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"GREAT IS TRUTH AND IT SHALL PREVAIL"

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SRI AUROBINDO'S MESSAGE TO AMERICA

At the request of the Sri Aurobindo Society of New York, which celebrated his 77th birthday on August 15 under the chairmanship of Miss Pearl Buck, Sri Aurobindo gave a momentous message measuring the psychological tendencies of the West and the East and expressing his ideal both of human unity and of the Divine Spirit's integral manifestation in the human and the material, by which alone that unity can be fundamental, complete and permanent. The Mother also sent the following short but inspiring message:

"Stop thinking that you are of the West and others of the East. All human beings are of the same divine origin and meant to manifest upon earth the unity of this origin."

I have been asked to send on this occasion of the fifteenth August a message to the West, but what I have to say might be delivered equally as a message to the East. It has been customary to dwell on the division and difference between these two sections of the human family and even oppose them to each other; but, for myself I would rather be disposed to dwell on oneness and unity than on division and difference. East and West have the same human nature, a common human destiny, the same aspiration after a greater perfection, the same seeking after something higher than itself, something towards which inwardly and even outwardly we move. There has been a tendency in some minds to dwell on the spirituality or mysticism of the East and the materialism of the West; but the West has had no less than the East its spiritual seekings and, though not in such profusion, its saints and sages and mystics, the East has had its materialistic tendencies, its material splendours, its similar or identical dealings with life and Matter and the world in which we live. East and West have always met and mixed more or less closely, they have powerfully influenced each other and at the present day are under an increasing compulsion of Nature and Fate to do so more than ever before.

There is a common hope, a common destiny, both spiritual and material, for which both are needed as co-workers. It is no longer towards division and difference that we should turn our minds, but on unity, union, even oneness necessary for the pursuit and realisation of a common ideal, the destined goal, the fulfilment towards which Nature in her beginning obscurely set out and must in an increasing light of knowledge replacing her first ignorance constantly persevere.

But what shall be that ideal and that goal? That depends on our conception of the realities of life and the supreme Reality.

Here we have to take into account that there has been, not any absolute difference but an increasing divergence between the tendencies of the East and the West. The highest truth is the truth of the Spirit; a Spirit supreme above the world and yet immanent in the world and in all that exists, sustaining and leading all towards whatever is the aim and goal and the fulfilment of Nature since her obscure inconscient beginnings through the growth of consciousness is the one aspect of existence which gives a clue to the secret of our being and a meaning to the world. The East has always and increasingly put the highest emphasis on the supreme truth of the Spirit; it has, even in its extreme philosophies, put the world away as an illusion and regarded the Spirit as the sole reality. The West has concentrated more and more increasingly on the world, on the dealings of mind and life with our material existence, on our mastery over it, on the perfection of mind and life and some fulfilment of the human being here: latterly this has gone so far as the denial of the Spirit and even the enthronement of Matter as the sole reality. Spiritual perfection as the sole ideal on one side, on the other, the perfectibility of the race, the perfect society, a perfect development of the human mind and life and man's material existence have become the largest dream of the future. Yet both

are truths and can be regarded as part of the intention of the Spirit in world-nature; they are not incompatible with each other: rather their divergence has to be healed and both have to be included and reconciled in our view of the future.

The science of the West has discovered evolution as the secret of life and its process in this material world; but it has laid more stress on the growth of form and species than on the growth of consciousness: even, consciousness has been regarded as an incident and not the whole secret of the meaning of the evolution. An evolution has been admitted by certain minds in the East, certain philosophies and Scriptures, but there its sense has been the growth of the soul through developing or successive forms and many lives of the individual to its own highest reality. For if there is a conscious being in the form, that being can hardly be a temporary phenomenon of consciousness; it must be a soul fulfilling itself and this fulfilment can only take place if there is a return of the soul to earth in many successive lives, in many successive bodies.

The process of evolution has been the development from and in inconscient Matter of a subconscious and then a conscious Life, of conscious mind first in animal life and then fully in conscious and thinking man, the highest present achievement of evolutionary Nature. The achievement of mental being is at present her highest and tends to be regarded as her final work; but it is possible to conceive a still further step of the evolution: Nature may have in view beyond the imperfect mind of man a consciousness that passes out of the mind's ignorance and possesses truth as its inherent right and nature. There is a truth-consciousness as it is called in the Veda, a supermind, as I have termed it, possessing Knowledge, not having to seek after it and constantly miss it. In one of the Upanishads a being of knowledge is stated to be the next step above the mental being; into that the soul has to rise and through it to attain the perfect bliss of spiritual existence. If that could be achieved as the next evolutionary step of Nature here, then she would be fulfilled and we could conceive of the perfection of life even here, its attainment of a full spiritual living even in this body or it may be in a perfected body. We could even speak of a divine life on earth; our human dream of perfectibility would be accomplished and at the same time the aspiration to a heaven on earth common to several religions and spiritual seers and thinkers.

The ascent of the human soul to the supreme Spirit is that soul's highest aim and necessity, for that is the supreme reality; but there can be too the descent of the Spirit and its power into the world and that would justify the existence of the material world also, give a meaning, a divine purpose to the creation and solve its riddle. East and West could be reconciled in the pursuit of the highest and largest ideal, Spirit embrace Matter and Matter find its own true reality and the hidden Reality in all things in the Spirit.

SRI AUROBINDO—THE POET

A REJOINDER TO A RECENT CRITICISM

BY K. D. SETHNA

In the *Illustrated Weekly of India* (July 31) appeared a comment on Sri Aurobindo's poetry. It was by C. R. M. in *Books and Comments* and written apropos of my study, *The Poetic Genius of Sri Aurobindo*. After calling my book interesting, C.R.M. went on to say:

"For Mr. Sethna, Sri Aurobindo's Muse is a case of 'this side idolatry', and I am not so sure that genius is so rampant here as he claims. The merits seem to me to consist of a high level of spiritual utterance, abundant metrical skill, and a sound poetic sensitivity based on the classics and much akin to that of many of the more conservative masters. Sometimes it is as if Sri Aurobindo had taken the cream of Milton, Wordsworth and Tennyson and stirred it to boiling point in the cauldron of his Muse. There are some first-rate passages of blank verse, e.g.

*Only he listens to the voice of his thoughts, his heart's ignorant whisper,
Whistle of wind in the tree-tops of Time and the rustle of Nature.*

Elsewhere there are many pleasant lines of a derivative nature and it is interesting to find traces of the influence of that Yellow Book character, the poet Stephen Phillips, who was at Cambridge with Sri Aurobindo. The Tennysonian influence is still stronger:

*And lightning 'twixt the eyes intolerable
Like heaven's vast eagle all that blackness swept
Down over the inferior snowless heights
And swallowed up the dawn.*

This, in spite of, or because of, that horrible word 'twixt (a crutch for amateur versifiers!) might be from the *Idylls*, and, by stressing the resemblance, one does not mean to decry Sri Aurobindo's talents, for Victoria's laureate was a master of rhythm and a true delineator of beauty."

Naturally, as the author of *The Poetic Genius of Sri Aurobindo*, I could not let C.R.M.'s comment pass. I wrote him a letter and requested its publication. The reply, though not ungenerous, scarcely served my purpose. It ran: "I find your letter on Sri Aurobindo's poetry very interesting and well-expressed (though it hasn't changed some of my opinions!) but I regret that my space is so confined that there is no room for it and we have no correspondence column in the 'Weekly'." As C. R. M. is a gifted writer of considerable popularity and his readers may accept his estimate of Sri Aurobindo, it is necessary that I should voice in *Mother India* what was originally meant for the *Weekly*.

The Originality of a Master of Yoga

C.R.M.'s paragraphs, though appreciative in places and hitting off the truth here and there, seem to me on the whole to miss the mark because of his rather cursory acquaintance with Sri Aurobindo's poetry and a certain haste in making up his mind. When he says, "Sometimes it is as if Sri Aurobindo had taken the cream of Milton, Wordsworth and Tennyson and stirred it to boiling point in the cauldron of his Muse," it is not easy to agree even if his statement be applied to Sri Aurobindo's early work which is not that of a full-fledged Yogi; but when we come to his later work—especially his latest and longest, the epic *Savitri* at which he is still busy and to which I have devoted many pages in my book—the statement loses all relevance. Milton's intellectual theology, Wordsworth's half-philosophical half-emotional pantheism and Tennyson's vague religious idealism can hardly be equated with the vision and experience of a Master of Yoga. As for the manner, it is equally individual in its turns and tones. Except that Sri Aurobindo, like Milton, Wordsworth and Tennyson, does not bring in the typical modernist idiom à la Eliot of *The Waste Land*, nowhere are these poets in either the substance or the style of lines like

*A body like a parable of dawn,
That seemed a niche for veiled divinity
Or golden temple-door to things beyond,*

or,

*The dubious godhead with his torch of pain
Lit up the chasm of the unfinished world
And called her to fill with her vast self the abyss,*

or,

*A wandering hand of pale enchanted light
That glowed along a fading moment's brink
Fixed with gold panel and opalescent hinge
A gate of dreams ajar on mystery's verge,*

or,

*The superconscious realms of motionless peace
Where judgment ceases and the word is mute
And the Unconceived lies pathless and alone.*

These lines, with their direct mystical insight and their suggestive rhythm carrying the concrete life-throb of a Yogi's supra-intellectual consciousness, are not only different in a striking way from the typically Miltonic, Wordsworthian or Tennysonian poetry but also lead us to question C.R.M.'s phrase: "a sound sensitivity based on the classics and much akin to that of many of the more conservative masters." The term "conservative" is in itself debatable. What are called the "classics" are seldom conservative except in the sense that they are not flashy and flamboyant, addicted to involved conceit and confusing imagery, limping in metre and jaggedly irregular in form. If actually there are any conservative masters, the poet of *Savitri* is little akin to them in sensitivity. He has a warm suddenness of simile, a sweeping boldness of metaphor, a varicoloured intensity of vision, a breath-bereaving grandeur of intuition. Nor can the sensitivity shown in these things be said to have its basis in the classics, though the latter too are beautifully or powerfully vivid. Rather a vividness most revolutionary is at work in the Aurobindonian sensitivity—simile, metaphor, vision, intuition, all are of an unusual inner experience mostly beyond the classics. Sri Aurobindo's sensitivity is based on the classics in only one respect: it is neither morbid nor injudicious and has a certain poise and control in even the midst of extreme novelty and force. "Sound" it is, in the best connotation of the term, like the sensitivity of the classics, but its soundness, like that of the other, is an attribute which makes for the genuinely great utterance as distinguished from the merely rushing, dazzling, distracting speech, and does not imply any imitativeness or want of "fine frenzy."

