropomorphic yet theo-centric world-view needed, and the spiritual metaphysic—having as its goal the New-birth of Humanity into the Spirit and the divinisation of man—which will serve as its *Unterbau*, its basis, and the Religion of a Divine Humanity arising therefrom. Now before we proceed to see the type of ethic we need, one that can receive its sanction from such a metaphysic, we shall see what part India has to play in the New World Order, because it is India that has to give men a new world-view.

#### India and the New World Order.

When we stated in the second essay that India must become the torch-bearer of the New World Order, because with her rich store of spiritual and psychological knowledge she is eminently suited to help mankind to take the next step in its evolution, and play the leading part in solving the present crisis of our civilisation, we were neither voicing a patriotic sentiment nor trying to live in the glories of the past. In spite of the outer turbulent conditions, there is a spiritual force working in India today, more puissant and irresistible than any yet felt in her consciousness; she has today an all-comprehending and integral spiritual knowledge and luminous vision the like of which she has never attained in her great past.

She has a spiritual metaphysic which can give rise to the kind of world-view mankind needs today; and she can best serve the world not by merely giving it, but by herself creating a spiritual culture on a basis of such a metaphysic. This she can only do by realising the Spirit herself and making it the governing principle of her life. After she has done this, she must become a radiating centre of its Light, Power and Bliss, and help in the regeneration of man and his final divinisation.

That is the reason why she must not attempt to create for herself the Western type of culture; she must not only be careful to see that she does not get torn by pseudo-religious strifes, she must also be careful not to get shut up in so-called secular formulas borrowed from European culture, a culture which some of the finest minds in the West are trying to rejuvenate by infusing in it Vedantic strains. She can surely assimilate from the world whatever does not run counter to her aims and ideals, and all that is conducive to her development, but her culture must be essentially spiritual. She has much to learn from the West, especially the right ordering of her physical existence, but whatever she takes she must transmute by making the Spirit its formative power.

The ideal of the modern Western rationalistic-utilitarian-hedonistic culture is that of materially well provided beings living in a perfectly functioning economic society. The West believes in a rational mechanised civilisation and is convinced that by reason and science it can establish the empire of man over nature and ultimately create on earth an ideal society. It does admire and encourage intellectual and aesthetic creations, but its mind is essentially pragmatic—it is haunted by the idea of necessity. It worships Life and not the Spirit, and often even mistakes the Life-force for the Spirit, and mind for the soul. With the exception of a few mystics and saints, post-mediaeval Europe has not been Spirit-conscious, it has been Life-conscious. Even before, its psychological bent was not very much different. Consequently it has created a culture that reflects its own inherent nature and consciousness. The philosophies that have influenced its civilisation have been materialistic, vitalistic or idealistic, but never truly spiritual. It must not be supposed from this that there have

\* For the difference between a spiritual metaphysic and an intellectual one refer to last essay: "The Need of a New World-View."

been no spiritual tendencies in the West except among scattered individual mystics—there have been a few spiritual movements, but they did not succeed; they could not get a response from minds whose natural bent was pragmatic, especially so when Spirit and Life were admitted to be irreconcilable opposites. That is why, as we saw, the message of Christ was not understood by Europe and only the ethical side of his teaching was stressed and the mystical side ignored.\*

When we turn to India we find that she has never accepted any interpretation of life other than the spiritual. She has never been satisfied with the appearances of things but has always known that the material cannot be properly understood without a true knowledge of the psychic and the spiritual, that the finite can only be understood in its relation with the Infinite, and the temporal in its relation with the Timeless Eternal. She found that man as he knew himself was only a part of his real self, that his true being was far greater and much more complex than it appeared on the surface, and that behind his outer consciousness there were other deeper and higher ranges, at the summit of which was the Supreme Truth. She saw that man was not chained forever to his lower nature, but could transcend it and find his true self in the One Divine Self who is the self of all.

That is why the culture she has created in the past has been a spiritual one. After years of subjugation she is finding her feet again and is making an effort to regain her right place in the world; but she will only be able to do so by once again contacting the Spirit and creating for herself a spiritual culture.

Such a culture affirms that the Ultimate Reality is a Divine Being, Lord of all existence, and regards the cosmic manifestation as an emanation and projection of His Being and as existing in Him, and man as a soul and power of His Being descended in Nature; it seeks to lift man from a lower level of consciousness to a higher one and to transform him from a rational animal into a highly developed intellectual and ethical being, and finally into a divinised being. Then it declares that the Supreme is not only a Transcendent Reality but is also the Indwelling Divine Person who lives in the inmost recesses of all beings, and that by surrendering to His influence and guidance man can partake of His Divine Consciousness and learn to live as "The eternal portion of the Divine."

#### The Spiritual Ethic.

We know now what type of metaphysic is needed for a new theo-centric world-view and the kind of religion such a metaphysic will give rise to. The next question is that of a new ethic—one that has a real sanction. Man's rules of conduct follow the curve of his own evolutionary ascent. In the early stages of his evolution he instinctively obeys the moral law given by his prophet or law-giver as an indisputable fact—its sanction is given by an extra-cosmic Personal Deity who is pictured as a glorified man having the same faults and foibles, and who punishes the wicked and rewards the virtuous. This may be called an Anthropomorphic Ethic. As he develops in himself a social conscience—a sense of co-operation and mutual aid, and finds a need to bridle the strong aggressive type who instead of co-operating with the weaker tries to subjugate him, he erects a moral code which will ensure a social equilibrium. The sanction for this is social utility. This is a Social Ethic. This code also like the first imposes an external control on the individual.

When he evolves further, and his mind comparatively frees itself from the bondage of his concupiscent nature, and as he learns not to be the helpless slave of his desires and passions, he tries to act according to what he thinks is right, good and just; he lays before himself a categorical imperative and tries to find the highest Truth and the highest Good and attempts to create an ideal ethic. This urge to find the absolutes of the true and the good has behind it the demand of the inner soul which secretly guides the outer man and endeavours to lead him towards a divine life upon earth. Such an Idealistic Ethic in its inner truth is not a Benthamite balancing between the rewards accruing from good and evil deeds, but is an attempt made by evolving man towards growing into a perfect and divine nature. And this is the real sanction for an Idealistic Ethic—that it acts as a refining and a sublimating influence on a man's being and prepares him for a greater life. Good always leads him towards a diviner nature which will be above suffering and grief caused by bondage to the lower nature, whilst evil keeps him securely anchored to it so that he is hindered from attaining a spiritual consciousness and nature,

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

## TOWARDS A NEW WORLD—Continued from previous page

a growth into which alone can give him knowledge, power, freedom and bliss.

But even this Idealistic Ethic is still an intellectual formula; it may be a plastic one and not a rigid moral rule, but still it cannot be called an absolute ethic—it can only be an interim ethic. When an absolute application is given to such an ethic it often becomes a distortion of the original truth it was supposed to contain. It does not have within it enough light and knowledge to serve at all times and under all conditions.

Only a Spiritual Ethic can be an absolute ethic—a law of right action that is not regulated by rules and formulas but one that has as its central movement a spontaneous truth-action executed from a direct truth-perception which sees each thing in its right relation with other things and can trace behind appearances the inner cause to its outer effect. Such an ethic can be none other than action done from a spiritual consciousness, or rather, action done in Yoga—that is, in union with the Divine. When by a conquest of desire, conversion of consciousness, and total self-surrender man attains constant union with his Divine Creator and learns to act each moment and in each thing no longer according to the dictates of his ignorant mind but in obedience to the Divine Will, he is said to act in Yoga. In such a Yogic action, he does not have to mentally discriminate between good and evil and right and wrong—the All-seeing and All-knowing Divine Presence that envelops and penetrates his whole being guides all his thoughts and actions. This is the true Spiritual Ethic, an ethic that is rooted in Truth, grounded in Reality and which can be made operative in actuality. When one reaches the highest Truth-plane of the Divine Reality and attains a gnostic vision of all existence, then one apprehends the real-ideas, the seed-truths, and realises that our human values are their distorted reflections in earth-life. Of course this Spiritual Ethic is not one which all men can practise; but one has to begin somewhere; till men reach a state of consciousness when they will be able to practise such an ethic, they should endeavour to practise the Idealistic Ethic, the tenets of which will be given to them by those who have attained constant union with the Supreme, and who are consequently fitted to be the guides of those who aspire to live a divine life.

### A Spiritual Psychology.

So now our new world-view has a spiritual metaphysic, a religion and an ethic; but these only point the way to the ultimate goal—they do not show how one can actually attain it. For this we need a new Psychology—first, a body of knowledge which can reveal the whole working of a man's personality, the psychological structure of his being with all its levels and

all the ranges of his consciousness—its depths and wideesses as well as its heights. It must be a psychology that takes its stand on the spiritual metaphysic, for when certain fundamental questions like the descent of the soul from its Transcendent Source into Nature, or its evolution through various lives, are discussed, psychology will merge into metaphysics. Needless to say this psychology will have to avoid the tendency of some of the modern Western systems to take up one aspect of a man's nature or level of his consciousness, generally the darkest or the most turbid, and to try to explain by it his whole nature and the entire field of his activity.

It must also be able to show the working behind the urges of a man's natural being, like the power-urge, the sex-urge and the safety-urge, as well as those of his inner soul-being—the urge to seek the highest truth, good and beauty, and the aspiration to seek God and to attain divine perfection.

Then this psychology must have its practical side—it must lay down a scientifically formulated spiritual discipline by following which scrupulously man can harmonise his inner and outer nature, integrate his whole personality round his true being—his soul-being, and then attain a higher level of consciousness and nature. It must also give the workings of the process by which his mental, vital and physical nature can be transmuted by the alchemy of the Spirit.

Finally it must show man how to actualise and make operative in his life the truths revealed by the metaphysic, so that his religion does not remain lip-worship but becomes a path that leads towards God-realisation and divinisation.

Only by possessing such a metaphysic, ethic and psychology will it be possible to understand the problem of collective living. It is only on such a foundation of the Spirit that it will be possible to create a just system of social relationships in which the individual will find his right place in the collectivity and will work for its good, and in which the collectivity will realise itself through the development of the individual who will become the spearhead of its evolutionary movement.

When man will learn to live not on his surface but within his depths, when he is one with the Divine within, he will be able to contact all things and beings in their depths, and know definitely as a fact of experience that other beings are also like him emanations of the Divine, and have descended into Nature for a common purpose—to manifest God in life. When men will realise this a true inner oneness will be attained by the human race, and only then will it be possible to create a greater life upon earth—a life lived in God and for God.

## (b) THE SOLUTION

The next problem before us is—from where are we going to get such a complete philosophy of life? The ancient philosophies of India in spite of their greatness are not complete; they have not only to be re-interpreted in terms that can be understood by the modern mind, but also carried a step further—a very necessary step, for they do not give an adequate answer to the problem of ends. In the last analysis they all affirm that the Static Immutable Self is the Ultimate Reality, and that the world-manifestation is either an illusion or an inferior phenomenal existence from which the individual must finally withdraw and merge in the Infinite. To us the attaining of union with this static poise of the Divine Self, which is generally called "Self-realisation", can only be the first step; the second step is to realise that just as there is the silent Immobile status of the Divine which bases and supports the whole of existence, so also there is His dynamic aspect in which He puts forth the cosmic manifestation from the depths of His Being; he has also to know that the Divine Self has a double status of Personality—Impersonality, that He is both the Divine Person and the Impersonal Absolute, but that in his highest Transcendent status He exceeds both these aspects. And the last step is to rise to the summit of the Divine Truth and make Its Light and Power bear upon life and radically transform it. This means that our goal will be the conquest of life by the power of the Spirit. It is only by ascending to this Summit Light, the Divine Gnosis, that the truth behind the cosmic manifestation, its working, and the end for which it is put forth can be known. In this all-embracing and unifying truth-vision the integrality of the Divine Being is apprehended with all His different poises, like the Impersonal Absolute and the Divine Person, the Static Self and the Supreme Dynamis, the One and the Many, the Nirguna Brahman and the Saguna Brahman. Here all these poises are not seen as separate aspects but as real-statuses of a single unified Reality. (That is the main reason why there is a difference, in spite of the underlying identity, between religious systems, for their founders realised different aspects of the same Reality, and did not attain a vision of the Integral Divine. For example, the Reality that Chaitanya apprehended—the Divine Being as a Person—was the same as, and yet different from, the Reality that Shankara did—the Impersonal Absolute. Each such aspect is of course the whole Reality, but presenting a particular front to the ascending human consciousness).

Such a Gnostic vision of the Integral Divine Reality would declare that the world is a manifestation of this Reality, and therefore real—neither an illusion, Maya, nor some inferior phenomenal existence super-imposed upon a featureless, silent, Impersonal Absolute. If the world is real and an emanatory projection of the Divine, it follows that there must be some purpose for which it was manifested—it cannot be taken as the caprice of some irresponsible Creator.

As we have seen, the evolution process points towards the fact that this purpose is a growth of consciousness from the unconsciousness, or rather the stunned and involved consciousness of matter into dimly conscious plant life, then into the unreflective and instinctive animal-life ending in rational man, who will finally develop into the fully aware divine being. That is why our spiritual metaphysic declares the advent of the God-man to be the next step in the evolutionary ascent of humanity.

This brings us to our final problem. As we have pointed out in the previous essay, the creation of a spiritual metaphysic—that is, a metaphysic based upon a spiritual realisation—presupposes the existence of a spiritual metaphysician, a seer philosopher; and as our metaphysic has as its basis a realisation of the Integral Divine Reality, we must first have a seer who has attained such a realisation. Secondly, it must be shown how the truths revealed by this metaphysic can be dynamised and made operative in life; and since this metaphysic points towards the next evolutionary step humanity has to take, it is absolutely essential that we must have one who can become the leader of the evolution—the new mutant individual—one who by his own example can show that it is possible to transform and divinise the entire being of man, and can lead him to his destined goal. Such a leader must be one who accepts existing terrestrial conditions and conquers them by his spiritual power and himself becomes the Way through which men shall pass into the kingdom of the Spirit; he must represent evolving humanity trying to attain a higher level of consciousness, as well as the Divine Power working in the earth-existence to uplift man. Then, not only must he have the realisation of the Supreme Truth, he must also have the power to liberate Its Force upon the earth, for only such a sovereign Power can conquer the anarchic forces that at present hold sway over the world.

## TOWARDS A NEW WORLD—Continued from previous page

Such a highly realised being would verily be the world-leader—the kind of spiritual guide that is wanted by mankind to lead it out of suffering, ignorance, falsehood and chaos, into the Light and Bliss and Immortality of the Spirit.

The only one today who can give us a complete philosophy of life, and become not only the world's spiritual guide but also the leader of its evolution, and one who has already become a radiating centre of a tremendous spiritual light and power, is the seer-philosopher and Master of Yoga, Sri Aurobindo of Pondicherry. Having assimilated the essence of all that is finest in the two cultures of the East and the West in all fields of human activity from the spiritual to the material, and having attained the realisation of the Integral Divine Reality, he stands before us today as the apotheosis of the spiritual endeavour of humanity and the leader of the new race. His whole life, spiritual development and his final realisation of the Supermind, the Gnostic Light and Creative Dynamis of the Divine, marks him out as a spiritual leader who can bridge the abyss that exists at present between Spirit and life, and create on earth a divine existence.

His words in *The Synthesis of Yoga* give us an assurance of that. Regarding the antinomy between life and the Spirit, he writes, "So strongly has the idea prevailed, so much has it been emphasised by prevalent philosophies and religions that to escape from life is now commonly considered as not only the necessary condition but the general object of Yoga. No synthesis of Yoga can be satisfying which does not, in its aim, reunite God and Nature in a liberated and perfected human life, or, in its method, not only permit but favour the harmony of our inner and outer activities and experiences in the divine consummation of both. For man is precisely that term and symbol of a higher Existence descended into the material world in which it is possible for the lower to transfigure itself and put on the nature of the higher and the higher to reveal itself in the forms of the lower. To avoid the life which is given him for the realisation of that possibility can never be either the indispensable condition or the whole and ultimate object of his supreme endeavour or of his most powerful means of self-fulfilment. It can only be a temporary necessity under certain conditions or a specialised extreme effort imposed on the individual so as to prepare a greater general possibility for the race."

But then, one may ask, "How is it that Sri Aurobindo's spiritual vision is so different from that of other saints and Yogis? How is it that he so emphatically asserts that the ultimate goal of evolution is the divinisation of humanity?" These questions are quite pertinent, for prophets and saints have come and gone but humanity has not been rid of evil, strife and suffering. What is this sovereign power whose radiating centre Sri Aurobindo has become on earth, which can conquer what has till now been unconquered?

In order to have a true understanding of Sri Aurobindo's spiritual vision and his world-work, we can do no better than learn from Sri Aurobindo himself, in his own words, the rationale of his Supramental realisation and his Yogic teaching. A few extracts from his writings are given below in which he states clearly and precisely his vision of Reality and the Cosmic purpose. Most of these are taken from letters written to his disciples.

"The Shankara knowledge is, as your Guru pointed out, only one side of the Truth; it is the knowledge of the Supreme as realised by the spiritual mind through the static silence of pure Existence. It was because he went by this side only that Shankara was unable to accept or explain the origin of the Universe except as illusion, a creation of Maya. Unless one realises the Supreme on the dynamic as well as the static side one cannot experience the true origin of things and the equal reality of the active Brahman. The Shakti, or Power of the Eternal becomes then a power of illusion only and the world becomes incomprehensible, a mystery of cosmic madness, an eternal delirium of the Eternal. Whatever verbal or ideative logic we may bring to support, this way of seeing the universe explains nothing; it only creates a mental formula of the inexplicable. It is only if you approach the Supreme through his double aspect of Sat and Chit-Shakti, double but inseparable, that the total truth of things can become manifest to the inner experience. This other side was developed by the Shakta Tantrics. The two together, the Vedantic and the Tantric truth unified, can arrive at the integral knowledge...."

In the Supermind these questions do not even arise; for it is the mind that creates the problem by creating oppositions between aspects of the Divine which are not really opposed to each other but are one and inseparable.

This Supramental knowledge has not yet been attained, because the Supermind itself has not been attained, but the reflection of it in intuitive spiritual consciousness is there and that was what was evidently realised in experience by your Guru....."

"In the ancient Indian system there is only one triune supernal, Sachchidananda. Or if you speak of the upper hemisphere as the supernal,

there are three, Sat plane, Chit plane and Ananda plane. The Supermind could be added as a fourth, as it draws upon the other three and belongs to the upper hemisphere. The Indian systems did not distinguish between two quite different powers and levels of consciousness, one which we can call Overmind and the other the true Supermind or Divine Gnosis. That is the reason why they got confused about Maya (Overmind-Force or Vidya-Avidya), and took it for the supreme creative power. In so stopping short at what was still a half light they lost the secret of transformation—even though the Vaishnava and Tantra Yogas groped to find it again and were sometimes on the verge of success. For the rest, this, I think, has been the stumbling-block of all attempts at the discovery of the dynamic divine Truth; I know of none that has not imagined, as soon as it felt the Overmind lustres descending, that this was the true illumination, the Gnosis, with the result that they either stopped short there and could get no further, or else concluded that this too was only Maya or Lila and that the one thing to do was to get beyond it into some immovable and inactive silence of Ignorance or any disguise."\*

"I mean by the Supramental, the Truth-Consciousness whether above or in the universe by which the Divine knows not only his own essence and being but his manifestation also. Its fundamental character is knowledge by identity, by that the Self is known, the Divine Sachchidananda is known, but also the Truth of manifestation is known because this too is That—*Sarvam Khalvidam Brahma, Vasudevah Sarvam*, etc. Mind is an instrument of the Ignorance trying to know—Supermind is the Knower possessing knowledge, because one with it and the known, therefore seeing all things in the light of His own Truth, the light of their true self which is He. It is a dynamic and not a static power, not only a Knowledge, but a Will according to Knowledge—there is a Supramental Power or Shakti which can manifest direct its world of Light and Truth in which all is luminously based on the harmony and Unity of the One, not disturbed by a veil of Ignorance or any disguise."\*

It is the secret of this Supermind that the ancient seers did not know. It seems that they were aware of its existence and called it the "Truth hidden by a Truth where the Sun unyokes his horses,"\*<sup>2</sup> but they had no idea of bringing the power of this Truth down into the earth-consciousness as a stabilised power to transform life. They knew the possibility of reaching this Truth, but they thought that it was not possible to return once one passed through the gates of the Sun—the symbol of this Truth.

As Sri Aurobindo's realisation is that of the Supermind, the goal of his Yoga is different from that of other Yogas. He writes: "The way of Yoga followed here has a different purpose from others,—for its aim is not only to rise out of the ordinary ignorant world-consciousness into the Divine Consciousness, but to bring the Supramental power of that Divine Consciousness down into the ignorance of mind, life and body, to transform them, to manifest the Divine here and create a divine life in Matter."\*<sup>3</sup>

### Supermind, the New Emergent.

The emergence of the Supermind as a new principle in the earth-evolution, like Mind, Life and Matter before it, is inevitable according to Sri Aurobindo. He says that what were formerly involved and latent principles have emerged one after the other owing to a secret urge and impulsion in themselves and in response to a pressure put upon them from their corresponding typical planes. These planes of Mind, Life and Subtle Matter intersect our earth-plane. The last principle to emerge was Mind—when a pressure from the Mind-plane was exerted on its own principle involved and lying latent in animated and vitalised Matter, the latter responded and a contact was formed by which Mind became an operative power on earth. Now Supermind has to emerge and become established in earth-existence.

All this time evolution had proceeded automatically, because there was no self-conscious being who could actively and consciously co-operate with its *nisus*, its inner urge. Man is exactly the type of being who can do so; by an intense effort he can consciously hasten his evolution. It is the attempt to compress evolution into a single life-time, instead of it being a long drawn out process spreading over centuries, and to make the divinisation of man an actuality today instead of a dim hope in some distant future, that has occupied Sri Aurobindo for the past forty years. To make the Supermind act on its corresponding principle in earth-existence and make it emerge, some one who represents the earth-consciousness has to reach it and make it an active power in his own being. Sri Aurobindo, through his own spiritual attainment, makes this contact between the Supermind above and its involved derivative in the earth-consciousness possible. He acts as a bridge which spans the two ends of Being, joining Its depths to Its heights. In the following lines he discusses the emergence of the Supermind.

"The descent of the Supramental is an inevitable necessity in the logic of things and is therefore sure. It is because people do not understand what the Supermind is or realise the significance of the emergence of cons-

\*From "Bases of Yoga".

\*1. From "The Letters of Sri Aurobindo" (First Series).

\*2. Rig-Veda V, 62-1.

\*3. From "Lights on Yoga".

\*From "The Letters of Sri Aurobindo" (First Series).

## TOWARDS A NEW WORLD—Continued from previous page

sciousness in a world of inconscient Matter that they are unable to realise this inevitability. I suppose a matter-of-fact observer, if there had been one at the time of the unrelieved reign of inanimate Matter in the earth's beginning, would have criticised any promise of the emergence of life in a world of dead earth and rock and mineral as an absurdity and a chimera; so too, afterwards he would have repeated this mistake and regarded the emergence of thought and reason in an animal world as an absurdity and a chimera. It is the same now with the appearance of Supermind in the stumbling mentality of this world of human consciousness and its reasoning ignorance."\*

"We speak of the evolution of Life in Matter, the evolution of Mind in Matter; but evolution is a word which merely states the phenomenon without explaining it. For there seems to be no reason why Life should evolve out of material elements or Mind out of living form, unless we accept the Vedantic solution that Life is already involved in Matter and Mind in Life because in essence Matter is a form of veiled Life, Life a form of veiled consciousness. And there seems to be little objection to a farther step in the series and the admission that mental consciousness may itself be only a form and a veil of higher states which are beyond Mind. In that case, the unconquerable impulse of man towards God, Light, Bliss, Freedom, Immortality presents itself in its right place in the chain as simply the imperative impulse by which Nature is seeking to evolve beyond Mind...."

"The material universe starts from the formal atom surcharged with energy instinct with the unformed stuff of a subconscious desire, will, intelligence. Out of this Matter apparent Life manifests and it delivers out of itself by means of the living body the Mind it contains imprisoned within it; Mind also has still to deliver out of itself the Supermind concealed in its workings."\*1

"The animal prepares and imperfectly prefigures man and is itself prepared in the plant as that too is foreseen obscurely by all that precedes it in the terrestrial expansion. Man himself takes up the miraculous play of the electron and atom, draws up through the complex development of the protoplasm the chemical life of sub-vital things, perfects the original nervous system of the plant in the physiology of the completed animal being, consummates and repeats rapidly in his embryonic growth the past evolution of the animal form into the human perfection and, once born, rears himself from the earthward and downward animal proneness, to the erect figure of the spirit who is already looking up to his farther heavenward evolution."\*2

We know now what this farther heavenward evolution is. Regarding the new race of Supramental beings, Sri Aurobindo writes: "Your statement about the supramental evolution is correct except that it does not follow that humanity as a whole will become supramental. What is more likely to happen is that the supramental principle will be established in the evolution by the descent just as the mental principle was established by the appearance of thinking Mind and Man in earthly life. There will be a race of supramental beings on the earth just as now there is a race of mental beings."\*3

"What we propose just now is not to make the earth a Supramental world but to bring down the Supramental as a Power and established consciousness in the midst of the rest to let it work there and fulfil itself as Mind descended into life and matter has worked as a Power there to fulfil

itself in the midst of the rest. This will be enough to change the world and to change Nature by breaking down her present limits."\*

## The Leader of the Evolution.

In some letters written to one of his disciples Sri Aurobindo explains how his own Sadhana is connected with the earth-evolution.

"My point about my Sadhana was that my Sadhana was not done for myself but for the earth-consciousness as a showing of the way towards the Light, so that whatever I showed in it to be possible—inner growth, transformation, manifesting of new faculties, etc.—was not of no importance to anybody, but meant as an opening of lines and ways for what had to be done."\*1

"My supramentalisation is only a key for opening the gates of the Supramental to the earth-consciousness; done for its own sake, it would be perfectly futile."

"I am seeking to bring some principle of inner Truth, Light, Harmony, Peace into the earth-consciousness; I see it above and know what it is—I feel it ever gleaming down on my consciousness from above and I am seeking to make it possible for it to take up the whole being into its own native power, instead of the nature of man continuing to remain in half-light, half-darkness. I believe the descent of this Truth opening the way to a development of divine consciousness here to be the final sense of the earth evolution."\*2

Such is the purpose Sri Aurobindo reads in the world manifestation. It is really very heartening to know that whilst we toil on with hope in our hearts for a better world to come, even though outwardly there seems to be no justification to entertain such hopes, there is at least some one who very quietly and silently works day and night unceasingly to create the kingdom of God upon earth, and actually assures us that a glorious future and a divine life is our allotted destiny. In the face of darkness and despair he declares with authority—"In the world outside there are much worse symptoms such as the general increase of cynicism, a refusal to believe in anything at all, a decrease of honesty, an immense corruption, a preoccupation with food, money, comfort, pleasure to the exclusion of higher things, and a general expectation of worse and worse things awaiting the world. All that, however acute, is a temporary phenomenon for which those who know anything about the workings of the world-energy and the workings of the Spirit were prepared. I myself foresaw that this worst would come, the darkness of night before the dawn; therefore I am not discouraged. I know what is preparing behind the darkness and can see and feel the first signs of its coming. Those who seek for the Divine have to stand firm and persist in their seeking; after a time, the darkness will fade and begin to disappear and the Light will come."\*3

It is the manifestation of this Divine Light in our earth-existence that is the real solution for the crisis of our civilisation.

Whilst men wait and hope for the Light to come, Sri Aurobindo brings It daily nearer to them, and away from the tumult of life's superficial activities carries on his great work of the regeneration and divinisation of man, and he will not cease to do so

"Till the nescient dusk is lifted from man's soul  
And the morns of God have overtaken his night."

\* From "The Letters of Sri Aurobindo" (First Series).

\*1. From "The Life Divine."

\*2. From "The Ascending Unity."

\*3. From "The Letters of Sri Aurobindo" (First Series).

\* From a Letter to a Disciple.

\*1. From "Letters of Sri Aurobindo" (Second Series).

\*2. Ibid.

\*3. Ibid.

THE END

## Steed of Light

Fire-born steed of the supernal vastness  
Burning with the whiteness of gold,  
A mighty lightning from the celestial calm,  
Sweeping the dark veldts of time  
And tundras of wayless sleep —  
Thy rapturous feet stamping oblivion's  
Titan womb of far echoless space —  
Drunk with a high majestic will,  
Thou kindlest the multitudinous star-worlds  
Glowing across life's prison-caves.  
O winged splendour of flamed speed!  
Give me thy power of pauseless flight  
To the unreach'd pinnacles of the Self,  
Spurning all narrow fetters of the dust  
And all its nocturnal nakedness,  
To be lost in the sun's loneliness.

ROMEN.

## Esoteric Moon

Poised on the edge of a long drawn-out ray,  
Wafted on the perfume of a dream  
She lay, abandoned to the stars' display:  
Her mirrored beauty in a magic beam  
Was caught, bathing with rapturous hue the earth  
Sleeping beneath the canopy of night —  
The night and stars paid tribute to her birth,  
Painting a décor for Her spectral light —  
On high she rose across the vaulted sky,  
Vestured in a secret loveliness  
That veiled the gleam in Her angelic eye,  
Softening the power of Her to a sweet caress,  
To something mortal nature could define  
As mystic, holy, sacred and divine.

NORMAN DOWSETT.

# LIGHTS ON LIFE-PROBLEMS

(13)

One of our chief aims is to provide authentic answers to the many perplexing questions with which the common man is faced. This cannot be better done than by considering these questions in the light of Sri Aurobindo's writings and basing precise answers on them, 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.

Q. 1: Belief in the law of Karma, in one form or another, has existed, both in the East and the West, since ancient times. Is this belief based on any sound practical or philosophical truth?

A: There is an unanswerable truth in the theory of Karma,—not necessarily in the form the ancients gave to it, but in the idea at its centre,—which at once strikes the mind and commands the assent of the understanding. There is a solidity at once of philosophical and of practical truth supporting the idea, a bedrock of the deepest universal undeniable verities against which the human mind must always come up in its fathomings of the fathomless; in this way indeed does the world deal with us, there is a law here which does so make itself felt and against which all our egoistic ignorance and self-will and violence dashes up in the end, as the old Greek poet said of the haughty insolence and prosperous pride of man, against the very foundation of the throne of Zeus, the marble feet of Themis, the adamantine bust of Ananke. There is the secret of an eternal factor, the base of the unchanging action of the just and truthful gods, *devânâm dhruvâni vratâni*, in the self-sufficient and impartial law of Karma.