Is Sri Aurobindo's Early Blank Verse like Tennyson's "Idylls"?

As regards the early blank verse, written mostly in the poet's own twenties and in the last decade of the nineteenth century, the comment that in it the Tennysonian influence, especially from the *Idylls of the King*, is the strongest strikes one as too sweeping. There is an audacious Elizabethan temper in this blank verse, and Milton, Keats, Arnold and the finest of Stephen Phillips are there as general influences much more than Tennyson. Least of all is the mood or the manner of the *Idylls* dominant. The early Tennyson had great lyrical and descriptive power, but the poet of the *Idylls* has, in the main, a marked lack of intensity and is more absorbed in decorating and elaborating the obvious and mirroring the rather mawkish sentimentality and prudish respectability of the typical Victorian temperament than in expressing profound vision and emotion. A considerable skill in metre and rhythm is there, but, except on rare occasions, it is not wholly charged with poetic inspiration. Creative energy, whether puissant or delicate, is wanting, and in its place we have an adroit yet somewhat empty elegance that is not seldom on the verge of being musically-turned prose. These faults are precisely what are most absent in Sri Aurobindo's youthful blank verse. Even when a Tennysonian influence may be traced, it is just the passion and the poignancy and the true poetic tone that render him non-Tennysonian. Consider this passage of Tennyson's in the middle of the Enid story:

*O purblind race of miserable men,
How many among us at this very hour
Do forge a life-long trouble for ourselves,
By taking true for false, or false for true;
Here, thro' the feeble twilight of this world
Groping, how many, until we pass and reach
That other, where we see as we are seen....*

Put it side by side with the following from Sri Aurobindo's *Love and Death*—part of a lament by a lover visiting the land of the dead—where to a superficial eye the Tennysonian influence may seem strong:

*O miserable race of men,
With violent and passionate souls you come
Foredoomed upon the earth and live brief days
In fear and anguish, catching at stray beams
Of sunlight, little fragrances of flowers;
Then from your spacious earth in a great horror
Descend into this night, and here too soon
Must expiate your few inadequate joys.
O bargain hard! Death helps us not. He leads
Alarmed, all shivering from his chill embrace,
The naked spirit here....*

A world of difference behind the surface resemblance should be evident. Sri Aurobindo is all vibrant and sensitive, the poetry is unforced, unflogged, and though the art is consummate there is little of the deliberative and consciously constructive. Genuine vitality is the distinguishing mark of the nineteenth-century Sri Aurobindo as it is of the twentieth-century one, and such vitality is the one thing that is mostly to seek in

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THE AFTERMATH OF POLITICAL FREEDOM

BY RISHABHCHAND

If one goes round India feeling the pulse of the people and looking for the first fruits of freedom, won with so much labour and sacrifice, one is likely to be somewhat disappointed. There is hardly any ardour or enthusiasm, let alone exultation, in the masses of the country. There is, instead, either a dull stupor or a hectic flurry; a bewildered languor or a confused groping and perverse self-application. It is only the activities of the few able and energetic men at the helm that are responsible for whatever progress has been nationally and internationally achieved; the people in the villages, away from the hum and bustle of the towns, are distracted, discontented and apathetic—most of them do not seem to be even conscious of the freedom they live in! One looks in vain for the glow and buoyancy of freedom that marked the triumph of the French Revolution or the phenomenal success of the Bolsheviks in Russia.

Why is it so? Why has not the heart of India been stirred? Why has not the entire nation risen like a Leviathan to hail and worship the all-bestowing goddess of freedom

when she has come at last? Why this stupor and apathy, this perplexity and distraction.

The question raises an important issue and it would be perilous to hide it out of sight. Whatever the achievements in diplomatic and administrative, even in economic and industrial fields, if they do not stir the depths of the people and satisfy their souls, they do not constitute real and enduring national progress. They are the work of a few great men and may go the way of all such individual work. It is what the people have accepted and made their own that abides and becomes a permanent part of the racial or national life; the rest is but a passing show, however brilliant it may appear at the moment.

It may be argued that it is rather too early to look for the fruits of freedom in India. But history speaks eloquently in refutation of this contention. It has been seen that freedom brings about an immediate revival or renewal of the vitality of a nation and is irresistibly creative and constructive. It may be argued again that the partition of India, the horrors and atrocities of

communal frenzy and the relentless ravages of floods and famines have left India atrophied and paralysed and that it is irrational to expect so soon the positive signs of exultation or enthusiasm in the people. Here too the verdict of History is otherwise, for, those who have studied the political history of the world know well enough that there is no disaster that can darken the skies of a newly emancipated country. Once the fetters have fallen, the national being advances with the impetuous force of a mounting tide and civil wars, communal violences and even Nature's cataclysms are all swallowed up like swirls and eddies in rushing waters.

The bitter facts have to be faced that the national Congress, the conqueror of freedom for the country has lost its power and prestige, that the morale of the people has gone considerably downhill, that the country is fast drifting into chaos and confusion and falling an easy prey to the disruptive forces of Communism. All this is evidence enough, if any were needed, that the political freedom that has come has not touched the mainspring of the national being. It has come garbed

in an alien dress, echoing alien slogans and goes about its business with an alien pomp and pageantry. And the masses, the long-trodden masses, dispirited, distrustful and diffident, either look on with a cynical indifference or lie inert and immobile in the helpless obscurity of their unplumbed destitution.

Is this the freedom India has so long been waiting for? Will it revitalise and new-create her? Will it lead to the realisation of the Ramrajya of which Gandhiji had a distant glimpse? There is no gainsaying that what has been attempted and accomplished is a brilliant beginning, but it must be admitted at the same time that it is very superficial and in many respects not quite in keeping with the Spirit of the nation. There is something lacking, something without which all the bravura of the present will end in mere exhaustion and stagnation.

The real freedom is the freedom of the Spirit. Man reaches his real manhood in proportion as he approximates to it and his humanity which is essentially a divine humanity can flower only in the uncurbed

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Tennyson of the *Idylls*. To look upon this Tennyson as "a master of rhythm and a true delineator of beauty" is as serious a mistake as to see him cropping up in Sri Aurobindo.

The Difference between "Traditional" and "Derivative"

It would be rash to deny influences in *Urvashi* or *Love and Death*, the works of Sri Aurobindo's youth. However, not only is the influence of the *Idylls* most faint, if at all, but also the other influences do not prevent the play of a fresh individual style reflecting an individual temperament and taking up the best of blank-verse masters into a new creation with qualities all its own of beauty and power:

*Snow on ravines, and snow on cliff, and snow
Sweeping in strenuous outlines to heaven,
With distant gleaming vales and turbulent rocks,
Giant precipices black-hewn and bold
Daring the universal whiteness.*

That the blank verse should be nineteenth-century in certain respects was inevitable, since it belonged to that period; but this in itself is no fault at all. And to say that it has "many pleasant lines of a derivative nature" is both to be patronising out of turn and to be deficient in close and keen scrutiny. To characterise as merely pleasant the poetic intensity that is Sri Aurobindo's is to be perilously near the level of the flapper who called the Himalaya "so sweet" and the Falls of Niagara "so dinky". To talk of his being "derivative" is not only to forget the genius-touch that can make all shadows of past masters part of an entirely novel chiaroscuro but also to perpetrate a confusion between the derivative and the traditional. Sri Aurobindo's blank verse can be called traditional. But to be traditional is not to be debarred from originality and greatness. While being traditional, one can be, if one has the genius, as original and great as Homer, Virgil, Lucretius, Marlowe, Milton, Keats. An infinite diversity is possible within traditionalism, and numberless heights and depths of vision and emotion can be reached through traditional technique. There is quite an amount in the later work of Sri Aurobindo that breaks new ground in technique and also goes psychologically beyond the general sources of poetry in the past; hence he cannot be dubbed altogether traditional. But wherever he is such, he is in the line of the masters and, though—contrary to what C. R. M. implies—I do not idolatrously accept everything written by Sri Aurobindo as being always "tops", I consider the epithet "derivative" utterly misguided.