Q. 2: What is the fundamental meaning of Karma?

A: Fundamentally, the meaning of Karma is that all existence is the working of a universal Energy, a process and an action and a building of things by that action,—an unbuilding too, but as a step to farther building,—that all is a continuous chain in which every one link is bound indissolubly to the past infinity of numberless links, and the whole governed by fixed relations, by a fixed association of cause and effect, present action the result of past action as future action will be the result of present action, all cause a working of energy and all effect too a working of energy. The moral significance is that all our existence is a putting out of an energy which is in us and by which we are made and as is the nature of the energy which is put forth as cause, so shall be that of the energy which returns as effect, that this is the universal law and nothing in the world can, being of and in our world, escape from its governing incidence. That is the philosophical reality of the theory of Karma, and that too is the way of seeing which has been developed by physical Science.

Q. 3: It is held by many that this law of Karma wholly determines and governs the evolution of the life and soul in the universe. Is this true?

A: The law or chain of Karma is only an outward machinery and cannot be elevated to a greater position as the sole and absolute determinant of the life-workings of the cosmos unless the cosmos is itself entirely mechanical in its character. But all is not Law and Process, there is also Being and Consciousness; there is not only a machinery but a Spirit in things, not only Nature and law of cosmos but a cosmic Spirit, not only a process of mind and life and body but a soul in the natural creature. If it were not so, there could be no rebirth of a soul and no field for a law of Karma. But if the fundamental truth of our being is spiritual and not mechanical, it must be our self, our soul that fundamentally determines its own evolution, and the law of Karma can only be one of the processes it uses for that purpose: our Spirit, our Self must be greater than its Karma. There is Law, but there is also spiritual freedom: Law and Process are one side of our existence and their reign is over our outer mind, life and body, for these are mostly subject to the mechanism of Nature. But even here their mechanical power is absolute only over body and matter; for Law becomes more complex and less rigid, Process more plastic and less mechanical when there comes in the phenomenon of life, and yet more is this so when mind intervenes with its subtlety; an inner freedom already begins to intervene and, the more we go within, the soul's power of choice is increasingly felt: for Prakriti is the field of law and process, but the soul, the Purusha, is the giver of the sanction, *anumanta*, and even if ordinarily it chooses to remain a witness and concede an automatic sanction, it can be, if it wills, the master of its nature, Ishwara.

Q. 4: The modern scientific mind, while admitting the mechanical law of the action of the energies, reduces all to a determination by the physical energies of the universe. Is this not an arbitrary over-simplification of the complex workings of the many strands of the universal Nature? Is not the action of our inner mental and moral nature largely independent of the rule of our bodily processes?

A: Being is no doubt one, and Law too may be one; but it is perilous to fix from the beginning on one type of phenomena with a pre-determined will to deduce from that all other phenomenon however different in its significance and nature. In that way we are bound to distort truth into the mould of our own prepossession.

Intermediately at least we have rather to recognise the old harmonious truth of Veda—which also came by this way in its end, its Vedanta, to the conception of the unity of Being,—that there are different planes of cosmic existence and therefore too of our own existence and in each of them the same powers, energies or laws must act in a different type and in another sense and light of their effectuality. First, then, we see that if Karma be a universal truth or the universal truth of being, it must be equally true of the inly-born mental and moral worlds of our action as in our outward relations with the physical universe. It is the mental energy that we put forth which determines the mental effect,—but subject to all the impact of past, present and future surrounding circumstance, because we are not isolated powers in the world, but rather our energy a subordinate strain and thread of the universal energy. The moral energy of our action determines similarly the nature and effect of the moral consequence, but subject too—though to this element the rigid moralist does not give sufficient consideration,—to the same incidence of past, present and future surrounding circumstance. That this is true of the output of physical energy, needs no saying nor any demonstration. We must recognise these different types and variously formulated motions of the one universal Force, and it will not do to say from the beginning that the measure and quality of my inner being is some result of the output of a physical energy translated into mental and moral energies,—for instance, that my doing a good or a bad action or yielding to good or to bad affections and motives is at the mercy of my liver, or contained in the physical germ of my birth, or is the effect of my chemical elements or determined essentially and ultimately by the disposition of the constituent electrons of my brain and nervous system. Whatever drafts my mental and moral being may make on the corporeal for its supporting physical energy and however it may be affected by its borrowings, yet it is very evident that it uses them for other and larger purposes, has a supraphysical method, evolves much greater motives and significances. The moral energy is in itself a distinct power, has its own plane of karma, moves me even, and that characteristically, to override my vital and physical nature. Forms of one universal Force at bottom—or at top—these may be, but in practice they are different energies and have to be so dealt with—until we can find what that universal Force may be in its highest purest texture and initial power and whether that discovery can give us in the perplexities of our nature a unifying direction.

Q. 5: The ethical mind has tried to read in the complex workings of the Karmic Law the strict working of the rule of moral justice. Is this also not an error of over-simplification by arbitrary selection of a limited principle as the sole regulator of the manifold action of universal Nature?

A: The universe is not an ethical proposition, a problem of the antinomy of the good and the evil; the Spirit of the universe can in no way be imagined as a rigid moralist concerned only with making all things obey the law of moral good, or a stream of tendency towards righteousness attempting, hitherto, with only a very poor success, to prevail and rule, or a stern Justicer rewarding and punishing creatures in a world that he has made or has suffered to be full of wickedness and suffering and evil. The universal Will has evidently many other and more supple modes than that, an infinity of interests, many other elements of its being to manifest, many lines to follow, many laws and purposes to pursue. The law of the world is not this alone that our good brings good to us and our evil brings evil, nor is its sufficient key the ethical-hedonistic rule that our moral good brings to us happiness and success and our moral evil brings to us sorrow and misfortune. There is a rule of right in the world, but it is the right of the truth of Nature and of the truth of the Spirit, and that is a vast and various rule and takes many forms that have to be understood and accepted before we can reach either its highest or its integral principle.

Q. 6: Some extreme moralists maintain that even catastrophes and upheavals in the physical nature like earthquakes are a result of the sins of men? Is there any truth in this?

A: Why should earthquakes occur by some wrong movement of man? When man was not there, did not earthquakes occur? If he were blotted out by poison gas or otherwise, would they cease? Earthquakes are a perturbation in Nature due to some pressure of forces; frequency of earthquakes may coincide with a violence of upheavals in human life but the upheavals of earth and human life are both results of a general clash or pressure of forces, one is not the cause of the other.

K. G.

# F I R E

BY JOYCE CHADWICK

This is a Briton writing. Humanity was young when my forefathers left their home in the Indus basin, bringing with them on their long journey to this country—once called "Albion", the "White Island"—their priests, bards, and musicians. The musicians brought their instruments, and among these the bagpipe. It is to be heard in the East, it remains the national instrument of Scotland, to this day. They brought also their subtly interwoven musical rhythms—like the twining of leaves, or the movement of great golden, happy, holy snakes sporting in water. Had they not done this, records of songs sung in India now by Sri Dilip Kumar Roy could not possibly come with so familiar a delight as they do to those Britons who know and enjoy the traditional Gaelic tunes.

They brought knowledge with them: amongst other things, of that white Fire, called *Agni* in the home-country, but here, I think, without a name. Since, perhaps, the time of the Druids, it has had little acknowledged worship, and yet its worship has always continued, and is not at all difficult to trace in the poetry, the hearts, and the customs of my people: for instance, in the fires they light and soberly dance around—soberly as a ritual—in November and at times of national and international rejoicing. Such fires were made to celebrate victory over that "horror of great darkness" with which Nazidom threatened the world lately. In one small country town such a fire is built every November about the wooden figure of a man's head: the rubbish is burned, the head is saved, to continue its symbolic purification through centuries. I would like to quote here the whole of Laurence Binyon's lovely poem on the burning of rubbish in autumn. It is called *The Burning of the Leaves* and is to be found in a small volume of that name<sup>1</sup> as well as the anthology *Poems of Our Time*.<sup>2</sup>

Now is the time for the burning of the leaves.  
They go to the fire; the nostril pricks with smoke  
Wandering slowly into the weeping mist.  
Brittle and blotched, ragged and rotten sheaves!  
A flame seizes the smouldering ruin and bites  
On stubborn stalks that crackle as they resist.  
The last hollyhock's fallen tower is dust:  
All the spices of June are a bitter reek,  
All the extravagant riches spent and mean.  
All burns! the reddest rose is a ghost.  
Sparks whirl up, to expire in the mist: the wild  
Fingers of fire are making corruption clean.  
Now is the time for stripping the spirit bare....

There was a London priest who wrote on the burned wall of his bombed church during the war: "O ye Fire and Heat, bless ye the Lord, praise him and magnify him for ever"—and this is how the Imagist poet "H.D." hails *Agni*. There is much purifying flame in the latest work<sup>3</sup> of this poet.

...for we must go forward,  
We are at the crossroads,  
The tide is turning;

and so:—

let us go down to the sea,  
gather dry sea-weed,  
heap drift-wood,  
let us light a new fire  
and in the fragrance  
of burnt salt and sea-incense  
chant new paeans to the new Sun  
of regeneration....

What of the contained white flame?—K. D. Sethna's:

O smile of heaven locked in a seed of light,  
O music burning through the heart's dumb rock . . . .<sup>4</sup>

Our poets, sons and daughters of those original wise Bards from the East, have never, quite, ceased to see it: always, after a temporary clouding, someone's eyes have pierced the heavy clay and found in the centre its burning inhabitant—that penetrating, moulding fiery fountain of perfection active in all forms: that Fire "that looks like water, burning in a chalice": that Fire which does so strongly and rapturously sparkle, bound and spiral up in and through the appearances of stick and stone, bird, beast, and man that the seers are often dazzled. But they go on looking. They are looking now. Increasingly, I believe, they are looking now.

This common path! It's burning earth.  
You, God the Creator that Angelo knew,  
Wholly taking me, make it so.  
Why? The path passes to what place?  
I see. Your Eyes are in my face.  
It whitens up to a crystal man,  
A man of light, the first man,  
Seebly here to anoint man  
Now man is to be what man can:

A golden-crystal, a fire-man  
Making a fire-white Albion.  
With what? With all he does and is;  
Sighs to have; half knows;  
With worship; and the power he calls "pain"—  
A force he, widening, will use  
As you the wind, the stream, the stone.

Rupert Brooke's vision of the clear person inside the clouded, should not be forgotten. It is described in the poem called *Dining Room Tea*.<sup>5</sup> A few friends are together; they laugh and talk, share food and find great delight in each other. Then comes the flash.

One instant I, an instant, knew  
As God knows all . . . . .  
I looked on your magnificence.  
I saw the stillness and the light,  
And you, august, immortal, white,  
Holy and strange . . .

To-day the Welsh poet, Mr. Vernon Watkins, is writing of this holy and strange whiteness in the language of his time. Listen to the beginning of a poem he calls *Music of Colours—White Blossom*:—<sup>6</sup>

White blossom, white, white shell; the Nazarene  
Walking in the ear; white touched by souls  
Who know the music by which white is seen,  
Blinding white, from strings and aureoles,  
Until that is not white, seen at the two poles,  
Nor white the Scythian hills, nor Marlow's queen....

What, then, to this writer is "the music by which white is seen"? The seventh verse says:—

If there is white, or has been white, it must have been  
When His eyes looked down and made the leper clean . . . .

And another way of saying that, of insisting on its "nowness", of getting it past humanity into earth, is:—

As I went through the falling night  
The pain that was to kill me a new  
Experience in my shoulder and side  
I feared, I was ashamed of it.  
How was I to deal with it if it grew?  
'Kneel!' God in my substance said.  
'Kneel down: the triangular light I am  
Shall whitely descend; in that, my dove,  
My spirit, as Time; and, inhabiting you,  
Pass down your knees to the trees and mud  
A Newness, old to foreseeing love;  
A strength longing has cried for loudly.  
I knelt. I felt leaves and a lamb  
Nuzzle my will. A river ran  
By like the orchestral act of a man....  
A passing worm  
Knew wormness too for a sweet form.  
Awareness grew. The leaves, the lamb  
Knew what it was in them sang I AM:  
The pain, the dark, the rent woman  
Full and proudly  
Filled their shapes to the meant moan.

Here, to put beside Rupert Brooke's, is Mr. Watkins's vision of the divine inside the evolving person: this time in a child's portrait. It begins an enchanting poem called *Llewelyn's Chariot*.

"Sun of all suns, seed of dandelion seeds,  
Sprung from the stem of delight and the starry course,  
High at the helm of night, in the van of deeds,  
A one-wheeled chariot you drive, and a headless horse.  
Your Maker makes you his glory . . ."

"Your Maker makes you his glory!" That seems to me something rather like the whole purpose of the Evolution described in six words. Should it not also be the proper salutation of all articulate beings to each other; and, beyond that, to whatever the minute brings? Saying such words—to a person, a thing, an event—the soul stands back in its own house, and the light from that gentle and strong place can show mind, heart and body the truth of this divine Becoming that may otherwise whirl so perplexingly. This is one way—and a "sunlit path" indeed—to that "orchestral living" which will be our delight and peace and a continual growing wonder of rapture in what Sri Aurobindo calls "the Knowledge", and it seems to me the Word which has supremely come through Sri Aurobindo's lips from the home-country to us—the Colonials. It is the salutation I would wish to send echoing back through *Mother India* to India on her Independence Day, and to India's, and our, great Teacher on his birthday. "Your Maker makes you his glory"; "O Flame, O Wine, your force has become conscious; you have discovered the One Light for the Many."

1. Macmillan & Co., Ltd.

2. Dent. Everyman Library, 1945.

3. *The Walls Do Not Fall*. Oxford University Press, 1944.

4. *The Secret Splendour*, Bombay 1943.

5. *Collected Poems*. Sidgwick & Jackson.

6. *The Lady with the Unicorn*. Faber & Faber. 1948.

# VISION AND REALISATION

Living and accurate expression of mystical and spiritual experience is rare. To convey the realities of this experience, in all their many-sidedness, and to show what the immense reaches of yogic evolution are, this series will present extracts from the writings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

O LORD, I am before Thee as an offering ablaze with the burning fire of divine union . . . . .

And that which is thus before Thee, is all the stones of this house and all that it contains, all those who cross its threshold and all those who see it, all those who are connected with it in one way or another, and by close degrees, the whole earth.

From this centre, this burning nucleus which is and will be more and more penetrated with Thy light and love, Thy forces will radiate over the whole earth, visibly and invisibly, in the hearts of men and in their thoughts.

Such is the certitude Thou givest me in reply to my aspiration for Thee. An immense wave of love descends upon everything and penetrates all. Peace, peace on all earth, victory, plenitude, marvel.

O beloved children, sorrowful and ignorant, and thou, O rebellious and violent Nature, open your hearts, tranquillise your force, it is the omnipotence of Love that is coming to you, it is the pure radiance of the light that is penetrating you. This human, this earthly hour is the most beautiful among all the hours. Let each, let all know it and enjoy the plenitude that is accorded.

O saddened hearts and anxious foreheads, foolish obscurity and ignorant ill-will, let your anguish be calmed and effaced.

This is the splendour of the new word that comes:

"I am here".

THE MOTHER

June 9, 1914.

—From *Prayers and Meditations of the Mother*.

\* \* \*

O my Lord, my sweet Master, for the accomplishment of Thy work I have sunk down into the unfathomable depths of Matter, I touched with my finger the horror of the falsehood and inconscience, I have reached the seat of oblivion and supreme obscurity! But in my heart was the Remembrance, from my heart there leaped the call which could arrive to Thee: "Lord, Lord, everywhere Thy enemies are triumphant; falsehood is the monarch of the world; life without Thee is death, a perpetual hell; doubt has usurped the place of Hope and revolt has pushed out submission; Faith is spent, Gratitude is not born; blind passions and murderous instincts and a guilty weakness have covered and stifled Thy sweet law of Love. Lord, wilt Thou permit Thy enemies to prevail, falsehood and ugliness and suffering to triumph? Lord, give the command to conquer and victory will be there. I know we are unworthy, I know the world is not yet ready. But I cry to Thee with an absolute faith in Thy Grace and I know that Thy Grace will save us."

Thus, my prayer rushed up towards Thee; and, from the depths of the abyss, I beheld Thee in Thy radiant splendour; Thou didst appear and Thou saidst to me: "Lose not courage, be firm, be confident,—I COME."

THE MOTHER

November 24, 1931.

—From *Prayers and Meditations of the Mother*.

\* \* \*

In moments when the inner lamps are lit  
And the life's cherished guests are left outside,  
Our spirit sits alone and speaks to its gulfs.  
A wider consciousness opens then its doors;  
Invading from spiritual silences  
A ray of the timeless Glory stoops awhile  
To commune with our seized illumined clay  
And leaves its huge white stamp upon our lives.  
In the oblivious field of mortal mind,  
Revealed to the closed prophet eyes of trance  
Or in some deep internal solitude  
Witnessed by a strange immaterial sense,  
The signals of eternity appear.

The truth mind could not know unveils its face,  
We hear what mortal ears have never heard,  
We feel what earthly sense has never felt,  
We love what common hearts repel and dread;  
Our minds hush to a bright Omniscient;  
A voice calls from the chambers of the Soul;  
We meet the ecstasy of the Godhead's touch  
In golden privacies of immortal fire.  
These signs are native to a larger self  
That lives within us by ourselves unseen;  
Only sometimes a holier influence comes,  
A tide of mightier surgings bears our lives  
And a diviner Presence moves the soul.

SRI AUROBINDO: Savitri. Bk. I. Canto 4.

\* \* \*

The universe removed its coloured veil,  
And at the unimaginable end  
Of the huge riddle of created things  
Appeared the far-seen Godhead of the whole,  
His feet firm-based on Life's stupendous wings,  
Omnipotent or lonely seer of Time,  
Inward, inscrutable with diamond gaze.  
Attracted by the unfathomable regard  
The unsolved slow cycles to their fount returned  
To rise again from that invisible sea . . . . .

A vastness brooded free from sense of Space,  
An Everlastingness cut off from Time;  
A strange sublime unalterable Peace  
Silent rejected from its world and soul.  
A stark companionless Reality  
Answered at last to his soul's passionate search:  
Passionless, wordless, absorbed in fathomless hush,  
Keeping the mystery none would ever pierce,  
It brooded inscrutable and intangible  
Facing him with its dumb tremendous calm . . . . .

There was no mind there with its need to know,  
There was no heart there with its need to love.  
All person perished in its namelessness.  
There was no second, it had no partner or peer;  
Only itself was real to itself.  
A pure existence safe from thought and mood,  
A consciousness of unshared immortal bliss,  
It dwelt aloof in its bare infinite,  
One and unique, unutterably sole.  
A Being formless, featureless and mute  
That knew itself by its own timeless self,  
Aware for ever in its motionless depths,  
Uncreating, uncreated and unborn,  
The One by whom all live, who lives by none,  
An immeasurable luminous secrecy  
Guarded by the veils of the Unmanifest,  
Above the changing cosmic interlude  
Abode supreme, immutably the same,  
A silent Cause occult, impenetrable,—  
Infinite, eternal, unthinkable, alone.

SRI AUROBINDO: Savitri. Bk. III. Canto. 1.

# AN UNKNOWN CARTOGRAPHER OF HEAVEN

## The Greatest Mystic of Fourteenth-Century England

By Horwenna Donnelly

The treatise known as *The Cloud of Unknowing* was written by an English mystic of the fourteenth century whose name has not come down to us. The idea of an English mystical teacher may seem a little surprising. But if it is true, as the Abbé Bremond has suggested, that there exists a close link between poetry and mysticism—poetry being one of those 'profane' states of nature in which it is possible to mark some of the signs of the mystical states of the soul—it will not seem quite so startling as a first survey of that practical people might suggest. For England has one of the richest poetic mines in the world, and poetry is the work of the feminine element in the being—the singing of Anima. Anima is passive, intuitive, contemplative; she is a mystic in embryo. In the fourteenth century—if we may borrow Claudel's parable—she and Animus were still living together in comparative harmony. But their divorce was approaching. The influence on men's minds of the medieval synthesis between contemplation and action still endured, but its power was waning, as the unity of Christendom was waning. Left alone after the Reformation to evolve their own form of Christianity, and being a people in whom the active, or masculine, element predominates, the English let Animus have his way. He made religion a matter of morals; inflated the value of humanitarianism, which sanctified his passion for action under the cloak of service, and produced the over-active Christianity we have today. It was indeed, no mere act of theological antisepticism that rooted out from the Godhead all representation of the feminine element which had survived, however feebly, in the figure of the Virgin Mary, but the outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual schism. Anima could not be quenched. She poured herself out in poetry and is still singing. It is from her inwardness, her secret impulses of love and surrender, fructifying in a Christianity that could nurture them, that the notable band of fourteenth-century English mystics lived and wrote, and among them the author of *The Cloud*.

### Background, Author, Style

Their background was the violent and chaotic century—Dante's century—which saw the Great Schism of the West, and the Great Plague which swept Europe from the Crimea to Ireland, taking multitudes in its wake. England was interminably at war with France and the miseries of the time found vent in religious and social agitation. In *The Vision of Piers Plowman*—one of the most wonderful of English poems, with the most magical of all opening lines—mystical vision and an impassioned social consciousness poured itself into verse. It is perhaps symbolic that these two great fourteenth-century works, *The Cloud* and *The Vision*, are both virtually anonymous—fittingly in the case of the former, for the man who wrote it wished for himself "nought" and "nowhere": and in the case of *Piers* equally fittingly, because although it has been ascribed to Langland, in essence it is the cry and confession of a whole people. In some ways poem and treatise have common features. Both were written in that Middle English hallowed by Chaucer; both inherited an alliterative style that had come down to them from Old English, and a natural use of allegory; both authors were mystics—one a poet on fire, the other a contemplative cool with the detachment and practice of continual self-effacement and aspiration. Both were works of maturity, brooded by a lifetime's experience.

Dom Justin McCann, the last editor of *The Cloud*, has suggested that the author was most likely a Cambridge "master", who became incumbent of a parish in East Anglia, and there "pursued the study and practice of the contemplative life." The flower of his mystical thought was gathered up in seven treatises, the chief being *The Cloud*, and its pendant *The Epistle of Privy Counsel*. These, as we learn from *The Cloud*, were written for a young aspirant of twenty-four. The author's own spiritual masters were, first and foremost, Dionysius the Areopagite (St Denis), and in a lesser degree Vercellensis and Richard of St Victor. Like all the fourteenth-century English mystics, the quality of his writing is pungent, homely, often poetic, firmly rooted in the earth even while it soars to heaven. Charles Williams said of *The Cloud* that it "aspires translucently, and no colours of earth shade it." That is true of its essence, which is the "deep but dazzling darkness", but its style is as vivid, natural and simple as homespun tweed. The author permits his gleams of humour. He will "speak playfully," neither is he too solemn to resist making his point through a little pleasantry, for he has the simplicity, the *sureness*—yes! and the gaiety, of all those who live near to God and have thereby what he would call "rightfulness of spirit." Sometimes he will fall deeply into that alliteration so reminiscent of *Piers*, as in the words "wretchedly and wantonly welter," and "fester in fantasies feigned by fiends," and his discourse is gemmed by words and expressions of noble and ancient lineage, some of them surpassingly expressive, which we have allowed to go into desuetude. He can illustrate with homely little examples taken from everyday life, as in his picture of the enemy who cries for help when his house catches fire. "Then" he says, "without any regard to him for that he is thine enemy, but for pure pity in thine heart stirred and raised by the dolefulness of his cry,

thou risest up—yea! though it be about mid-winter's night—and helpst him to quench his fire, or to still and rest himself in his distress." He can pungently and robustly clothe his points. Short prayer, he remarks, "secretly meant in the depth of the spirit" is the truest expression; "rather it pierceth the ears of Almighty God than doth any long psalter unmindfully mumbled in the teeth." Again, talking to his disciple of the stirrings of sin which may disturb the serenity of the soul, he expresses himself with forceful alliteration. These stirrings, he tells him, "thou must every day smite down and be busy to shear away with a sharp double-edged sword of discretion."

### The Teaching: Its Goal and Method

Within the idiom of *The Cloud*—which carries so definite a signature of individuality and century and yet is so timelessly beyond it that in the language of mysticism it is as contemporary in its message as it was in the England of Edward III—within this idiom lies the pearl of its teaching. And this is revealed in such profound exposition that an early commentator was moved to voice a doubt whether mystical matters of such a high order should be allowed to general access. The author himself was well aware of the danger and no mystical treatise has ever begun with so grave, so awesome an injunction to the reader. The prologue opens with an invocation to the Trinity, which is followed by a solemn exhortation:

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, I charge thee, and I beseech thee, with as much power and virtue as the bond of charity is sufficient to suffer, whatsoever thou be that this book shall have in possession, whether by property, or by keeping, or by bearing as a messenger, or else by borrowing, that inasmuch as in thee is by will and advisement (deliberation), thou neither read it, write it, nor speak it, nor yet suffer it to be read, written, or spoken, by any other or to any other, unless it be by such a one as hath (in thy supposing) in a true will and by a whole intent purposed him to be a perfect follower of Christ.

This injunction is again repeated at the end of the treatise with the words: "I pray thee for God's love that thou let none see this book, unless it be such a one as thou thinkest is apt." As Charles Williams observed, it makes his book well-nigh impossible to read.

The "work" of *The Cloud*, as the author calls it, is nothing less than the aspiration to reach the Pure Being of God. The method is that which is usually known as the Way of Negation; the silencing of the discursive mind and the abstracting of the soul from sense. It is "nought else but a naked intent directed unto God himself." In this effort the disciple is taught to begin by lifting his soul simply to God with the desire of aspiration and with "a meek stirring of love." These two things, holy desire—"list" as the Middle English has it, meaning "a glad zest and sweet fervour of a spirit"—and love, are the twin lights which will lead him to his goal. He tells his disciple that his life now "must always stand in desire," and he warns him that though God "asketh no help but only thyself," willing that "thou do but look upon him and let him alone," He is "a jealous lover and suffereth no fellowship, and . . . liketh not to work in thee unless he be only with thee by himself." Likewise the young contemplative, when he lifts his heart with a meek stirring of love to his Creator, "must mean himself and none of his goods." In this meek stirring of love lies the core of *The Cloud's* teaching. For there are two principal working powers of the being, knowing and loving, and God is only comprehensible to love. When the author asks himself: *What is God?* he does not return, as did St Thomas Aquinas, a profound formula *He who is*, but with sovereign simplicity: "I know not. . . . God himself can no man think. And therefore I would leave all the thing that I can think, and choose to my love that thing that I cannot think. For why, he may well be loved, but not thought. By love may he be gotten and holden, but by thought never." Again he says: "love may reach to God in this life, but not knowing." Shear away the desire of knowing, he directs; be blind: no "means" (methods) of man may come to this work. "All good means hang upon it, and it on no means; nor no means may lead thereto." By the failure of his bodily wits, man comes to the knowing of ghostly (spiritual) things; by the failure of his ghostly wits, to the knowledge of God. That is the supreme noughting of *The Cloud*; its joyous gesture of absolute surrender and emptying. "Have a man never so much ghostly understanding in knowing of all made ghostly things, yet may he never by the work of his understanding come to the knowing of an unmade ghostly thing; the which is nought but God. But by the failing he may. Because that thing that he faileth in is nothing else but only God. And therefore it was that Saint Denis said: "*The most godly knowing of God is that which is known by unknowing.*"

### The Two Clouds

When the heart is lifted to God it experiences a darkness, or *cloud of unknowing*. It is in this cloud that is between God and the contemplative that the soul must always, if it sees or feels God, experience him. "Bide



## An Unknown Cartographer of Heaven—Continued from previous page

in this darkness," he writes, "crying after him whom thou lovest." Though "unknowing" usually expresses this "cumbrous cloud" between the soul and God, it sometimes means a state of being without knowledge, or ignorance. In the process of concentration the soul must give itself to the impulses of love, to willings and stirrings. It is the higher will, above intellect, in its noumenal working, that must support the spiritual effort made by the soul. The author calls the will "the principal working power of the soul" and God "the highest willable thing." But it is plain that he means by will the activity of the psychic being, for he also refers to it as the "ghostly heart." "Lean meekly," he writes, "to this blind stirring of love in thine heart. I mean not in thy bodily heart, but in thy ghostly heart, the which is thy will. And beware that thou conceive not bodily that which is said ghostly."

It would appear that in a "fallen" state man cannot recollect these stirrings in his will—an allegorical way of saying that it is the divided consciousness that separates man from God; but the perfected soul lives in a continual communion, being aware every moment of its stirrings. He calls this "heeding the time," being in fact, self-aware. The work of the contemplative "is but a sudden stirring, as it were unadvised, speedily springing unto God as a sparkle from the coal." In the same way only "a devout and a meek stirring of love" can begin the work.

There is another "cloud" of which the disciple must hear, and this is the *cloud of forgetting*, in which he learns detachment and loss of the sense of personal being. In it the discursive mind is silenced and all matters that distract from God hidden away, for "unless thou bear him (the understanding) down, he will bear thee down." The labour of the contemplative is "all in treading down of the thought of all the creatures that ever God made, and in holding of them under the *cloud of forgetting*." He describes the distracting effect of paying attention to thoughts that seem, indeed, good and holy, and how the soul, following a train of thought, ends by being "scattered thou knowest not where." All thought, then, must be repressed. The soul must not allow itself to be haunted by the memory of its imperfections, but, in entire forgetfulness of all creatures and most of all itself, to "beat evermore on this *cloud of unknowing* with a sharp dart of longing love." To assist its concentration the soul may utter one word—"that thou mayest have better hold thereon take thee but a little word of one syllable"—but he adds later that the best prayer is "a ghostly cry . . . when it is in pure spirit, without special thought or any pronouncing of word; unless it be seldom, when for abundance of spirit it bursteth up into word."

The author is careful to warn the disciple at some length to discriminate very carefully between the "loving power" of the soul, and the intellection of the wit, which with the imagination, must be "stiffly trodden underfoot" for the work "to be truly conceived in purity of spirit." He does not mince his words over the fate of those who strive to comprehend God intellectually, and he directs his disciple to guard against disaster by meeking, or humbling, himself. His definition of meekness is "nought else but a true knowing and feeling of a man's self as he is." There are two degrees of meekness, perfect and imperfect. "Swink (toil) and sweat in all that thou canst" he says, "for to get thee a true knowing and a feeling of thyself as thou art; and then I trow (trust) that, soon after, thou shalt have a true knowing and a feeling of God as he is." Perfect meekness would seem to be an involuntary revelation, following the mystical experience; imperfect meekness, that knowledge of himself for which a man strives consciously. "Those who might get these (meekness and love) clearly, he needeth no more; for why, he hath all."