A Singular Oversight and a Strange Insensitiveness

The particular quotation C.R.M. has made in this connection does not show Sri Aurobindo at his most typical. I admit that it is not one of his best moments. But apart from its being neither Tennysonianly "idylls"-like in especial nor in any distinguishable way derivative, I should like to protest in the first place that it is robbed of its own proper effect by a singular oversight by C.R.M. Can any one make grammatical sense out of the line about lightning? Suspended solitarily in front of those about

"all that blackness", it has neither point nor bearing. It acquires meaning and relevance only if we quote it together with a few preceding it and restore the mutilated passage thus:

*...and with a roar of rain
And tumult on the wings of wind and clasp
Of the o'erwhelmed horizons and with bursts
Of thunder breaking all the body with sound
And lightning 'twixt the eyes intolerable,
Like heaven's vast eagle all that blackness swept
Down over the inferior snowless heights
And swallowed up the dawn.*

In the second place, I should like to protest that C.R.M.'s stricture on the word "twixt" in the lightning-line is insensitive. He regards this word as horrible and calls it "a crutch for amateur versifiers." Strange that a word which can be found in all the best poets from Spenser downwards and which has nothing unpoetic about it except that twentieth-century poets do not frequently employ it should be criticised at just the place where it is most appropriate. When William Watson spoke of a time

Pendulous 'twixt the gold hour and the grey

he was certainly not propping himself up in amateur versification; the word is subtly expressive of brief delicate suspension. Even more apt is it in Sri Aurobindo's line. Look at it carefully, listen to it attentively. Does it not carry the precise suggestion of lightning? The same reason that makes the word "blitz" so appropriate for lightning applies here.

Coming finally to the quotation which C.R.M. rightly judges to be first-rate—

*Only he listens to the voice of his thoughts, his heart's ignorant whisper.
Whistle of wind in the tree-tops of Time and the rustle of Nature—*

I may remark that it is not strictly a sample, as his description puts it, of blank verse. It is blank verse only in the sense that there are no rhymes. It is not pentametrical with an iambic base, as English blank verse is. It really illustrates the hexameter rhythm which Sri Aurobindo, shedding new light on quantitative prosody in English, achieves with striking inspired originality. To demonstrate this originality as well as the excellence of his blank verse and the remarkable revelatory force of his recent mystical poetry is the main aim of my book. C.R.M. has said hardly anything about my detailed treatment of my theme in this book, the patient careful critical analysis with which I have attempted to substantiate my thesis. Poetry is a "ticklish" affair and one must live with any poet's work a good deal and often with the help of somebody steeped in it, if one is to get over the surfaceness of impression to which one is liable, what with the fads and fancies that are most at play in one's reactions when the impact on one is of something directed not at one's "rational" mind but at one's temperament and taste and instinct—factors which if not specifically trained to be catholic are likely to trip up even critics like Johnson, Arnold and Eliot. May I hope that C.R.M. whose writings are often acute as well as charming will give my book a closer reading and, instead of being in a hurry to pass judgment, open himself more sensitively, more discerningly, to the Aurobindonian inspiration?

LIGHTS ON LIFE-PROBLEMS

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

Q. 1: If the law of Karma governs everything there can be no possibility of freedom. Are we completely bound by the rule of Karma? Is the human idea of freedom only an illusion?

A. The world of Matter seems to know nothing about freedom; everything there appears as if written in sybillic laws upon tablets of stone, laws which have a process, but no initial reason, serve a harmony of purpose or at least produce a cosmos of fixed results, but do not appear to be shaped with an eye to them by any discoverable Intelligence. We can think of no presence of soul in natural things, because we can see in them no conscious action of mind and a conscious active mental intelligence is to our notions the very basis and standing-ground, if not the whole stuff of soul-existence. If Matter is all, then we may very easily conclude that all is a Karma of material energy which is governed by some inherent incomprehensible mechanically legislating Necessity. But then we see that Life seems to be made of a different stuff; here various possibility develops, here creation becomes eager, pressing, flexible, protean; here we are conscious of a searching and a selection, many potentialities and a choice of actualities, of a subconscious idea which is feeling around for its vital self-expression and guiding an instinctive action,—often, though in certain limits, with an unerring intuitive guidance of ilfe to its immediate objective or to some yet distant purpose,—of a subconscious will too in the fibre of all this vast seeking and mutable impulsion. This too indeed works within limits, under fetters, in a given range of processes. But when we get to mind, Nature becomes there much more widely conscious of possibility and of choice; mind is aware of potentialities and of determinations in idea which are other than those of the immediate actuality or of the fixedly necessary consequence of the sum of past and present actualities; it is aware of numberless "may-bes" and "might-have-beens", and these last are not entirely dead rejected things, but can return through the power of the Idea and effect future determinations and can fulfil themselves at last in the inner reality of their idea though, it may well be, in other forms and circumstances.

Q. 2: But is not man's conscious choice and will itself an instrument of the universal Nature and is not his freedom an arbitrary illusion of his mentality which lives in each moment of the present and separates it by ignorance, by an abstraction of the mind from its determining past, so that he seems at every critical moment to exercise a free virgin choice, while all the time his choice is dominated by his own previous formation which he ignores?

A. That is the first idea of Karma. Certainly, our present will must come in as one though not by any means the sole element of the act and formation, but in this view it is not a free ever-new will, but constantly an instrument shaped and used by something greater than ourselves. Only if there is a soul or self which is not a creation, but a master of Nature, not a formation of the stream of universal energy, but itself the former and creator of its own Karma, are we justified in our claim of an actual freedom or at least in our aspiration to a real liberty. There is the whole heart of the debate, the nodus and escape of this perplexed issue.

Q. 3: Is there no relation between man's subjection to the blind force of Karmic Necessity and his irrespressible impulse of freedom, between his earthly human nature at whirl in the machinery of mind, life and body and the master Soul, the free Godhead, the real Man behind?

A. The soul of man is a power of the self-existence which manifests the universe and not the creature and slave of a mechanical Nature; and it is only the natural instruments of his being, it is mind, life and body and their functions and members which are helpless apparatus and gear of the machinery. These things are subject to the action of Karma, but man in himself, the real man within is not its subject, *na karma lipyate nare*; rather is Karma his instrument and its developments the material he uses, and he is using it always from life to life for the shaping of a limited and individual, which may be one day a divine and cosmic personality. For the eternal spirit enjoys an absolute freedom, and this freedom appears to us no doubt in a certain status, origin or background of all being as an unconditioned infinite of existence, but also it is in relation to the universe the freedom of an existence which displays an infinite of possibilities and has a power of shaping at will out of its own potentiality the

harmonies of the cosmos. Man, too, may well be capable of a release, *moksha*, into the unconditioned Infinite by cessation of all action and mind and personality; but that is not the whole of the Spirit's absolute freedom; it is rather a dependent liberty, since it endures only by this cessation. But the freedom of the Spirit is not so dependent; that remains unimpaired in all this action of Karma and is not diminished or abrogated by the pouring of its energies into the whirl of the universe.

Q. 4: Some spiritual thinkers maintain that man cannot enjoy this double freedom because as man he is an individual being and therefore a thing of Nature and entirely subject to Karma; to be free he must get away from individuality and Nature and Karma, and then man no longer exists, there is only the unconditioned infinite.

A. But this is to assume that there is no power of spiritual individuality, but only a power of individuation in Nature, only the formation of a nodus of mental, vital and physical Karma with which the one self for a long time mistakenly identifies its being by the delusion of ego. But if on the other hand there is any such thing as an individual power of spirit, it must in whatever degree share in the force and freedom of the self-existent Divinity; for it is being of his being.

Q. 5: Why is man bound by Karma and conditioned and determined by its law though he is free in spirit? Why does he not have complete freedom?

A. It is because there is separation between his outward nature and his inmost spiritual self and he does not live in that outwardness with his whole being, but with a shape, turn and formation of himself which he calls his ego and his personality. The cosmic spirit in matter seems itself to be bound, for the same reason, because it has started an outward action, a law and disposition of material energy which must be allowed to unroll its consequences; itself holds back behind and conceals its shaping touch, but still its supporting assent and impulse are there and these come out more into the open as Nature rises in the scales of life and mind. Nevertheless, even in mind and even in its phenomenon of a conscious will Karma is the first law and there cannot be there a complete freedom; there is no such thing as a mental will which is absolutely free. And this is because mind is part of the action of the outward Ignorance, an action which seeks for knowledge but does not possess its full light and power, which can conceive of self and spirit and infinity and reflect them, but not altogether live in them, which can quiver with infinite possibility, but can only deal in a limited half-effective fashion with limited possibilities. An Ignorance cannot be permitted to have, even if in its nature it could have, free mastery. It would never do for an ignorant mind and will to be given a wide and real freedom; for it would upset the right order of the energy which the Spirit has set at work and produce a most unholy confusion. It must be forced to obey or, if it resists, to bear the reaction of the Law; its partial freedom of a clouded and stumbling knowledge must be constantly overruled both in action and result by the law of universal Nature and the will of the seeing universal Spirit who governs the dispositions and consequences of Karma. And that is in patent fact the character of our mental being and action.

K. G.

The Aftermath of Political Freedom

Continued from page 3

freedom of the Spirit. The dream of India has been to evolve a nation of free souls, to be peopled by divine men who have left the animal behind them. It is this freedom, the spiritual freedom, that will satisfy the soul of India and that is why, when mere political freedom has come to her, she is rather apathetic and unresponsive. Touch her with the magic wand of a Buddha or a Shankar, a Chaitanya or a Ramkrishna, a Vivekananda or a Sri Aurobindo and you will wonder how she starts up and responds! She can dare all, stake all, achieve all, if once the

main chord of her being is deeply and deftly touched.

The imperative need of the hour is such a touch and call. Not a parochial or sectarian, obscurantist or reactionary agitation, but a wide, universal, evocative appeal from the depths of the Spirit to the soul of India. That will mean a new birth of this ancient nation, the release of its latent, abounding vitality and creativeness and the breaking of a new Light for the leading of the world.

SRI AUROBINDO AND THE NOBEL PRIZE

The name of Sri Aurobindo has been proposed for the award of Nobel Prize in Literature in 1950, by Madame Gabriela Mistral, the Nobel Laureate of Chile, and seconded by Miss Pearl S. Buck, the Nobel Laureate of the United States of America. A memorial supporting Sri Aurobindo's nomination has been signed by many leading citizens of our country and it is being submitted to the Swedish Academy.

THE PRESIDENT,
SVENSKA AKADEMIEN,
STOCKHOLM, SWEDEN.

Dear Sir,

Sri Aurobindo is held in deep reverence in India and other parts of the world. We, his countrymen and admirers, look up to him as one who shares the vision of the Great Ones of all ages and who belongs to the galaxy of "just men made perfect." With his divine, cosmic vision and a life breathing forth the fragrance of holiness, Sri Aurobindo has given us a glimpse, unparalleled for its profundity and sublimity, of the occult significance of the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Bhagwad Gita. Through his writings, he has revealed to us once again the pathway of experiencing the Real and the Eternal. This pathway is the Integral Yoga, the simultaneous divinisation of consciousness and matter in the various dimensions of the human personality. The story of the grand strategy of Evolution through which the Supreme Being fulfils Himself in the multifarious forms of manifestation constitutes the core of this universal drama of the Becoming. Poetry has become, in Sri Aurobindo's hands, an instrument of articulating the celestial music, the ecstasy of the Infinite, and the whole system of Sri Aurobindo's thought is a superb edifice, a majestic summation of the Laws of the inner and the outer worlds in which the Eternal continues to exert pressure on all orders and aggregates of Life to ascend heavenward in an orchestration of a unified, co-operative movement, thus helping man to divest himself of the separative, egoistic, communalistic and nationalistic tendencies and to regain a living faith in the ideal of unity of all life.

Sri Aurobindo's profound and penetrating analysis of the fundamentals of Indian Culture and his vision of India's glorious destiny of being the meeting-place of the best of the East and the West have awakened us to the opulent spiritual heritage that belongs to us and the part that India has to play in the destiny of mankind. We look up to Sri Aurobindo as belonging to the family of the Seers and Sages of the world whose line has never ended and whose majesty of the soul will continue to shed lustre on all parts of the world and at all times.

It is, therefore, a source of great pleasure to us to bring to your attention his contribution and to commend to your favourable consideration the proposal to award Nobel Prize in Literature to Sri Aurobindo.

Yours faithfully,

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|---|---|
| Hon. Mr. Gopalswami Ayyangar, Minister for Transport, Government of India. | Dr. Asthana, Vice-Chancellor, Agra University. |
| Hon. Mr. N. V. Gadgil, Minister for Works, Mines and Power, Government of India. | Dr. D. R. Bhattacharya, Vice-Chancellor, Allahabad University. |
| Hon. Mr. Jairamdas Daulatram, Minister for Food and Agriculture, Government of India. | Dr. C. R. Reddy, Vice-Chancellor, Andhra University. |
| Hon. Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukerjee, Minister for Industry & Supply, Government of India. | Dr. Manvala Ramanujam, Vice-Chancellor, Annamalai University. |
| Hon. Mr. K. C. Neogy, Minister for Commerce, Government of India. | Dr. P. Parija, Vice-Chancellor, Benares Hindu University. |
| His Excellency Shri M. S. Aney, Governor of Bihar, Chancellor, Patna University. | Dr. P. V. Kane, Vice-Chancellor, University of Bombay. |
| Hon. Dr. S. K. Sinha, Premier, Bihar Government. | Dr. P. N. Bannerjee, Vice-Chancellor, Calcutta University. |
| His Excellency Sir Chandulal Trivedi, Governor of East Punjab and Chancellor, East Punjab University. | Mr. Reddy, Vice-Chancellor, University of Mysore. |
| Hon. Mr. Bhimsen Sachar, Premier, East Punjab Government. | Dr. Sir M. Bhawani Shankar Neogy, former Vice-Chancellor, Nagpur University. |
| His Excellency Shri Mangaldas Pakvasa, Governor of Central Provinces and Chancellor of Nagpur University. | Mr. Ali Yar Jung, Vice-Chancellor, Osmania University. |
| Hon. Mr. Harekrishna Mehtabji, Premier, Orissa Government. | Sir C. P. N. Singh, Vice-Chancellor, Patna University. |
| Hon. Shri Gobind Vallabh Pant, Premier, United Provinces Government. | Hon. Sir Teja Singh, Vice-Chancellor, East Punjab University. |
| His Highness the Maharaja of Gwalior, Rajpramukh of Madhyabharat Union. | Shri C. N. Acharya, Vice-Chancellor, Utkal University. |
| His Highness the Maharaja of Patiala, Rajpramukh of East Punjab Union. | Shri A. S. Bharatan, General Manager, Press Trusts of India. |
| His Highness the Maharaja of Rewa, Rajpramukh of Vindhya Pradesh Union. | Shri Tushir Kanti Ghosh, Editor, <i>Amrita Bazar Patrika</i> , Calcutta. |
| | Acharya J. B. Kripalani, Ex-President of the Indian National Congress. |
| | Mrs. Clara Motwani, Principal, Buddhist Women's College, Colombo. |
| | Shri Jamshed Nusserwanjee, former Mayor, Karachi Municipality. |
| | Dr. D. N. Wadia, Director, Bureau of Mines and Geological Adviser, Government of India. |
| | Dr. Kewal Motwani, Visiting Lecturer to American, Indian and Far Eastern Universities. |
| | Dr. James H. Cousins, Poet, Dramatist, Art-Critic. |

SRI AUROBINDO, THE LEADER OF THE EVOLUTION

PART II OF "THE WORLD CRISIS AND INDIA"

BY "Synergist"

INTRODUCTION

In *The World Crisis and India* we came to the conclusion that humanity today needs a leader—one who has the highest spiritual vision and knowledge, and who can, consequently, give men a complete philosophy of life, a new world-view showing the true purpose of existence, and that he must be a leader who, through an identification with the Divine Being, can become a radiating centre of His Light and Power and Bliss. Then we saw that the world is in need not only of such a spiritual guide but also of the leader of its evolutionary movement, for humanity has to take the next step in its evolutionary ascent and attain a higher state of being and consciousness, and therefore requires a leader of the evolution, one who can through his own spiritual development show that the transformation of the present rational man into a gnostic being, a Truth-Conscious divinised person, is possible.

We finally concluded that the only one who can be such a leader is the seer-philosopher and Master of Yoga, Sri Aurobindo. His whole life, spiritual development and his great realisation of the Supramental Truth-Consciousness show that he is the one person today capable of guiding humanity towards its destined goal, and of helping it to manifest the Divine Purpose in the world.

Therefore, the object of publishing in this Series selections from his writings is to place before men a new world-view—a world-view erected upon the foundation of an integral spiritual realisation and having consequently its very roots in Reality, for only on such a sure basis will it be possible to create a greater civilisation.

But before we come to his spiritual philosophy, it will be interesting to know something about his early life, and the circumstances under which it took a dramatic turn, changing him from a political leader into the greatest of the Rishis.

A SHORT BIOGRAPHY*

Early Life and Career

Sri Aurobindo was born in Calcutta on August 15, 1872. At the age of five he was sent along with his two elder brothers, Benoybhusan and Manmohan, to the Loretto Convent School at Darjeeling. After two years, in 1879, he was taken with his elder brothers to England for education. Sri Aurobindo lived in England for fourteen years. He was brought up at first in an English family (the Drewett family) at Manchester. While his two brothers, Benoybhusan and Manmohan went to the Manchester Grammar School, Sri Aurobindo was privately educated by Mr. and Mrs. Drewett. Mr. Drewett was an accomplished Latin scholar; he taught Sri Aurobindo Latin so well that when the latter had joined St. Paul's School in London in 1885, the Headmaster himself took up Sri Aurobindo personally to ground him in Greek and then pushed him rapidly through the higher classes of the school. Towards the end of 1889 he went from St. Paul's with a senior classical scholarship to King's College, Cambridge, where he studied for two years. Sri Aurobindo gave much attention to the classics at Manchester and at Saint Paul's; but in his last three years at St. Paul's he paid less attention to these subjects, taking them only casually, and spent all his time outside school in general reading, especially English poetry, literature and fiction, French literature and the history of ancient, mediaeval and modern Europe. He spent some time also over learning Italian, some German and a little Spanish. He spent much time too in writing poetry. The school studies during this period engaged very little of his time; he was already at ease in them and did not think it necessary to labour over them any longer. All the same he was able to win all the prizes in King's College in one year for Greek and Latin verse. At Cambridge, Sri Aurobindo passed high in the First Part of the Tripos (first class); it was on passing this First Part that the degree of B.A. is usually given; but as he had only two years at his disposal, he had to pass it in his second year at Cambridge, and the First Part gives the degree only if it is taken in the third year; if one takes it in the second year one has to appear for the second part of the Tripos in the fourth year to qualify for the degree. He might have got the degree if he had made an application for it, but he did not care to do so. A degree in England is valuable only if one wants to take up an academical career.