### Man's Preparation and God's Grace

How shall a man prepare himself for the contemplative life, and how shall he know when he is ready? *The Cloud* teaches that no one shall come to contemplation without forsaking worldly things "in a true will," or without much meditation, or "full special grace, or long use in special grace." Those who are called to the work must first purify themselves and cleanse their consciences, for it is "privy love set in cleanness of spirit upon this dark *cloud of unknowing* betwixt thee and thy God (which) subtly and perfectly containeth in it the perfect virtue of meekness, without any special or clear beholding of anything under God." Some men need "long ghostly exercise" to prepare them; others "be so subtle in grace and in spirit, so homely (familiar) with God in this grace of contemplation that they may have it when they will." All men have difficulty in the work, both "sinners" and "innocents." Sinners have the hardest labour, though it sometimes happens that those who have been "horrible and customary sinners come sooner to the perfection of this work than those that have been none." He adds a remarkable pendant to this in his assertion: "not what thou art, nor what thou hast been, doth God regard with his merciful eyes, but what thou wouldst be." And if the work is hard and strait in the beginning, when devotion comes, when the soul really surrenders itself, "it shall be made full restful and full light . . . And thou shalt have either little travail or none; for then will God work sometime all by himself. Then wilt thou think it merry to let him alone." This insistence on God taking up the work himself occurs very often in *The Cloud*. Let grace "do with thee and lead thee whersoever it willeth. Let it be the worker, and thou but the sufferer; do but look upon it and let it alone. Meddle thou not therewith as though thou wouldst help it, for dread lest

thou spill all. Be thou but the tree, and let it be the carpenter; be thou but the house, and let it be the husband dwelling therein." Then may God send out a beam of ghostly light to touch the soul—but of this, he says, he dares not speak with his "blabbering fleshly tongue."

Love all men as kin, for all must be "loved plainly and nakedly for God." Offer all actions to God: "whoso clotheth a poor man and doth any other good deed for God's love, bodily or ghostly, to any that hath need, let them be sure they do it unto Christ ghostly."

Finally, how shall a man know when to pass from meditation to contemplation? He will know by the stirring of his soul when it reads of this high work. But most surely will he know his readiness when he feels that nothing he does is complete "unless this secret little love set upon the *cloud of unknowing* be in a ghostly manner the chief of all their work."

It would be impossible to understand the teaching of *The Cloud* without special reference to the author's conception of grace. Man cannot be "knit to God" in love and will by nature, but only by grace. He is "made a god in grace" because the soul in union with God is "all one with him in grace, yet . . . full far beneath him in nature." Grace is the gift of God, by which he reforms the soul. The work of the contemplative can never be done by his own unaided power; it is "never gotten by study, but only by grace." The aspirant can do the spade-work with divine help, but the stirring of love "that is the work of God only." Grace to come to contemplation is also given solely by God "in whatsoever soul he liketh, without any merit of the same soul." "It is neither given for innocence nor withholden for sin. Take good heed that I say *withholden*, and not *withdrawn*." In the same way God adapts himself to the capacity of the soul, which, by virtue of reforming grace, is enabled to comprehend him by love, who is incomprehensible "to all created knowing powers . . . incomprehensible, I mean, by their knowing and not by their loving."

### A Wholeness of Outlook

The Negative way of this fourteenth-century bhakta, with his emphasis on "nought" and "nowhere" rather than "everywhere" and "aught" (anything) may seem at first sight austere and wholly renunciatory. Nothing could be further from the truth. The author knows exactly where to lay the pruning knife; but he never cuts unnecessarily. Though the spiritual psychology which he seems to have inherited through Ricard of St. Victor from St. Augustine, is a primitive one, his intuitions surpass and transform it. Always his discourse is sweetened by his good sense, his humility and wisdom. Something of this may be caught in his axioms. "The nearer men touch the truth, the more wary must men be of error." If the reader cannot grasp what he reads, "lay it beside thee," he says, "till God come and teach thee." Keep healthy, he instructs his young friend, "I tell thee truly, this work asketh a full great restfulness, and a full whole and a clean disposition, as well in body as in soul." Too great straining of body and spirit may lead to derangement, and the contemplative "fall into fantasy in his ghostly wits." And he advises "Listiness of spirit" not "boisterousness of body." "Learn to love listily with a soft and a demure behaviour as well in body as in soul," then the body "by the virtue of the soul shall set itself upright." Again, "God forbid," he says, "that I should separate what God hath coupled, the body and the spirit. For God would be served with body and with soul, both together, as seemly is, and reward man his meed both in body and in soul." This wholeness of outlook is reflected in his refusal to depose reason, which is greatly helpful to meditation and "a beam of the likeness of God." Neither will he separate action and contemplation. "A man may not be . . . fully contemplative (as it may be here) except he be in part active." Likewise he gives the sovereignty to love and puts askesis in a subsidiary place. He encourages his disciple to be cheerful in the right spirit and not to let his failures depress him, and that though he must love all creatures in God, "familiar affection" to friends is permissible, for even Christ had a special love towards the disciple John. Be temperate in all outward activities, he advises, "as in eating and drinking, and in sleeping, and in keeping of thy body from outrageous cold or heat, and in long praying or reading, or in communing in speech." The contemplative life, rightly practised, will carry its own sanctions and restraints. "They have God, in whom is all plenty; and whoso hath him—yea as this book telleth—he needeth nought else in this life."

*The Cloud of Unknowing* needs reading in its entirety, not once but many times. Nevertheless, as Charles Williams said, "The charge and challenge of that most blessedly unknown cartographer of heaven cannot be easily overcome." He prayed that all those who had towards his book only a curious wit should not read it. Those who choose its way will find in it that extraordinary power to transmit light which is the mark of the master. Wrapped in his anonymity he remains one of the purest and truest voices in English mysticism: "they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." He ends his book with the words:

"Farewell, ghostly friend, in God's blessing and mine! And I beseech Almighty God that true peace, whole counsel, and ghostly comfort in God with abundance of grace, evermore be with thee and all God's lovers on earth. Amen."

# RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT

BY ANILBARAN ROY

Sri Aurobindo started National Education in Bengal but unfortunately for the country he could not organise it according to his vision and ideal. That education has been grossly neglected and we see corruption rampant everywhere. It was expected that with the advent of swaraj, things would be mended and education in India would be placed on a spiritual basis following the eternal ideal of India. But that has not yet been realised; on the contrary, the Constituent Assembly has adopted an article which has raised serious misgivings in the minds of people, that the present Government have put a ban on spiritual training.

It is true, the article refers expressly only to institutions wholly maintained out of Government funds, but people naturally think that the Government expect all other educational institutions to follow the same rule.

But a closer examination of that article, aided by a study of the speeches made by the sponsors in the Constituent Assembly, shows that the Government only intended that sectional and credal religions should not be taught in Government schools. There is no ban on teaching spirituality which constitutes the essence of all religions. Most people favour the imparting of religious education in schools, but they are not sure about the method. But our ancient Rishis solved the problem for us; they have left for us the Gita which contains the essential truth of all religions. Indeed the Gita is not a book of credal religion, it is a spiritual scripture, yoga shastra. At the end of every chapter of the Gita we find the following *samkalpa*—*Srimadbhagavadgitasupanishadsu brahmavidyam yogasastre*.

A credal religion consists of certain special rites and ceremonies of worship and prayer according to some dogmatic belief. In this sense, the Hindu, Muslim, Christian religions are different. But these are the externals of religion, which may serve as a preparation for the true spiritual life which consists in finding direct union with God through self-giving and surrender so that all our life and action may be controlled by the divine Will and our consciousness be filled with divine peace and light and love and bliss. This is the true aim of all real religions, and yogic practice is the means of attaining it and the Gita is an eminent scripture of Yoga. We find in it a synthesis of all paths in such a manner as is to be found nowhere else. If only the Gita be taught well in our schools and colleges, a firm foundation will be laid for a truly moral and spiritual life. Still educational institutions are hesitating to introduce the Gita as they fear that the Government do

not favour it. In order to remove these doubts I wrote a personal letter to Dr. Rajendra Prasad, the President of the Constituent Assembly, and to be quite sure I sent to him a copy of a Hindi booklet, *Kshatriya dharma*, prepared by myself, giving an interpretation of the first 38 slokas of the second chapter of the Gita. As his reply removes a serious doubt and also may be helpful to the University Commission who will have to give their report soon, I take the liberty to publish that letter here in full:

1, Queen Victoria Road,  
New Delhi, the 9th July, 1949

My dear Anil Babu,

I am so glad to receive your letter dated the 2nd July after such a long time. I do not know to what particular part of the Constitution relating to religious education you refer in your letter. So far as I am aware there is no ban on spiritual training. In fact only institutions maintained out of State funds shall not provide any religious instruction. Institutions, run out of endowments which require religious instructions to be imparted, are free to give it even if the State manages such an institution. But no one can be compelled to take such an instruction unless, in the case of a minor, the guardian consents to it. I think, the wording of article 22 of the draft Constitution which perhaps you had in mind is clear, but I would like to know how this idea has arisen.

I have been glancing over the book in Hindi which you have been good enough to send to me. A book like this should prove very useful as a text book but, as you know, these text books are prescribed for the lower classes by text book committees and for the higher classes either by the University or by particular boards. I am not in touch with any of these institutions and I do not know how I could help you in getting it accepted. But I would suggest to you to put yourself in touch with the authorities concerned. I am well,

With regards,  
yours sincerely,  
S/d Rajendra Prasad.

Sri A. B. Roy  
Sri Aurobindo Ashram,  
Pondicherry.

## ADORATION

Thou sleepest on the eye-lids of the Superconscient, O Monarch of man's dream-land, and coverest Thyself up with the Inconscient's sheet; ever inscrutable are Thy ways.

Becoming a child Thou plungest down along the precipitous incline of Involution, into the dead waters of the bottomless Inconscience. A deep Silence envelops Thee there.

\* \* \*

At the end of a long, long, aeonic journeying on land mankind has now firmly pitched its camp on the Cape of Mind on the shore of the Superconscient's sea:

And there, O Divine, it awaits the arrival of the Boat of Thy Grace to voyage to the distant Supramental Shore.

Assuming once again the form of Fish, O Divine, manifest Thyself before Manu, the Man, and in Thy Ark carry him to the Superconscient's Northern Mount.

\* \* \*

While the ever-circling water-wheel of breath empties the waters of Life, how can the mind remain composed with the futile consolations offered by the world?

But now both Life and Mind have become submerged in Thy Consciousness; the former has forgotten its transcendence and the latter its restlessness in the rhythm of the Infinite.

\* \* \*

When Thou, O Divine, camest near my heart and stoodst knocking at my door, the obstructing wall of sin, hit by Thy Foot, tumbled down.

The sentries of the unscalable Fortress of sin had been in the Subconscient's sleep; and ignorant of danger, all the Ministers too had been asleep in their mansions.

But in the inner apartment the Monarch Ego with his Consort were awake and watching the path of Thy Advent; and joyously he approached Thee, with his crown in his hand.

Returning to Thee the throne of Nature entrusted by Thee to him, the Ego was now happy; abdicating and surrendering to Thee he celebrated his own as well as Thy Victory.

\* \* \*

In the hive of my heart I gather the ever-new honey of Divine Delight and there erect a home for the swarm of Mind's *vrittis*.

Since Thy Consciousness has become the Queen and is ruling the other bees a state of happiness and content has settled there and all the griefs have vanished.

\* \* \*

On the *Trikāta* Mountain, of Mind-Life-Body's triple peak, O Sun, stop Thy chariot awhile and shower Thy lustrous Force of Truth on those pinnacles.

\* \* \*

Using Honey for ink write on my forehead Thy Fate-script of Love with the Superconscient's pen; I too will fill Thy Divine Lotus-Foot with my love's lacrymograph.

\* \* \*

When I stood before Thy Feet and held up the begging-bowl of my heart, that too Thou snatchedst away from me, O inscrutable Divine.

In a moment Thou madest me a pauper without any belongings, by snatching my heart-bowl away; but the very next moment pouring down Thy Love, Thou showedst me the Supreme Fullness.

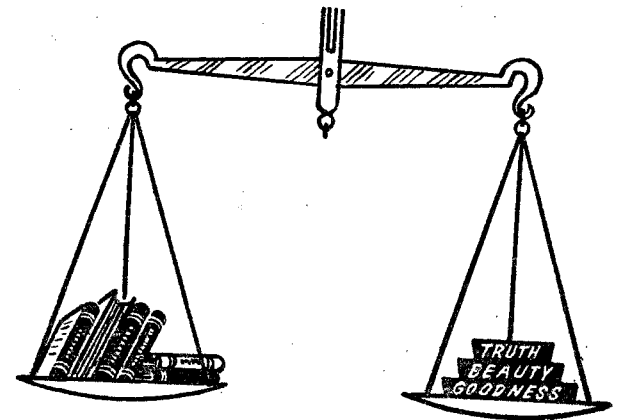
RAJNIKANT MODY.

Stanzas translated by the author from his Gujarati poem ARCHANA.

# BOOKS in the BALANCE

## YOGA AND LIFE

### A MASTER'S DIRECT GUIDANCE TO HIS DISCIPLES



#### LETTERS OF SRI AUROBINDO

Edited by K. H. G. Published by the Sri Aurobindo Circle, 32, Rampart Row, Bombay. Rs. 8/-

##### AN EASTERN CRITIC'S ESTIMATE

*The Sun from which we kindle all our suns*

(Sri Aurobindo: *Savitri*)

*Letters of Sri Aurobindo*, the second in the series that is being brought out by the Sri Aurobindo Circle, Bombay, runs into six hundred pages of solid matter, a product well worth the painstaking labour and discriminating industry that K. H. G., the Editor, has brought to bear on this publication. Classified and arranged in 16 sections under descriptive titles, this collection of letters written by Sri Aurobindo to his disciples and enquirers covers a wide field and a variety of topics from Jivanmukti to Earthquakes, Quantum Theory to Avatars.