In 1890 he passed the open competition for the Indian Civil Service, but he neglected his lessons in riding and failed in the last riding test. He was, as is often done, given another chance to pass, but avoided presenting himself in time for the test. He was on this pretext disqualified for the Service, although in similar cases successful probationers have been given a further chance to qualify themselves in India itself. He felt no call for the I.C.S. and was seeking some way to escape from that bondage. He thus deliberately disqualified himself without himself rejecting the Service,

which his family would not have allowed him to do.

At the age of eleven, Sri Aurobindo had already received strongly the impression that a period of general upheaval and great revolutionary changes was coming in the world and he himself was destined to play a part in it. His father in his letters had bitterly complained of the mechanical character and heartlessness of the British Government in India. He also sent him Indian newspapers marking for attention news items relating to maltreatment of Indians by Englishmen in the country. This and other circumstances raised a feeling of resentment against the subjection of India to a foreign rule. But the decision to take part himself in some action directed towards the liberation of the country took shape only after some years. At Cambridge as a member of the Indian Majlis of which latterly he became the secretary, he delivered many revolutionary speeches which, as he afterwards learnt, had their part in determining the authorities to exclude him from the Indian Civil Service.

When Sri Aurobindo was disqualified for the Indian Civil Service, the Gaekwar of Baroda was in London. Sri Aurobindo was introduced to him by the brother of Sir Henry Cotton and obtained an appointment in the Baroda service and left England in February, 1893.

Sri Aurobindo passed thirteen years, from 1893 to 1906, in the Baroda service, first in the Settlement and Revenue Department and in secretariate work for the Maharaja, afterwards as Professor of English and, finally, Vice-Principal in the Baroda College. These were years of self-culture, of literary activity—for much of the poetry afterwards published from Pondicherry was written at this time—and of preparation for his future work. In England he had received, according to his father's express instructions, an entirely occidental education without any contact with the culture of India and the East. At Baroda he made up the deficiency, learned Sanskrit and several modern Indian languages, especially Marathi and Gujarati, the two official languages of the Baroda State. He learnt Bengali very quickly and for the most part by himself.* A great part of the last years of this period was spent on leave in silent political activity, for he was barred from public action by his position at Baroda. The outbreak of the agitation against the partition of Bengal in 1905 gave him the opportunity to give up the Baroda service and join openly in the political movement. He left Baroda in 1906 and went to Calcutta as Principal of the newly-founded Bengal National College.

Political Life

There were three sides to Sri Aurobindo's political ideas and activities. First, there was the action with which he started, a secret revolutionary propaganda and organisation of which the central object was the preparation of an armed insurrection. Secondly, there was a public propaganda intended to convert the whole nation to the ideal of independence which was regarded, when he entered into politics, by the vast majority of Indians as unpractical and impossible, an almost insane chimera. It was thought that the British Empire was too powerful and India too weak, effectively disarmed and impotent even to dream of the success of such an endeavour. Thirdly, there was the organisation of the people to carry on a public and united opposition and undermining of the foreign rule through an increasing non-cooperation and passive resistance.

At the time the military organisation of the great empires and their means of military action were not so overwhelming and apparently irresistible as they now are: the rifle was still the decisive weapon, air power had not developed and the force of artillery was not so devastating as it afterwards became. India was disarmed, but Sri Aurobindo thought that with proper organisation and help from outside this difficulty might be overcome and in so vast a country as India and with the smallness of the regular British armies, even a guerrilla warfare accompanied by general resistance and revolt might be effective. There was also the possibility of a great revolt in the Indian army. At the same time he had studied the temperament and characteristics of the British people and the turn of their political instincts, and he believed that although they would resist any attempt at self-liberation by the Indian people and would at the most only concede very slowly such reforms as would not weaken their imperial control, still they were not of the kind which would be ruthlessly adamant to the end: if they found resistance and revolt becoming general and persistent they would in the end try to arrive at an accommodation to save what they could of their empire or in an extremity prefer to grant independence rather than have it forcefully wrested from their hands.

In some quarters there is the idea that Sri Aurobindo's political standpoint was entirely pacifist, that he was opposed in principle and in practice to all violence and that he denounced terrorism, insurrection etc. as entirely forbidden by the spirit and letter of the Hindu religion. It is even suggested

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* From *Sri Aurobindo and His Ashram*—with grateful acknowledgement to Arya Publishing House, Calcutta 12.

* Dinendra Kumar Roy lived with Sri Aurobindo in Baroda as a companion and his work was rather to help him to correct and perfect his knowledge of the language and to accustom him to conversation in Bengali than any regular teaching.

THE ASHRAM OF SRI AUROBINDO

AN IMPRESSION AND INTERPRETATION

BY DR. C. R. REDDY

Vice-Chancellor, Andhra University, Waltair.

Dr. Reddy had the pleasure, last December, of taking to Sri Aurobindo the Prize awarded to the Master by Andhra University. We welcome this article of his, in which he records with remarkable sensitivity and charm his personal response to the Ashram's way of life and to the teaching of Sri Aurobindo.

Through a series of unpremeditated events, a power beyond me drew me last December to Sri Aurobindo and the Holy Mother at their Pondicherry Ashram. I spent a few days there in an atmosphere of inspired bliss. Probably I was beside myself most of the time. Something higher had gripped me. Most reluctantly I left the place. Fondly I dwell in memory on the unmerited but wonderful reception I was accorded through the causeless grace of the Master and the ineffable tenderness of the Mother.

I do not wish to dwell on this occasion on matters pertaining to inner life. The theme of this paper is the objective nature and significance of the Ashram and the thoughts it evoked in me. It has a significance not merely for the Hindus but for entire humanity. There is nothing specially Hindu in Sri Aurobindo's teachings and discipline. The soul is not Hindu. God is not Hindu. They are Universals. The origin of a particular creed may be traced to a particular height with localization in time and in geography, but the Ganges and sister rivers of like power for holiness all flow into the same ocean of eternity.

The teachings and discipline of the Ashram have had their source in the mystic heights of Vedic culture, but God is one; man is one. The truths of the soul transcend limitations of body, race, time and space. They have universal, eternal application.

In the Ashram there are pious men and pious women, who by birth belong to various faiths; naturally Hindus, mostly because, of the attraction of neighbourhood and of inherited culture. There are Christians, Zoroastrians, Muslims and members of other creeds. But in conviction and in life, these many have been fused into one. Therefore, the faith acquired in the Ashram—a faith which does not negative reason—is a common possession of all. In the discipline they have adopted for the growth and fruition of their lives, they are one. It is the unity of harmony, not of mechanical uniformity and monotony, that makes for the orchestral swell of a heavenly music.

Misguided Questions About Sri Aurobindo

It is a pity that the nature of Sri Aurobindo Ashram is not universally understood. Where it is not understood, it cannot be appreciated. We have had a few critics, who, in my opinion, have not understood and therefore could not appreciate.

One of them wondered how Sri Aurobindo, a Yogi and a Sanyasi, (apparently synonymous terms to him), could have sent his famous message to the Andhra University, when at the recent Convocation, it did itself the honour of conferring its National Prize on him for Eminent Merit in Humanities. The "eminent" should have been "supreme". He argued: "Sri Aurobindo has renounced the world. Why then does he want to sponsor the idea of linguistic provinces and other affairs? Is this all C. R. Reddy's forgery?" Apparently his idea is that Sri Aurobindo should have nothing to do with the world, as according to him, he had renounced it. After divorce one should not visit his wife!

Another critic, writing more recently, could not understand why Sri Aurobindo, the mystic, lends a mysterious life at Pondichery, giving darshan to people only on a few selected occasions, and refusing to undergo publicity. He is a Star, no doubt; but should he not be a Cinema-Star? He even insinuates that the Mother is everything there and the Master almost nothing.

I do not wish to answer point by point. In his preface to his *Pro Vita Sua*, Cardinal Newman ably exposed the inadequacy of point by point replies in dealing with controversies relating to the field of the Soul and Spirit. What is required is explaining, so far as this could be done by language and by human thought which have their limitations, the nature of the life lived and involved. If that cannot explain and convince, nothing else would. Where that fails, logic cannot succeed.

This is not the first time that Sri Aurobindo delivered messages of secular import. He gave a prescient reading of the future when he declared that the liberation of India and of a good bit of the world were contingent on the Allies triumphing over Hitler and his Asuric hordes. He always has been on the side of Suras, the powers of Light, in their battle with Asuras, the powers of darkness. The light he gives is a steady one and permanent. He does not create confusion by hasty opportunism and momentary tactics of a spectacular kind.

The Confusion Between Sanyasi and Rishi

At the root of the misconception that I am trying to dispel is the fallacy that he is a Sanyasi, who has given up the world and therefore, has no right to re-enter it. There is a confusion here between Sanyasi and

Rishi. What the critic has said may or may not be true of a Sanyasi but it is not true of a Rishi. Sri Aurobindo is a Rishi.

Renunciation, final, absolute, is not possible for the compassionate. They may renounce this or that which is not compatible with perfect illumination or power, but they cannot give up the struggling, sorrow-ridden world without stretching a helping healing hand. The tender-hearted with pity in their souls and power in their hands, cannot be indifferent to the fate of human beings. The Sanyasi may feel that, to be care-free, one has to give up all care for others. That is not the way of the Rishi; nor of a Bodhisatwa, nor of the Master and the Mother at the Pondicherry Ashram. If Nirvana is to be entered, it must be after the Mission of Compassion has been fulfilled and not before. And so it is that our saviours possess this trinity of grace—Wisdom, Power and Compassion. They are with us and for us. They look upon this hard earth as the stepping stone to Heaven; and not as its summary, irreconcilable contradiction which must be denounced and renounced.

The Sanyasi that discards clothes and the world is foreign to the Vedic spirit. Renunciation of the world is a creed of later growth and perhaps belongs to times when our race had become less virile and had to undergo defeat, despair and despondency. The Rishis were not Sanyasis. Anything but that. They were seers who saw, felt and transmitted the truths they came into contact with—truths eternal, ever-existent, neither made nor unmade by gods. By their spiritual discipline, a natural process and no magic, they sought for and acquired illumination and with it power. Knowledge is power; spiritual knowledge no less than scientific. They lived in the world, and for the world, they retreated to woods and lonely places. Retreat is not renunciation. Though they retired to forests, they had colonies there, peopled not only with men but with women. They grew the most beautiful flowers and the most charming Sakuntalas. They took part in the politics of the day and not infrequently played leading roles. Vashista guided the Solar dynasties. Viswamitra was a disturbing factor in his time. If they sought after spiritual illumination and power, it was not to enjoy solitary bliss on the top of inaccessible heights. It was not for attaining Kaivalya or Nirvana; but to be here with us and for us, to help us to improve, and to inflict punishment in case we proved to be too foolish or too obstinate. Their ideal was more the Bodhisatwa than the Buddha. The ancient Ashrams of the Vashistas and Viswamitras, of the Brigus and the Angirasas, were brimful of a life of the world which, however, was not worldly; a life on earth that was not earthy, but directed to the good of humanity and its uplift to the stature and status of the bright gods. They welcomed disciples and they received all persons that deserved to be received by their merit. Jabali was of low illegitimate birth but he was a Satya Kama, a lover of truth and was therefore reckoned a Vipra.

Nor were the studies in Ashrams confined to spiritual lore and sacred mysteries. The disciples had to fetch wood not only to feed the sacred fires but the kitchen fires also for feeding the inmates. They brought flowers for worship. Archery and the art of war were fostered. Vishwamitra taught Sri Rama and Lakshmana the use of potent weapons. Agnivasa was the guru of Drona, the Brahmin, who taught the Kauravas and Pandavas without forfeiting his Brahminhood. They trained Kshatriyas in war and weapons so that they might protect our dharma from the aggression of Asuric hordes. Fighting for a righteous cause was not considered to be a degradation of our moral or spiritual nature. The very avatars of gods during their sojourn on earth made blood flow in rivers and swam through them to the eternal gratitude of our race and its devotion.

There was nothing anaemic about the Aryan culture at its best and purest. It is to the immortal credit of Sri Aurobindo that he has tried to re-establish on earth after the lapse of many decadent centuries the true creed and the genuine discipline of the Vedas.

How Sri Aurobindo Unlocked the Secret of the Vedas

In the education of Sri Aurobindo western classics played a leading part. He was a first rate scholar in Greek. Greek and the civilization of Greece, are twin sisters of Bhasha and ancient Aryanism. Greek seems to have given Sri Aurobindo the key that unlocked the Veda to our generation.

Sri Aurobindo confesses that he does not know why there has been a mystery at the core of every religion; but it is a fact. We may not be able to explain the why and wherefore thereof. But in all religions there seems to be in the depths at the very centre a mystery. In the religion of the Greeks, there was the Eleusinian mystery, to quote but one instance.

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THE ASHRAM OF SRI AUROBINDO —Continued from page 7

It is this idea that seems to have led Sri Aurobindo to search for and discover the key to the Vedas.

He had noticed, as all had done, the very close resemblance between the religions of Hesiod, Homer and our Vedas. There was nothing gloomy in either religion. The religion of Hellas teemed with strong Gods and lovely Goddesses who mingled freely with men and women and even entered into matrimonial relationship with them, begetting heroes and heroines, just as they did in Aryavarta in the twilight dawn of history. Zeus, Hera, Apollo, Athene and Aphrodite—are not all these the doubles of the Devas of the Vedic Pantheon? Gods could be defeated by men. The innate spiritual omnipotence of man was thus recognized and symbolized. There was not the same sharp and hopeless separation between heaven and earth as there has been since. Men and women having the blood of Gods and Goddesses in their veins were radiant, powerful and full of hope and joy. Wherever they trod flowers bloomed. They enjoyed life whether in earth or in heaven without fear of thereby forfeiting their right to the highest Swarga or the place to which good beings ascend.

And yet at the core of this bright and breezy religion of the Greeks, there was something deeper, a mystery hidden from the human eye but made clear to the initiates. This mystery was not celebrated as a joyous popular festival but as something solemn, awesome, to be held in secret and far from the madding crowd.

And a further correspondence between Vedic and Hellenic metaphysics. The gods of Greece were subject to an impersonal law and destiny more potent than themselves. Great as they were, there was something greater, more potent. Similarly with us, there was a law of destiny and of Karma supreme over all beings—including the gods. "Even Shiva cannot escape the consequences of his karma."

Sri Aurobindo, an accomplished scholar in Greek and one who was steeped in the lore of our ancient Vedic culture, struck on the idea that in our case also there must have been a mystery embodied in the Vedas. There was. He discovered it and revealed it to the world.

Sri Aurobindo's philosophy is in a sense factual. Even in its sublimest flights, it is based on fact, experience and personal realization, and on seeing like a seer or Rishi. It rises like a pillar of cloud to heaven but it rises from the earth wafted on wings of Sadhana.

Broadly speaking there have been two types of Vedic interpretation, ritualistic and naturalistic. According to the former, by performing the Yagnas and other rites with the appropriate hymns or Mantras, we compel the Gods to give us cattle, horses, and material and other boons that we desire. Even Brahma is obliged, if the Tapas is properly performed, to grant boons, however, formidable or even dangerous.

The Naturalistic school, of which Yaska may be regarded as the founder sees in the Vedic Usha, Vrithra, Indra, Agni, Aswins and the other Gods and Goddesses, phenomena of nature personified.

There is a third school, the school of Sri Aurobindo which sees in the Vedic Hymns very real and sublime spiritual truths. When the Rishis performed Yagnas and prayed to Indra for "Govu" or "Aswa", it was not for the paltry purpose of getting a few cows and a few horses. The Vedic mountain did not labour to produce such silly mice. So Govu and Aswa must refer to something greater and of far higher significance to man's life and his progress. Sri Aurobindo proves with wonderful clarity and logic—his spirituality is so inseparably united with reason—that Govu meant Illumination such as comes from the rays of the sun and Aswa meant not horse but Power. And what for did our Rishis desire acquisition of Illumination and of Power? Not for looking at themselves as in a mirror and sitting brooding on their own beauty like a silly girl; and not to let power remain a bare possession without fruitful application. It was for helping the world and for using them as stages in their yet further progress to the rank and region of the Devas, that they sought Light and sought Power, sought Omniscience and Omnipotence.

And now we can in some small measure understand the nature of this extraordinary Ashram in which life and the joy of life are mingled in happy union with spirituality and spiritual progress. It is dug out of the Vedas and planted in Pondicherry.

The Wonderful Mother and the Harmonious Regime

And the wonderful Mother, the presiding genius, and the great Master, the inspiring soul: here we have in perceptible symbol Purusha and Prakriti, giving life, light and joy around.

Early morning the Ashramites assemble in the street overlooked by the balcony from which the gracious Mother gives Darshan; remaining for a while moving about, smiling, looking bright, radiant, a ray of divinity like Usha. If anybody thought that a Holy Mother should cultivate ascetic frugidity and a perpetual scowl as evidence of her spirituality, he would be mistaken. She is not an ascetic. She plays tennis! The Devas are always bright. At this assembly there is a large concourse of men, women and children with bhakti in their hearts and love, light and joy in their looks and talk and behaviour. Nothing gloomy. It is the dawn that dispels the darkness.

At a later hour, the Mother presides like Flora, the Goddess of Flowers, with huge baskets laden with colour and perfume placed before her. Men, women and children, bathed, in happy reverence and joyous veneration advance to salute her and receive from her benedictions and flowers. Then the different people foregather in their different circles to talk over

the great truths that count; or each retires to his place to meditate and to cultivate psychological discipline and practice sadhana. Sadhana is the way to realise and experience, to perceive, to see and become a seer. This Ashram is no dry as dust world. It is a world apart from the world, but existing in it and for it like the Ashrams of our Vedic Rishis. The men and women of the colony have their meals mostly in common. Starvation is not regarded as an essential process for developing spirituality. The food is simple. It is cooked by the women Ashramites. There is enough nourishment and perfect hygiene. And the women find in this service an aid to their Soul's progress.