The letters deal mainly with the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo—its aim, goal, conditions and sadhana. True; but as the Editor observes in the Foreword, since this Yoga “aims not only at a liberation but also at a decisive spiritual conquest and transmutation of . . . Ignorance, resulting in the complete divinisation of our entire existence, the manifold problems of life also come up at many places for illuminating elucidation from the central spiritual vision.” Common occurrences come in for unfamiliar treatment and much that is unlit and unexplained in every-day life stands lit and revealed in all its significance after a careful study of this collection. To take just one illustration. Answering a complaint about the ingratitude of human nature, Sri Aurobindo writes:

“Your surprise at X’s behaviour shows that you do not yet know what kind of thing is the average human nature. Did you never hear of the answer of Vidyasagar when he was told that a certain man was abusing him,—‘Why does he abuse me? I never did him a good turn.’ The unregenerate vital is not grateful for a benefit, it resents being under an obligation. So long as the benefit continues, it is effusive and says sweet things, as soon as it expects nothing more it turns round and bites the hand that fed it. Sometimes it does that even before, when it thinks it can do it without the benefactor knowing the origin of the slander. . . . Of course people with a developed psychic element are by nature grateful. . . .” (P. 410)

##### Wisdom that Leads by the Hand

The epistolary medium has certain obvious advantages over other media for communication of knowledge and wisdom. Treatises are generally more occupied with forceful presentation of the thought and the development of the argument and the clinching of issues than with convincing the reader and as such appeal only to a certain type of intellectuals. Discourses can, of course, be popular and have a place in the dissemination of knowledge, but they cannot take the place of Letters which rarely fail to be fit vehicles to reach a wider circle of readers whose temperaments and levels of culture are and may be at variance with one another. Being in the nature of heart-to-heart talks, they do away with formalities and put the mind of the reader *en rapport* with the writer. Here there is a free flow of thought from one to another following the mind of the recipient. This is of special importance in matters like spiritual practice. An olympian enunciation of fundamental truths of the Atman or the *Sat* may dazzle, but it fails to carry effectively the soul of the novice. It is the reverse in Letters. Here the Master leaves his heights, comes down and meets the aspirant, *jijnasu*, on his own level, leads him by his hand as it were. And particularly in cases like the present one when the Master is a Seer his words carry a double conviction. Apart from the informality, the *Vak* of the Rishi carries with it an intrinsic power, a vibration that flows from the word and penetrates into the soul in an unmistakable manner. Thus, the atmosphere one breathes while reading the epic of Valmiki is one of sweet resonance and melting emotion; a recitation of the Hymns of Parasara charges the whole air with powerful spiritual vibrations and leaves one on rare heights. These words carry a concrete effect. Sri Aurobindo’s letters, written mostly as they are in answer to queries relating to the spiritual life, have—we can safely aver from personal experience corroborated by the experience of hundreds—the power to effect the very thing they inculcate verbally.

Continued on next page

##### A WESTERN CRITIC'S VIEW

A second volume of Sri Aurobindo’s letters to his disciples has just been published. Brilliantly edited, like the First Series, the letters are assembled into groups dealing with the subjects of questions propounded to the Master by his followers. For the sincere seeker after Light there can hardly be imagined a treasure of such value; here are laid open for our study Sri Aurobindo’s answers to the intimate problems that have been expressed by other sincere seekers. One finds one’s own perturbations and difficulties answered on every page. In what we like to think of as these democratic times we must avoid the use of the word authority; but if we have any sense of reality we must be profoundly grateful for these pronouncements which come from one of the world’s greatest spiritual leaders. One who has himself trodden the path and found the Light—as we may satisfy ourselves by a study of *The Life Divine* and *Essays on the Gita*—lets us into his sanctum where he is talking to his chosen disciples.

These letters are not for the dilettante of orientalia, not even for the casually interested amateur of Eastern philosophy. They are downright messages to downright people who have cast in their lot with the searchers after God, and no nonsense. They presuppose, of course, a fundamental knowledge of Sri Aurobindo’s principles, but this by no means makes them less understandable to the ordinarily equipped intelligent Westerner. Indeed, Sri Aurobindo’s system is so essentially simple and the terms he uses—with a few Sanskrit exceptions—so self-explanatory that a neophyte in spiritual science (yoga) will find no trouble in understanding it or its objectives. Unless, of course, he is still bogged up with trying to “satisfy his mind”; because the full benefit can only be derived from these communications if the reader has achieved at least some measure of self-consciousness and of self-surrender, and the plasticity and extension of mind and spirit that will then have inevitably followed. In the hands of a truly open-minded and supple intelligence these Letters will work wonders, although they may mean little to the shut face of academic log-rolling or punditism. They are for what we call in the West, for want of a better term, the practical mystic.

There is a great magic in the unstudied form which these letters take—they are, indeed, conversations rather than compositions. One listens to the Master who speaks illuminated words fluently—and free from “thoughtfulness”—because he is the Light. This atmosphere of spontaneity when accompanied by close rationality, is both an aid to conviction and a mark of the authentic. *The Life Divine* and the *Essays* may properly be called hard reading; they appear to be calculated pronouncements embalming Sri Aurobindo’s teachings for the use of humanity over a long period, and particularly designed to stand unshaken in the rough and tumble of Western intellectualism. As philosophic works they will stand any proper test of academics. These qualities make them admittedly involved and difficult for the casual reader—just as any other science deeply presented, and with its own category of terms and forms, must be. To understand them one must study with a disciplined spirit and mind.

But these *Letters* are another matter. Here the ideas are so simply, delightfully, presented with such genial sympathy that one who runs may read and understand—if he has the spiritual capacity or flair. There is, indeed, an excitement and pleasure of discovery in reading them that carries the reader on to the attempt to finish the book at a sitting! (Which is impossible! There are 599 pages of reading matter—excellent value by any standard; beautifully bound, fine large print, good paper, and one of the best produced books we have seen.)

This is a notable book. If you are one of the few who are determined to find the Light as soon as possible—buy it. If you are not of this select band but know someone who is—buy it for him or her. You will be very popular.

A. L. CRAMPTON CHALK.

### The Entire Field of Yogic Life

In themselves these precious Letters cover the entire field of the sadhana special to Sri Aurobindo's perceived Truth of Human Destiny. It is indeed a Manual of Sadhana. All sadhana verily is a regulated effort to rise towards a Higher Reality, towards God. The sadhana begins with the awakening of man to his state of imperfection, his dissatisfaction with the present state of his existence. It proceeds to win him the saving Light through a disciplined endeavour to transcend his limitations and grow into a higher Knowledge leading to the living Truth that is behind and above all that we see and do not see. This Supreme Reality though one in essence is multi-faceted and so are the means of approach to That. There is really no conflict among them.

"There are a thousand ways of approaching and realising the Divine... each path has its own aim and direction and method and the truth of each does not invalidate the truth of the other... the important thing is to follow one's own way well and thoroughly." (P 40,43)

Particular paths appeal to particular temperaments and that is because the possibilities of one soul are different from those of another. The aim of the Integral Yoga is its own:

"This Yoga aims at a new and transformed life... its aim is to refound life in the truth of the spirit and for that purpose to transform the roots of all we are and do from the mind, life and body to a greater consciousness above the mind... In the new life all connections must be founded on a spiritual intimacy and a truth quite other than any which supports our present connections." (P. 240)

The Higher Consciousness, the Higher principle to found the new life on is what has been termed the Supermind by Sri Aurobindo. It stands high above at the summit of this world-manifestation of which it is the original creative Truth.

How to effect the desired change in ourselves and what is the nature of the self-discipline one has to take to? Prayer, meditation, concentration, work (for the Divine), bhakti, surrender and an inner psychic opening—any of these or all of these combined in a way most suited to the nature and need of the seeker on the one hand and the Divine Grace operating directly or through the Guru on the other, are the twin powers that work out the sadhana. The contribution of personal effort and the place of the Grace and the Intervention (Section IX), the true form of prayer and the conditions under which it is effective (p. 11,370), meditation, its nature (p. 390) and its distinction from concentration, are some of the topics treated with illuminating felicity in these pages.

No doubt, this path like all great paths is beset with difficulties thrown up by one's own nature and the environmental Nature which resist all change. By far the largest part of the book is devoted to their analysis and the ways of surmounting them with the least scrimmage. While dealing with this aspect Sri Aurobindo gets into what is with him a rare reminiscent mood and observes:

"As for the Mother and myself, we have had to try all ways, follow all methods, to surmount mountains of difficulties, a far heavier burden to bear... far more difficult conditions, battles to fight, wounds to endure, ways to cleave through impenetrable morass and desert and forest, hostile masses to conquer... For the leader of the way in a work like ours has not only to bring down or represent and embody the Divine, but to represent too the ascending element in humanity and to bear the burden of humanity to the full and experience, not in a mere play or Lila but in grim earnest, all the obstruction, difficulty, opposition, baffled, hampered and only slowly victorious labour which are possible on the path... It is because we have the complete experience that we can show a straighter and easier road to others—if they will only consent to take it. It is because of our experience won at a tremendous price that we can urge upon you and others 'take the psychic attitude; follow the straight sunlit path, with the Divine openly and secretly upbearing you—if secretly, he will yet show himself in good time,—do not insist on the hard, hampered, roundabout and difficult journey.'" (Pp. 387-88)

#### A Large Variety of Subjects

Besides these important aspects of sadhana there is a variety of subjects touched upon in this series. Cheiro's predictions, the truth behind astrology, the extent to which the stars 'record a destiny that has been already formed' (P. 558) come in for a brief treatment. Discussing the question of Destiny and Free Will, Sri Aurobindo draws pointed attention to the fact that *there are layers of destiny and that the destiny on the physical plane can be altered by changing the less rigid destiny on the higher altitudes by means of the spiritual Force*. Séances, mediums, state of soul after death, its process of journey, rest and rebirth, how best one can help the departed, the possibility or otherwise of human beings regressing in evolution are some of the other interesting topics dealt with.

Sri Aurobindo is no iconoclast though he is uncompromising in his own way. He says:

"It is a spiritual principle not to take away any faith or support of faith unless the persons who have it are able to replace it by something larger and more complete."

For him whatever promotes the spiritual growth of the individual is good, no matter how it is viewed by modern rationalists. It will be worthwhile for our pure theists to pause and ponder over what he remarks about worship, *bahyapuja*:

"If done with true consciousness it can bring the greatest possible completeness to the adoration by allowing the body and the most external consciousness to share in the spirit and act of worship." (P. 238) He cares little, however, for conventional virtues and taboos. Dealing with the question of humility in some and sense of superiority and strength in others, he writes:

"As for the sense of superiority, that is a little difficult to avoid when greater horizons open before the consciousness... spiritual experience creates (in some) more and more humility; there are others like Vivekananda in whom it creates a great sense of strength and superiority; there are others in whom it fixes a sense of superiority to men and humility to the Divine. Each position has its value. Take Vivekananda's famous answer to the Madras Pundit who objected to one of his assertions saying, 'But Shankara does not say so,' to whom Vivekananda replied, 'No, but I, Vivekananda, say so,' and the Pundit was speechless. That 'I, Vivekananda' stands up to the ordinary eye like a Himalaya of self-confident egoism. But there was nothing false or unsound in Vivekananda's spiritual experience. For this was not mere egoism, but the sense of what he stood for and the attitude of the fighter who, as the representative of something very great, could not allow himself to be put down or belittled. This is not to deny the necessity of non-egoism and of spiritual humility, but to show that the question is not so easy as it appears at first sight. For if I have to express my spiritual experiences I must do that with truth—I must record them, their *bhava*, their thoughts, feelings, extensions of consciousness which accompany them. What am I to do with the experience in which one feels the whole world in oneself or the force of the Divine flowing in one's being... And I have to use the word I..." (P. 310-11)

Sri Aurobindo's disposal of the prohibitive injunction against the use of powers by the Yogi is again characteristic of him (P. 576-77). It is possible to look at his teachings as quite unconventional. But let none forget that the very basis of his Yoga and spiritual culture is essentially Vedic in origin. His defence of Rama as an Avatar and challenging refusal to admit any validity of charges of the modern debunkers against the Hero of Valmiki would bring tears to the eyes of the most orthodox Hindu. (Pp. 503-520).

To the seeker after truth this handsome volume is a precious companion for its rich store of wisdom and guidance; to the refined mind, *rasika*, a perennial source of beauty and delight; to the initiate a spring-board to the vast expanses of the Spirit.

#### ANNUAL NUMBERS OF SRI AUROBINDO CIRCLE

Sri Aurobindo Circle, Bombay, publishes on the 24th April every year a Special Number containing unpublished writings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and important articles by other writers on philosophical spiritual, literary, scientific and sociological subjects treated from the Aurobindonian standpoint. A special feature of these Numbers is its poetry-section which contains selections from the spiritual and mystical poetry of the new school of poets writing under Sri Aurobindo's inspiration.

The Fifth Number, published on 24th April this year, contains a number of articles and poems of great value. Sri Aurobindo's own contributions include "Chitrangada"—a long unpublished poem of over 200 lines, 22 letters to a disciple and two articles on "Ideal of Human Unity" and "Limitations of Religion as the Law of Life". An important feature, in this Number, of profound spiritual value is the six talks of the Mother which are published here for the first time.

The prices of these Numbers are:

First Number Rs. 5/-; Second Number Rs. 5/-; Third Number Rs. 5/8; Fourth Number Rs. 6/-; Fifth Number Rs. 7/-.

#### AN OPINION

"In the height, breadth and clarity of its vision, this occasional Journal, which is a collection of poems and essays by the pupils of Sri Aurobindo, would appear to be considerably above other journals of a similar nature published in Europe in America."

THE MIDDLE WAY (England) Oct. 1948.

SRI AUROBINDO CIRCLE, 32, Rampart Row, Fort, Bombay.

# ROMANTICISM, SYMBOLISM, MYSTICISM

BY K. R. SRINIVASA IYENGAR

## I

Why certain poets write poetry, why poetry affects us and how it affects us, why "new" poetry is new and is yet of a piece with all poetry from the first agitated lispings of Adam and Eve, are a mystery which is not easily amenable to the categories of morality and reason. The flowers on a tree no doubt derive in an obscure way from the hidden root, which is itself sustained by the earth and the air and the sky; even so, each burst of blossoming retains its essential mystery and repeats the splendid miracle. The mystery and the miracle granted, it is not unhelpful to anatomize this glory of efflorescence,—both figurative and literal,—and even to label the limbs and the functions. The poetry is what primarily matters; the analysis, the labelling, the exegesis, have but a subordinate place. But the poets themselves often love to think that the origins and processes of their creative work can be explained like an Euclidean proposition. And the critics and literary historians readily take the cue and structure the rest of the glittering facade. In the result, we have endless discussions on theories and schools of poetry, on movements and tendencies, on revolutions and counter-revolutions. "Though one man must originate a movement", says Walter de la Mare, "it takes many men to make one, and when our glance backward deepens into a security, we see not so much the movement as the men". Thus, so long as we do not forget the men in the movement, or the poetry in the poetolatry, even these discussions may have their own especial value for us, and we need not therefore sniff at them with quite a contemptuous air.

After Rousseau and the French Revolution came the stormy Age of Romanticism, marked by massed clouds, blinding lightning-flashes, rumbling thunder, and torrential rains. It was an age of richness and vastness, strangeness and sublimity, contrast and complication, fantasy and grotesqueness; and Victor Hugo was the careering Achilles of the age, the Titan of the romantic agony and ecstasy. Destroyer and deliverer at once, he furiously charged against the tower of restraints, and set free the captive lady. In a poem indited in 1834, *Response a un Acte d'Accusation* (Reply to an Act of Impeachment), Victor Hugo actually made a virtue of the criticisms hurled against him by the traditionalists:

*I own my wickedness.  
Dread demagogue am I: from laws set free:  
Destroyer of the ancient A B C....  
Henceforth no words of high or low degree!  
A tempest in the inkstand I decree....  
Yes I'm that Danton, I that Robespierre.  
'Gainst courtly words which their long rapiers wear  
I've made their valets (vulgar words) rebel....  
I've ta'en, thrown down the old Bastille of rhymes.  
Nay more, I've broken all those chains as well  
Which bound the word of "people".<sup>1</sup>*

There were doubtless other storm-troopers of the movement operating at other European battle-fronts, but during the second quarter of the nineteenth century Paris was the crucial focus, and Victor Hugo was the acknowledged Generalissimo, with Sainte-Beuve for his Chief of Staff. Gautier thought that young Victor Hugo "might have worn the crown or laurel-garland of a Caesar or a god". There is also the testimony of another of his younger contemporaries, Theodore de Banville: "At times there appears a new work by Victor Hugo, and everything lights up, resounds, murmurs, sings. The shining, sounding, fascinating verse, with its thousand surprises of tone, of colour, of harmony, breaks forth like a rich concert. Every moment he adds something new to that swing of syllables, that melodious play of rhyme, which is the grace and the glory of the poetry of France". The cardinal date, 1830; the production of *Hernani*, the event; Romanticism had arrived. From Victor Hugo poetry now issued forth in an inexhaustible flood; plays and novels spirted out in quick succession; and his fame leapt across frontiers, and communicated an aching thrill to countless devotees of song. The condition of constant excitation which became normal to Victor Hugo gave him an exceptional fecundity and facility in poetic expression, but such a condition was, after all, fatally apt to degenerate into the disease of insomnia and its attendant evils. Inebriated with a sense of one's own powers, one is likely to lose one's bearings, to see spectres, to hurl challenges, to fight windmills. Romanticism, then, can be a disease, but be it admitted that it is the splendid disease of intoxication to which the lunatic, the lover, and the poet, creatures who are of imagination all compact, are peculiarly susceptible. Victor Hugo, said the late Lytton Strachey, "had the powers of a great genius and the soul of an ordinary man". It might be true; it might be true no less that Victor Hugo lacked poise, and lacked humour; that he is for eager, ebullient youth, rather than for sober, disillusioned age. And yet, at his quintessential best, Victor Hugo is as irresistible as the sun, as laden with promise as spring:

*Still barred thy doors!—the far east glows,  
The morning wind blows fresh and free.  
Should not the hour that wakes the rose  
Awaken also thee?....*

*Apart we miss our nature's goal,  
Why strive to cheat our destinies?  
Was not my love made for thy soul?  
Thy beauty for my eyes?<sup>1</sup>*

In his *Legende des Siècles* (Legend of the Ages), his most ambitious work in poetry, Victor Hugo sought to present, as it were cinematographically, the story of human civilization from Eve the mother of men to the Revolution the mother of the people. As he declared in the Epilogue:

*This book is the dread wreck of Babylon,  
The gloomy tower of things, the home concise  
Of right, wrong, morning, tears, and sacrifice;  
Once proud, and ruling o'er horizons far,  
Now having nought but blocks that hideous are,  
Scattered in the dark valley, lost and laid;  
It is man's epic—harsh, immense—decayed.<sup>2</sup>*

Contraries fascinated and attracted Victor Hugo, and he loved to bring together evil and good, body and soul, barbarism and civilization, Quasimodo and Esmeralda; and seeing them together, he saw the filiations between them, and it appeared to him that, like the iron and the magnet, they could not help being together, that indeed one could not be imagined apart from the other. Life is broad, human nature is incalculably broad; and extremes meet and clash and coalesce into a new harmony. In Victor Hugo it would be absurd to look for the psychological penetration or profundity of a Tolstoy or Dostoevsky, but in his limited way he too was an explorer into the continent of truth and nature, and his integrity was beyond question. It is, however, not as a psychologist or thinker, but as a poet, that Victor Hugo still reigns in our hearts. Taken in the mass, his poetry almost strikes us as a primordial avalanching force, all warmth and motion and light. "He can conjure up", says Strachey, "the strangest visions of fancy; he can evoke the glamour and the mystery of the past; he can sing with exquisite lightness of the fugitive beauties of Nature; he can pour out, in tenderness or in passion, the melodies of love; he can fill his lines with the fire, the stress, the culminating fury, of prophetic denunciation; he can utter the sad and secret questionings of the human spirit, and give voice to the solemnity of fate". Victor Hugo was, perhaps, three-fifths barbarian and two-fifths prophet, but he was beyond question touched with the *enthousiasmos* of the born poet, and that is all that matters.

From the Renaissance, its magnificent record of fulfilment and failure, through the intervening unexciting formalism of the eighteenth century, to the triumphs and excesses of the Age of Romanticism, is certainly a far cry, but a long range view reveals a rhythm that may otherwise be altogether missed. Such a synoptic view is presented by Sri Aurobindo in his illuminating treatise, *The Future Poetry*:

"The constant self-expansion of the modern mind has broken down many limiting barriers; a vast objective knowledge, an increasingly subtle subjectivity, a vivid living in the past, present and future, a universal view of man as of Nature, are its strong innovations. This change has found inevitably its vivid reflections in the wider many-sided interests, the delicate refinements, fine searchings, large and varied outlook and profound inlook of modern poetry.... On the one side a sentimental or a philosophic naturalism, on the other a flamboyant or many-hued romanticism, superficial mediaevalism, romanticized Hellenism, an interest in the fantastic and the supernatural, tendencies of an intellectual or an ideal transcendentalism, are the salient constituting characters. They make up that brilliant and confusedly complex, but often crude and unfinished literature, stretching from Rousseau and Chateaubriand to Hugo and taking on its way Goethe, Schiller, Heine, Wordsworth, Byron, Keats and Shelley, which forms a hasty transition from the Renaissance and its after-fruits to the modernism of today which is already becoming the modernism of yesterday. Much of it we can now see to have been ill-grasped, superficial and tentative, much, as in Chateaubriand and in Byron, was artificial, a pose and affectation; much, as in the French Romantics, merely bizzare, overstrained and overcoloured.... Nevertheless behind this often defective frontage was the activity of a considerable force of new truth and power, much exceedingly great work was done, the view of the imagination was immensely widened and an extraordinary number of new motives brought in which the later nineteenth century developed with a greater care and finish and conscientious accuracy, but with crudities of its own and perhaps with a less fine gust of self-confident genius and large inspiration".

*Continued on next page*

1. Tr. by Henry Carrington.

1. Tr. by Aru Dutt.  
2. Tr. by Henry Carrington.

# Romanticism, Symbolism, Mysticism—Continued from previous page

## II

After a run of about two decades, the Romantic holocaust seemed to be almost spent. Hugo was alive and active, but he was rather a sobered Hugo. It was with Theophile Gautier, the Parnassians, and the Symbolists that the immediate future lay. Gautier's *Emaux et Camées* (Enamels and Cameos) came out in 1852, and its orderliness and restraint, its purity and strength, made an instant appeal to a people who were just recovering from the intoxicating effects of the Romantic vintage. "In *Emaux et Camées*", says Saintsbury, "it is almost impossible to find a flaw; language, metre, arrangement, are all complete and perfect, and this formal completeness is further informed by abundant poetic suggestion". Here is a specimen of Gautier's "clean chryselephantine" verse, in Swinburne's exquisite adaptation:

We are in Love's land today;  
Where shall we go?  
Love, shall we start or stay,  
Or shall we row? . . .  
Where shall we land you, sweet?  
On fields of strange men's feet,  
Or fields near home?  
Or where the fire-flowers blow,  
Or where the flowers of snow  
Or flowers of foam?  
We are in Love's land today.

The Parnassians, who came to prominence in the sixties and seventies, likewise executed a clear and polished beauty, restrained and impersonal to a marked degree. Then occurred Baudelaire whose *Les Fleurs du Mal* (Flowers of Evil), published in 1857, "created a new shudder" over all France and all Europe. A sinister eruption of Erebus fire, Baudelaire's poetry achieved a terrifying splendour and gave modern poetry the violent renovation it needed. The din and dust of everyday life and the insurrection within his own tortured soul were Baudelaire's principal themes, and what gives the murky world of *Les Fleurs du Mal* its peculiar glow is the radiance of his fiendish uncompromising sincerity. "In his verse", says T. S. Eliot, "he is now less a model to be imitated or a source to be drained than a reminder of the duty, the consecrated task, of sincerity." Baudelaire, it has been said, was the "Devil's martyr"; but it is idle to turn away from the poetry to the mess that he would appear to have made of his life; and we shall do well to bear in mind Herbert Read's warning to biographers:

"A poet's poems are facts far more essential in his life than his sexual adventures or his financial difficulties, and the biography of a poet should therefore be primarily an account of his creative activity, the life of his muse, and the other facts are only important in so far as they contribute to an understanding of this process".

And the essential biography of Baudelaire is contained in these lines from Swinburne's memorial poem:

Thou sawest, in thine old singing season, brother,  
Secrets and sorrows unbeheld of us:  
Fierce loves, and lovely leaf-buds poisonous,  
Bare to thy subtler eye, but for none other  
Blowing by night in some unbreathed-in-clime  
The hidden harvest of luxurious time,  
Sin without shape, and pleasure without speech;  
And where strange dreams in a tumultuous sleep  
Make the shut eyes of stricken spirits weep;  
And with each face thou sawest the shadow on each,  
Seeing as men sow men reap.

While Baudelaire was somewhat of a dark Olympian, his "successors", the Symbolists, aspired to a poetic utterance that was supple and musical, that freely trafficked with "symbols" and communicated a sense of the mutability of things. Startling or ethereal, sombre or glinting, language became for them the very flesh and blood of poetry, no mere decorative vestment or protective armour. In modern times, and more especially in France, poetry and the plastic arts have influenced one another, resulting in no small measure of interesting cross-fertilization. "Just as Monet blanketed his cathedrals in a mist of irreality", writes Bernard Weinberg, "as Debussy hid his melodies within a web of delicate harmony, so the poets of this late group bury their meaning in a tissue of images and symbols". Verlaine and Rimbaud, Laforgue, Corbière and Mallarmé, contributed in their several ways to the heritage of Symbolism which has, according to T. S. Eliot, affected (since 1908) "all English poetry that matters".

Verlaine was the purest singer of the whole group, but his collision with Rimbaud, while it perhaps brought out the poet, completely undid the man. Hovering uncertainly between the excesses of sensuality and the surges of mystical fervour, Verlaine gave his songs something of the aroma of the spirit, elusive but unmistakable. Of "god-struggler" Rimbaud Mr. Desmond MacCarthy writes: "It takes a short time to read all

Rimbaud has written, but a long time to understand him." Of Rimbaud's forbiddingly obscure poems, M. Bernard Fay says that they "are not born of contact with things, and do not aim at reproducing them. . . they issue from a place where there are no things, but only desires". Alone against the World; that might very well have been Rimbaud's defiant motto, prefixed to *Les Illuminations*. Mallarmé has been described as "the most erudite and laborious of literary contortionists", but there was a pointed purpose behind his anguished contortions. His aim invariably was to crystallize into plastic images all thoughts, all passions, all the movements of the mind, all the insurrections within the soul. The Mallarmean trick of linking chance audacious analogies to insinuate an inner spiral of meaning has been exploited, among others, by Edith Sitwell. Laforgue's *Moralités Legendaires* was, on the other hand, keyed to a high pitch of exasperated sensitiveness, and was marked by what appeared to be deliberate dislocations of normal associations of ideas. Mr. James Hunekar aptly describes Laforgue as the "new buffoon of dusty eternities who sings the sorrows and complaints of a world peopled by fantastic souls, clowns, somnambulists, satyrs, poets, harlots, dainty girls, Cheret posters, kings of psychopathic tastes, blithe birds and sad coloured cemeteries."

The Symbolists were, after all, only Baudelaireans with a difference, even as Baudelaire himself was but a Romanticist with a difference. The current of European Romanticism was by the very law of its being an irregular inconstant flow. As Mr. Richard Church points out, "Romanticism, since it is impulsive, must have an intermittent progress. One enthusiasm must fade and give place to another, sometimes the latter being detained until another artist, of a later generation, arises to give it expression". What Mr. Earle Welby, adopting a phrase of Dr. Johnson's, calls the Romanticist's "hunger of the imagination which preys on life" cannot altogether cease to be or get satiated except in a wholly self-poised, self-possessed, and self-satisfied age. The edge of the hunger remains, but perhaps the nature of the palate varies from time to time. Mr. Eliot has drawn a rather nice distinction between Baudelaire on the one hand and the Symbolists—Laforgue, Verlaine, Corbière, Rimbaud, and Mallarmé—on the other:

"Baudelaire not only reveals the troubles of his own age and predicts those of the age to come, but also foreshadows some issue from these difficulties. When we get to Laforgue, we find a poet who seems to express more clearly even than Baudelaire the difficulties of his own age: he speaks to us, or spoke to my generation, more intimately than Baudelaire seemed to do. Only later we conclude that Laforgue's 'present' is a narrower present than Baudelaire's, and that Baudelaire's present extends to more of the past and more of the future".

This is perhaps but another way of saying that Baudelaire was more of a universalist than his Symbolist successors. But he no less than they, equally if not to the same extent, typified one important aspect of the poetry written during the last one hundred years, viz., the determined exploration into consciousness, layer within layer, the aching desire for the discovery of fresh realms of experience, within and without, the forging of the filiations between these divers realms of experience, and, above all, the passionate unwearying pursuit of the elusive ultimate Reality, the beckoning Holy Grail for these dedicated Galahads of the spirit.

In his thoughtful study, *The Heritage of Symbolism*, Professor Bowra went to the root of the matter and declared that the Symbolist movement was fundamentally mystical. In crude language, the mystic seeks to understand a thing by becoming it, by living in it. What is the innermost truth of things? How shall we recognize it, how shall we seize it? Through internal evidence, through the stern ecstatic joy of recognition, through the ineffable sense of utter identity. The Symbolists and their latter-day successors were one in this—they refused to accept the scientist's view of the universe at its face value. In the mature work of Paul Valéry, Rainer Maria Rilke, Stefan George, Alexander Blok and William Butler Yeats—poets whose work Professor Bowra has submitted to a detailed scrutiny—the force of the Symbolist inspiration found fresh enduring poetic manifestations, thereby giving Symbolism a European significance. The Symbolist's habit of linking everything with everything else is born of the conviction that somehow the universe is a cosmos, however it may appear to be a chaos. Every object, every little bit of experience, every random pang of memory, every unpredictable jerk of hope, is but a link in a chain of relations that ultimately embraces the entire universe. If you contemplate with sufficient concentration, you can see infinity in a grain of sand, and so the grain of sand becomes, in a manner of speaking, a "symbol" of infinity. To quote Mr. Stephen Spender:

"The attitude of the Symbolist is essentially religious towards life, and his method is a modern form of the meditation of mystics. Every object in the world is a reflection of every other object. If a chosen object is contemplated with sufficient intensity it therefore has a universal significance, which unfolds meanings beyond itself. This is essentially the attitude of the Symbolist. The symbol does not necessarily 'stand for' something else: but the deeper levels of its significance are everything which it is not, besides everything which it is".

Continued on opposite page

# Romanticism, Symbolism, Mysticism—Continued from previous page

Neither Symbolism nor this religious "turn" could however, quite restore the lost infinitudes of the Spirit to the modern poet. A beginning had been made, the right road had been taken, but the goal was as yet far off. The Symbolist experiment had certainly not been in vain; it had given poetry a fresh stimulus and a new buoyancy; but the future lay with other life-forces, other nectarean inspirations. In the words of Sri Aurobindo,

"The rediscovery of the soul is the last stage of the round described by this age of the intellect and reason. It is at first mainly the perception of a desire soul, a soul of sense and sensation and emotion, and arriving through them at a sort of psychological mysticism, a psychism which is not yet true mysticism, much less spirituality, but is still a movement of the lower self in that direction. The movement could not stop here: the emergence of the higher perceptions of a larger and purer psychical and intuitive entity in direct contact with the Spirit could not but come...."