There is a dairy where I saw some fine cattle. That is the source of their milk supply.

There is a garden, and the vegetable garden there is one of the best I have seen; and I am not quite a bad judge of gardens and vegetable gardens.

There is a bakery and wholesome bread is assured. Also a laundry and a small soap factory.

Intellectual nourishment is not neglected either. There is a first class printing press equipped with the latest monotype and other machines. And books to read in plenty and a very fine library and a variety of periodicals.

Shabbiness in dress and manners and crude, vulgar conduct are not cultivated as arts leading to the soul's perfection. Said the great Kalidas: "Sareeram Adyam Khalu Dharma Sadhanam" and so the disciples go about dressed in decent clothes, clean, simple and becoming. A guest house is maintained where European conveniences could be had. I hope this will not be regarded as a double transgression of holiness and nationalism.

But in many respects what impressed me most were the educational institutions maintained by the Ashram and the ancient spirit of strength and joy that pervades them. The Mother, the embodiment of grace, light and tenderness, ordered an exhibition of games and physical exercises by the boys and girls of the Ashram Schools. I said to myself, "If all the schools were like this, won't India be unassailable by internal foes or external?" The parades were excellent. The exercises were gone through not merely efficiently but cheerfully. The girls were dressed in pants and tight-fittings jackets. They performed hazardous exercises like vaulting. Though there was risk of accident to limb, if not to life, they advanced, cool, calm, and resolute with bright looks and confident smiles, and went through the exercises without a single hitch or a single failure. Our Sanyasi critics may be aghast that the Mother, who is all grace and tenderness, should have organized our girls, as it were, into a corps of yogic Amazons. But the girls don't lack the charm and grace of their sex. She told me that it was the Calcutta killings and the bestial abominations perpetrated on our helpless women and children that made her think of organizing the students in her schools, boys and girls, into a corps capable of self-defence. At the root is the great Vedic idea that, without a strong body, you cannot have a strong soul, undaunted in danger and ready to perform the great task, the root principle of all Dharma, of defending the weak and helpless.

The Nation's Need and the Master's Work

The second criticism is: Why then does Sri Aurobindo shun the world? Why does he not come out and go about? Could we get a more prescient leader or a more powerful? I reply: What is wrong in Sri Aurobindo remaining in seclusion at Pondicherry? Retreat into the "tapovanam" was a frequent way of seeking the right atmosphere for spiritual exercises, concentration and penance. Religious leaders have found in seclusion a potent help for mental and spiritual efficiency and advancement. If the Rishi is spending his time and energy for helping the progress of the world and for equipping himself with the means of achieving that object, what business is it of ours to find fault? For such presumption involves the idea that we are better fitted to tell the Seer what means he should adopt than the Seer himself. I suppose this presumption is due to ignorance more than impertinence. Could not Sri Aurobindo be trusted to know how and by what methods he could carry out his great mission and acquire the needed illumination and power? I for one do not feel myself confident to tell the Master what school he should attend and what lessons he should learn.

Personally, and without meaning to lay down the law for one whose rule I feel I have to accept with implicit obedience, I see no reason why Sri Aurobindo should not, now that India is no longer a dependency, tread our soil once again with his hallowed feet and inspire the millions with his radiant personality. I see no reason. This does not mean that there is no reason. That is for the Master to decide. But Madras and all the cities in India and more specially the stricken provinces of Bengal and the Punjab would like to have his healing touch and his invigorating presence. But it is not for me to prescribe the ways and means. I know that the Master is promoting these and other humanitarian causes not merely in India but all over the globe in his own way and through agencies he deems the best and methods he deems most potent. So I leave it at that, believing where I cannot see.

After four days spent at this contemporary reproduction of the ancient Vedic Ashram, I left Pondicherry to return to Madras. But did I leave? Or was it only my body that left?

SRI AUROBINDO, THE LEADER OF THE EVOLUTION

Continued from page 6

that he was a forerunner of the gospel of Ahimsa. This is quite incorrect. Sri Aurobindo is neither an impotent moralist nor a weak pacifist.

The rule of confining political action to passive resistance was adopted as the best policy for the National Movement at that stage and not as a part of a gospel of Non-violence or pacific idealism. Peace is a part of the highest ideal, but it must be spiritual or at the very least psychological in its basis; without a change in human nature it cannot come with any finality. If it is attempted on any other basis (moral principle or gospel of Ahimsa or any other) it will fail, and even may leave things worse than before. He is in favour of an attempt to put down war by international agreement and international force, what is now contemplated in the "New Order", if that proves possible, but that would not be Ahimsa, it would be a putting down of anarchic force by legal force, and even then one cannot be sure that it would be permanent. Within nations this sort of peace has been secured, but it does not prevent occasional civil wars and revolutions and political outbreaks and repressions, sometimes of a sanguinary character. The same might happen to a similar world-peace. Sri Aurobindo has never concealed his opinion that a nation is entitled to attain its freedom by violence, if it can do so or if there is no other way; whether it should do so or not, depends on what is the best policy, not on ethical considerations. Sri Aurobindo's position and practice in this matter was the same as Tilak's and that of other Nationalist leaders who were by no means Pacifists or worshippers of Ahimsa.

For the first few years in India, Sri Aurobindo abstained from any political activity (except the writing of the articles in the *Induprakash*) and studied the conditions in the country so that he might be able to judge more maturely what could be done.

The public activity of Sri Aurobindo began with the writing of the articles in the *Induprakash*. These seven articles written at the instance of K. G. Deshpande, editor of the paper and Sri Aurobindo's Cambridge friend, under the caption "New Lamps for Old" vehemently denounced the then Congress policy of pray, petition and protest and called for a dynamic leadership based upon self-help and fearlessness. But this outspoken and irrefutable criticism was checked by the action of a Moderate leader who frightened the editor and thus prevented any full development of his ideas in the paper; he had to turn aside to generalities such as the necessity of extending the activities of the Congress beyond the circle of the bourgeois or middle class and calling into it the masses. Finally, Sri Aurobindo suspended all public activity of this kind and worked only in secret till 1905, but he contacted Tilak whom he regarded as the one possible leader for a revolutionary party and met him at the Ahmedabad Congress; there Tilak took him out of the pandal and talked to him for an hour in the grounds expressing his contempt for the Reformist movement and explaining his own line of action in Maharashtra.

Sri Aurobindo included in the scope of his revolutionary work one kind of activity which afterwards became an important item in the public programme of the Nationalist party. He encouraged the young men in the centres of work to propagate the Swadeshi idea which at that time was only in its infancy and hardly more than a fad of the few. One of the ablest men in these revolutionary groups was a Maharatta named Sakharam Ganesh Deuskar, who was an able writer in Bengali (his family had been long domiciled in Bengal) and who had written a popular life of Shivaji in Bengali, in which he first brought in the name of Swaraj afterwards adopted by the Nationalists as their word for independence,—Swaraj became one item of the fourfold Nationalist programme. He published a book entitled *Deshar Katha* describing in exhaustive detail the British

commercial and industrial exploitation of India. This book had an immense repercussion in Bengal, captured the mind of young Bengal and assisted more than anything else in the preparation of the Swadeshi movement. Sri Aurobindo himself had always considered the shaking off of this economic yoke and the development of Indian trade and industry as a necessary concomitant of the revolutionary endeavour.

As long as he was in the Baroda service, Sri Aurobindo could not take part publicly in politics. Apart from that, he preferred to remain and act and even to lead from behind the scenes without his name being known in public; it was the Government's action in prosecuting him as editor of the *Bande Mataram* that forced him into public view. And from that time forward he became openly, what he had been for sometime already, a prominent leader of the Nationalist party, its principal leader in action in Bengal and the organiser there of its policy and strategy. He had decided in his mind the lines on which he wanted the country's action to run: what he planned was very much the same as was developed afterwards in Ireland as the Sinn Fein movement; but Sri Aurobindo did not derive his ideas, as some have represented, from Ireland, for the Irish movement became prominent later and he knew nothing of it till after he had withdrawn to Pondicherry. There was moreover a capital difference between India and Ireland which made his work much more difficult; for all its past history had accustomed the Irish people to rebellion against British rule and this history might be even described as a constant struggle for independence intermittent in its action but permanently there in principle; there was nothing of this kind in India. Sri Aurobindo had to establish and generalise the idea of independence in the mind of the Indian people and at the same time to push first a party and then the whole nation into an intense and organised political activity which would lead to the accomplishment of the ideal. His idea was to capture the Congress and to make it an instrument for revolutionary action instead of a centre of a timid constitutional agitation which would only talk and pass resolutions and recommendations to the foreign Government; if the Congress could not be captured, then a central revolutionary body would have to be created which could do this work. It was to be a sort of State within the State giving its directions to the people and creating organised bodies and institutions which would be its means of action; there must be an increasing non-cooperation and passive resistance which would render the administration of the country by a foreign Government difficult or finally impossible, a universal unrest which would wear down repression and finally, if need be, an open revolt all over the country. This plan included a boycott of British trade, the substitution of national schools for the Government institutions, the creation of arbitration courts to which the people could resort instead of depending on the ordinary courts of law, the creation of volunteer forces which would be the nucleus of an army of open revolt, and all other action that could make the programme complete. The part Sri Aurobindo took publicly in Indian politics was of brief duration, for he turned aside from it in 1910 and withdrew to Pondicherry; much of his programme lapsed in his absence, but enough had been done to change the whole face of Indian politics and the whole spirit of the Indian people, to make independence its aim and non-cooperation and resistance its method, and even an imperfect application of this policy heightening into sporadic periods of revolt has been sufficient to bring about the victory. The course of subsequent events followed largely the line of Sri Aurobindo's idea. The Congress was finally captured by the Nationalist party, declared independence its aim, organised itself for action, took almost the whole nation minus a majority of the Mohammedans and a minority of the depressed classes into acceptance of its leadership and eventually formed the first national, though not as yet an independent, Government in India and secured from Britain acceptance of independence for India.