### III

With the turn of the century,—or not long after,—the great Symbolist adventure ceased at last to be a real adventure, and became more or less a stale formula of speech. Various modern diversions—Dadaism, Surrealism, Vorticism, Imagism,—gained a brief or local vogue, and were presently hushed up. But the nameless discontent yet gnawed into the modernist's being, and goaded him to experiment again, and yet again, with poetic expression. Between strict traditionalism at one extreme end—a traditionalism which was somewhat akin to the dull rattle of a skeleton's bones—and the Surrealism of M. Andre Breton's, which reduced the poet to a slave of the subconscious or the unconscious and his words to creatures wholly independent of received categories of thought, at the other, between these two polar extremes poets angularly and uncomfortably wavered and staggered, unsure of their position and direction. Then came the War, and after the War, the Revolution in Russia and the Peace of Versailles. In the rat's alley of the Long Week-End, the dead men and women of the post-war world pathetically sought their lost bones, could not find them, and whimpered in consequence. The old world was dead, there was no new world worth mention,—there was only the hideous wreckage from the past, the dilapidated Fisher-King with his paraphernalia of post-mortems, delirium-tremens, temper, stupor, vulgarity, and dirt.

It is not thus surprising in the least that the last thirty or forty years should have been an age of experiment, more visibly and consciously so than even earlier epochs. The "modern" phase of the movement which, to push it no further, had its distant beginnings in Rousseau and the French Revolution and its latter-day impulsion in the War and the Russian Revolution, is the subject of another absorbing new study by Professor Bowra, a book which will serve as a potent Open Sesame discovering divers new horizons of poetry. Professor Bowra presents a group of seven "modern" poets—a Greek, Constantine Cavafy, a Frenchman, Guillaume Apollinaire, two Russians, Vladimir Mayakovsky and Boris Pasternak, an Anglo-American, T. S. Eliot, and two Andalusian-Spaniards, Federico Garcia Lorca and Rafael Alberti—and with these for his illustrative material sketches out the main principles and processes of the modern creative experiment in poetry. The opening chapter, which is tentative and persuasive more than definitive or dogmatic, carefully distills out the essence of "modernism", both as a negative revolt and as a positive activity, as a vainglorious heresy no less than as a belligerent faith. How belligerent the moderns can be may be gauged from these two excerpts, the first from a Russian "futurist" challenge issued in 1942, and the second from the manifesto, *Poetry is Vertical*, published twenty years later, by an international group of "advanced" poets:

"The past is stifling. The Academy and Pushkin are more unintelligible than hieroglyphs.

Throw Pushkin, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, etc. overboard from the steamer of modernity....

We demand respect for the poet's right:

1. to enlarge the vocabulary with arbitrary and derivative words—neologisms;
2. to uncompromising hatred for the language used hitherto;
3. to tear with horror from their proud heads the crowns of worthless fame made of bath-room brushes;
4. to stand upon the rock of the word "We" in a sea of cat-calls and indignation."<sup>2</sup>

The other extract, while in its own way it is equally downright, shows better manners:

"We are against the renewal of the classical ideal, because it inevitably leads to a decorative reactionary conformity, to a factitious sense of harmony, to the sterilization of the living imagination...."

1. *The Creative Experiment*, by C. M. Bowra. (Macmillan, 1949).  
2. *ibid.*, pp. 95-96.

The transcendental 'I' with its multiple stratifications<sup>3</sup> reaching back millions of years is related to the entire history of mankind, past and present, and is brought to the surface with the hallucinatory irruption of images in the dream, the daydream, the mystic-gnostic trance, and even the psychiatric condition.

The final disintegration of the 'I' in the creative act is made possible by the use of a language which is a mantic instrument, and which does not hesitate to adopt a revolutionary attitude toward word and syntax, going even so far as to invent a hermetic language, if necessary.

Poetry builds a nexus between the 'I' and the 'You' by leading the emotions of the sunken, telluric depths upward toward the illumination of a collective reality and a totalistic universe."<sup>3</sup>

It is, on the whole, more profitable therefore to turn from these packets of verbal dynamite to Professor Bowra's reasoned appraisal of modernist aims and methods. After a reference to the Nietzschean differentiation between the Apollonian and Dionysian ideals in poetry, Professor Bowra writes: "The moderns tend towards the Dionysian outlook. Their idea of the authentic thrill is of something powerful and overwhelming which gives not intellectual light but a sense of more abundant life". The thrill is the thing, and the poetry is the thrill. To select is to falsify, and hence the modern poet aims at presenting the *whole* truth, as he sees it, as he participates in it. An age of complexity and confusion cannot be rendered in terms of simplicity and order—and an age of blind alleys and cross purposes can only be mirrored in a tantalizing crazy-patchwork-quilt of a poetic pattern. Hence such an exhibit of "trans-sense" as this bazaar-piece by the Russian poet, Anton Lotov:

Khan khan da dash  
Shu shur i des  
Vilar' fagda  
Suksan kaedeksh  
Mak sa Mak sa  
Yakim den zar  
Vaks bar dan yak  
Zaza  
Siu sech bazd i  
Gar yo zda be  
Men khatt zayde  
Vin da chok me.<sup>1</sup>

Hence too such a seeming aberration as this oft-quoted finale to *The Waste Land*:

London Bridge is falling down falling down falling down  
Poi s' ascose nel foco che gli affina  
Quando fiam uti chelidon — O swallow swallow  
Le prince d'Aquitaine a la tour abolie  
These fragments I have shored against my ruins  
Why then Ile fit you. Hieronymo's mad againe.  
Datta. Dayadhvam. Damyata.  
Shantih shantih shantih.

Further, as the modern poet is a prey to a double disharmony—between the word and the idea, and also between the world and himself—he is apt to make his poetry an expression of this unresolved tension, the very image of his tragic predicament. It is not surprising in the circumstances that when he writes a poem he generally finds himself in the position of Jose Asuncion Silva who confesses:

I showed my poem to a marvellous critic, who scanned it . . . .  
And read it seven times, and said, "I do not understand it."<sup>2</sup>

But he is determined to go his own way. Form and diction, metre and rhyme,—these he will subordinate to the experienced thrill, be it Heaven's grace or Hell's damnation. He will forge his poetry in the fire of contemporary life and hammer it into shape on the anvil of utter integrity.

While the several estimates in Professor Bowra's book adduce ample proof of the opulence of the modern European literary scene, students of English poetry will be particularly stimulated by the essay on Eliot's *The Waste Land*. "There are revolutions", declared Mr. Earle Welby once, "which can be carried through only by an alien, who has, besides willingness to break the rules he knows, a lucky ignorance of the customs of the country." Without fully subscribing to this view, we may nevertheless note the fact that a stupendous renovation in English poetry is being carried out by two "aliens", T. S. Eliot and Sri Aurobindo. From the stifled negations of *The Waste Land* to the guarded affirmations of *Four Quartets*—from the cynical owl's-cry of the early Eliot to the haunting cadences of the mature poet—is indeed a significant march, a pre-ordained

3. *Transition*, 1932, pp. 148-149.

1. *The Creative Experiment*, p. 12.  
2. *ibid.*, p. 18.

# COMMUNISM THE PARASITE

BY "AD ASTRA"

In the latest outrage, perpetrated by Communist forces in China on a member of the American Consulate Service, we have once more a "close up" of Communism as it is in the raw.

It is surprising that we still have an important number of intellectuals, scientists, writers, playwrights, politicians, and a vast number of people in other walks of life who still regard Communism as a true symbiosis. For instance when Bernard Shaw visited Russia with Lady Astor in 1931 he came back with a glowing account of that country. Similarly, Mr. Priestley on a more recent visit. It would be interesting to have their present views. Perhaps they would argue that Communism in the Soviet Union is not the same as, and not responsible for, the Communism in other countries. But did they really see Russia? Were they allowed to go where they pleased, I do not think so. I would rather suggest that all visits of notable people to Russia are carefully staged. The writer had some experience with Russians during the last war, when engaged in air intelligence, and it was at a time when Russian pilots talked perhaps more freely than they would today. It is illogical to the average thinking man that such eminent writers like G. B. S. and Mr. Priestley should so easily divorce the sparks from the fire; for Communism in other countries, however badly organized, certainly has its roots and sustenance in the mother soil of the Soviet, however long the lines of communication may be.

## No True Symbiosis

Communist China today does and can only get its sustenance from Communist Russia. Do the atrocities committed in the name of the victorious marching armies mean nothing to those who still hold that Communism is a true symbiosis?

Let me quote Dr. Poole in Aldous Huxley's *Ape and Essence*: "In true symbiosis there is a mutually beneficial relationship between two associated organisms. The distinguishing mark of parasitism, on the other hand, is that one organism lives at the expense of another. In the end this one-sided relationship proves

fatal to both parties; for the death of the host cannot but result in the death of the parasite by which it has been killed. The relationship between modern man and the planet, of which (until so recently) he regarded himself as the master, has been that, not of symbiotic partners, but of tapeworm and infested dog, of fungus and blighted potato."

Is it possible that today there are men, of proved intelligence, who still asseverate that the Power of the Kremlin is a symbiotic partner of the proletariat; that the common people of Russia have a claim or even a voice in the political destiny of the country? Do these misguided (they must be) friends of Russia really think that the Politburo, the NKVD with its long arm overseas, is really an institution for safeguarding the interests of the people? Do they think it merely a police department such as we enjoy in democratic countries? No! the weight of evidence is too great, even for G. B. S.

Communism is the parasite of the world today—it is obvious and in no uncertain terms. The point is, is it going to devour the host? Is its cankerous growth going to be allowed to continue?

## Need of United Opposition

Democratic governments are fighting the Communist upheavals as best they know how, but they need the backing of the responsible thinkers of the day; they need a unity of action from all walks of life. Those who have thought of Russia as a Russia of Karl Marx and Engels need to reorientate their ideas with the outstanding evidence before them. It seems indeed that the western democracies are following a policy of "wait and see". Yet there are voices raised in Britain and America and many other countries to give full aid to Nationalist China.

Can any man today shut his eyes to the fact that Communist China has the full support of the Soviet

Government? Surely we cannot forget that Stalin handed over the entire military equipment of the Japanese army of one million which surrendered in Manchuria to Mao Tse-tung? Do the democracies still think that Mao Tse-tung will "play ball" with them after his recent announcement that he will stand firm with the Soviet Union? These are facts beyond the realms of conjecture.

Because the western democracies have won minor skirmishes at Berlin does it mean they are to act 'the gentleman' towards other Communist activities in Asia? It is rather like placating a bully because he has agreed to behave in your own club when you know all the time he is acting the bully in someone else's club. It flavours of the 'appeasement policy' all over again.

Why question ourselves any more upon these points, they are there for all to see who have the will to see. Yet there are a vast number of people throughout the democracies who are proud to remain strictly neutral, who, by their surprising silence (probably because they cannot reconcile their previous views with present-day facts) serve admirably the policy of "wait and see", in which any lethargic government is only too willing to acquiesce.

The Democratic governments and those especially within the Commonwealth of Nations should declare a *united policy* against all Communist disturbances which in any way disrupt the national life of the country.

## The Two Pictures

There may be a subtle argument on the other side, that by becoming united we would be in fact forcing our own ideology on weaker nations; that this is only what Russia is doing by spreading Communism abroad. What truth is there in such an argument? None at all! In the first place could we say that in our unity we have an ideology? No! In the second place, is not every country left the freedom to join us or not as it will? But I am afraid we cannot say the same about the Soviet influence; its ideology is most exacting and its pressure (or does

it call it support?) brought to bear on weaker nations now under its control is unique, to say the least of it.

If we take any value of our social civilisation as a standpoint and view from there the workings of the Soviet Union it will be seen how they compare with our own in respect to freedom of expression. Even the social services, science, travel, (intercourse with other peoples of the earth) religion, the press, freedom of speech, to say nothing of a spiritual freedom for which man in his quest for Truth constantly hungers, consciously or unconsciously. Does the Soviet ideology of today compare at all favourably from any of these points of vantage? When one looks at Communism from the vantage point of the last mentioned, namely spiritual freedom, one despairs for the millions impregnated with the doctrines of the Kremlin. Especially the yet-to-be-educated youths in our universities and schools, who, fired with the adolescent fervour of adventure, are misguided by this chance to revolt against what appears to them a lethargic government.

If a truer and higher basis of life is to manifest itself in the world it can only come about by a united effort towards that which man knows to be the highest and best—in the purest sense. Man has to choose what he believes to be the nearest to Truth and Freedom, and he must be united in his endeavour to attain it.

## Action Now!

It is only by unity that this menace, which promises to embroil the earth in a third world war, can be cured. Yes, cured, for it has come to this: a parasitic disease of the world is to be tackled, and we cannot say we lack the specialists who have the medicine with which to effect a cure.

"Wait and see" can only be a palliative.

"Unity of purpose for the end to be achieved" can be a medicine which will effect a cure now.

Must we wait till the last minute and perform one more surgical operation which next time may prove fatal to the patient?

## Romanticism, Symbolism, Mysticism—Continued from previous page

march from the Naya to the Centre of Indifference, and from the still Centre toward the hidden heights. Sri Aurobindo was already a very considerable English poet when he commenced, in December 1917, the sequence of articles on the Future Poetry in his monthly philosophical review, *Arya*. The sequence spanned out into thirty-two instalments, and concluded in July, 1920. Sri Aurobindo too thought in terms of the future poetry, but his reasonings and prophecies took a different turn from those of the European "futurists". One or two excerpts from "The Future Poetry" will indicate the main lines of Sri Aurobindo's prophetic thought:

"The voice of poetry comes from a region above us, a place of our being above and beyond our personal intelligence, a supermind which sees things in their innermost and largest truth by a spiritual identity and with a lustrous effulgency and rapture, and its native language is a revelatory, inspired, intuitive word, limpid or subtly vibrant or densely packed with the glory of this ecstasy and lustre. It is the possession of the mind by the supramental touch and the communicated impulse to seize this sight and word that creates the psychological phenomenon of poetic inspiration, and it is the invasion of it by a superior power to that which it is normally able to harbour that produces the temporary excitement of brain and heart and nerve which accompanies the inrush of the influence . . . .

The first condition of the complete emergence of this new poetic inspiration and this significance of poetic speech must be the completion of an as yet only initial spiritualized turn of our general human feeling

and intelligence . . . . The pouring of a new and greater self-vision of man and Nature and existence into the idea and the life is the condition of the completeness of the coming poetry . . . .

It is in effect a larger cosmic vision, a realizing of the godhead in the world and in man, of his divine possibilities as well of the greatness of the power that manifests in what he is, a spiritualized uplifting of his thought and feeling and sense and action, a more developed psychic mind and heart, a truer and a deeper insight into his nature and the meaning of the world, a calling of diviner potentialities and more spiritual values into the intention and structure of his life that is the call upon humanity, the prospect offered to it by the slow unfolding and now more clearly disclosed Self of the universe."

In other words, the new poetry will come only with the new man; and the new man will be, not the mechanized Robot of a plastic paradise, but the divinized man who has pierced the veil of the mere mental consciousness and touched the springs of the innermost truth of things. The new poet, purified in heart and awakened in soul, will then be able to achieve a truly *mantric* utterance and hymn the ineluctable rhythms of the Spirit. A foretaste of this poetry has already been given by Sri Aurobindo himself in lyrics like *Thought the Paraclete* and *The Rose of God* and in the published Cantos of his great "futurist" epic, *Savitri: A Legend and a Symbol*.



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