Few Are Chosen

But those who turn their backs towards the sun
Have but shadows with which to guide their days;
But you, O men whose Life has just begun,
Who face the Light of Truth, the Sun's bright rays—
March on to glory in the Spirit's Sight,
On to knowledge where all knowledge gleams,
Where faith has turned to certitude, and Light
Fulfils the sacred Karma of your dreams.

—NORMAN DOWSETT.

Ape On Fire

Fuelled with forests I come, an ape on fire,
A brown beast burning towards the unbarred Blue,
Fierce brain that feels suddenly the skull blown off,
Blind belly crying to be an abysm of stars!

Helpless with flame that snatches them from earth,
My terrible arms strain reddening in mid-air—
Love that has lost the ecstasy it can grasp,
To embrace the bourneless body of the Beyond.

K. D. SETHNA.

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.

GRANT, O, Lord, that I may be like a fire that illumines and warms, like a fountain that takes away thirst, like a tree that shelters and protects . . . men are so unhappy, so ignorant, they need so much to be helped.

My confidence in Thee, my inner certitude grow from day to day; and from day to day also I feel Thy love more living in my heart, Thy light at once brighter and more soft; and more and more I fail to make a distinction between Thy work and my life, between my personality and the whole earth.

Lord, Lord, Thy splendour is infinite, Thy Truth is marvellous; and Thy all-powerful Love will save the world.

June 17, 1913.

THE MOTHER

—From *Prayers and Meditations of the Mother*.

* * * *

WHEN I was a child—about the age of thirteen and for about a year—every night as soon as I was in bed, it seemed to me that I came out of my body and rose straight up above the house, then above the town, very high. I saw myself then clad in a magnificent golden robe, longer than myself; and as I rose, that robe lengthened, spreading in a circle around me to form, as it were, an immense roof over the town. Then I would see coming out from all sides men, women, children, old men, sick men, unhappy men; they gathered under the outspread robe, imploring help, recounting their miseries, their sufferings, their pains. In reply, the robe, supple and living, stretched out to them individually, and as soon as they touched it, they were consoled or healed, and entered back into their body happier and stronger than they had ever been before coming out of it. Nothing appeared to me more beautiful, nothing made me more happy; and all the activities of the day seemed to me dull and colourless, without real life, in comparison with this activity of the night which was for me the true life. Often as I thus rose, I would see on my left an old man, silent and immobile, who looked at me with a benevolent affection and encouraged me by his presence. This old man, dressed in a long robe of sombre violet, was the personification—I knew later—of him who is called the Man of Sorrows.

Now the profound experience, the almost ineffable reality is translated in my brain by other notions which I can define thus:

Many a time during the day and in the night it seems to me that I,—that is to say, my consciousness is wholly concentrated in my heart, which is no longer an organ, not even a feeling, but the divine Love, impersonal, eternal; being this Love, I feel myself living in the centre of everything upon the whole earth, and at the same time it seems to me that I am stretching out immense, infinite arms and enveloping with a limitless tenderness all beings clasped, grouped, nestled upon my breast vaster than the universe . . . Words are poor and clumsy, O divine Master, and mental translations are always childish . . . But my aspiration for Thee is constant, and, to tell the truth, it is very often Thyself and Thou alone who livest in this body, an imperfect means of Thy manifestation.

May all beings be happy in the peace of Thy illumination!

February 22, 1914.

THE MOTHER

—From *Prayers and Meditations of the Mother*.

* * * *

N I R V A N A

All is abolished but the mute Alone,
The mind from thought released, the heart from grief,
Grow inexistent now beyond belief;
There is no I, no Nature, known-unknown.
The city, a shadow picture without tone,
Floats, quivers unreal; forms without relief
Flow, a cinema's vacant shapes; like a reef
Foundering in shoreless gulfs the world is done.

Only the illimitable Permanent
Is here. A Peace stupendous, featureless, still
Replaces all, — what once was I, in It
A silent unnamed emptiness content
Either to fade in the Unknowable
Or thrill with the luminous seas of the Infinite.

SRI AUROBINDO: *Collected Poems and Plays*.

* * * *

A stillness absolute, incommunicable,
Marks the sheer self-discovery of the soul;
A wall of stillness shuts it from the world,
A gulf of stillness swallows up the sense
And makes unreal all that mind has known.
Only the Inconceivable is left,
Only the Nameless without space or time;
Self's vast spiritual silence occupies space;
Thought falls from us and we cease from joy and grief;
The ego is dead; we are free from being and Time,
We have done with birth and death and work and fate.
O soul, it is too early to rejoice!
Thou hast reached the boundless silence of the Self,
Thou hast leaped into a glad divine abyss;
But where hast thou thrown self's mission and self's power?
On what dead bank on the Eternal's road?
One was within thee who was all the world,
What hast thou done for his purpose in the stars?
Escape is not the victory and the crown!
Something thou cam'st to do from the Unknown,
But nothing is finished and the world goes on,
Because only half God's cosmic work is done.
Only the everlasting No has neared
And stared into thy eyes and killed thy heart:
But where is the Lover's everlasting Yes,
And immortality in the secret heart,
The voice that chants to the creator Fire,
The symbol OM, the great assenting Word,
The bridge between the rapture and the calm,
The passion and the beauty of the Bride,
The chamber where the glorious enemies kiss,
The smile that saves, the golden peak of things?
This too is Truth at the mystic fount of Life.
A black veil has been lifted; we have seen
The mighty shadow of the omniscient Lord;
But who has lifted up the veil of light
And who has seen the body of the King?
A mystery of God's birth and acts remains,
Unsolved is the riddle of the unfinished Play;
The cosmic Player laughs within his mask,
And still the last inviolable secret hides
Behind the human glory of a Form,
Behind the gold eidolon of a Name.
A large white line has figured as a goal,
But far beyond the ineffable suntracks blaze.
What seemed the source and end was a wide gate,
A last bare step into eternity.
An eye has opened upon timelessness,
Infinity takes back the forms it gave,
And through God's darkness or his naked light
His million rays return into the Sun.
There is a zero sign of the Supreme;
Nature left nude and still uncovers God.
But in her grandiose nothingness all is there:
When her strong garbs are torn away from us,
The soul's ignorance is slain but not the soul.
The zero covers an immortal face.
A high and black negation is not all,
A huge extinction is not God's last word,
Life's ultimate sense, the close of being's course,
The meaning of this great mysterious world.
In absolute silence sleeps an absolute Power.
Awakening, it can wake the trance-bound soul
And in the ray reveal the parent sun:
It can make the world a vessel of Spirit's force,
It can fashion in the clay God's perfect shape.
To free the self is but a radiant pace;
Here to fulfil himself was God's desire.

SRI AUROBINDO: *Savitri*, Bk. III, Canto 2. . . .

THE NATION'S HOMAGE TO SRI AUROBINDO

On the occasion of the 77th birthday of Sri Aurobindo and the second anniversary of India's liberation, the Master and the Mother gave "darshan" to more than three thousand persons including the seven hundred inmates of the Ashram. In the serene atmosphere of the "darshan" room and amid the flowers offered to them, they gave their silent blessings—the promise of a divine light and love.

Among the visitors who came from outside were the Gaekwar of Baroda, the Yuvaraja of Pithapuram, the Dowager Maharani of Cooch Bihar, Sri N. Chakravarty, Financial Adviser to Damodar Valley Corporation, and Prof. Allaudin Khan, the celebrated musician of Maihar, who subsequently gave several performances to the Ashram.

What made this birthday of Sri Aurobindo an event of all-India fame was the seven-day Conference organised by an eminent committee in Calcutta—a mammoth celebration which drew messages from far and wide and from all important personages in the country. In other cities also there were large gatherings and the name of Sri Aurobindo was on the lips of the entire nation. Here at last seems to be the beginning of a new movement in the Indian consciousness towards the rediscovery of its true Swabhava. It is this especially that made the musician and author Dilip Kumar Roy of Sri Aurobindo's Ashram go to Bengal to attend the Conference and give recitals of his songs in English, Bengali and Sanskrit and read out the message sent by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother to the celebration-meeting in New York.

We give below some extracts from the speeches delivered and the messages sent in connection with the great occasion.

DR. K. N. KATJU,

Governor of Bengal and Inaugurator of the Calcutta Conference:

"... Sri Aurobindo had a great part to play in the achievement of our freedom. The patriotic movement that he carried on through his paper, *Vandemataram*, was a wonder to the people of that time. In fact it worked like a miracle. When the history of Indian nationalism is written, the history of this miracle which brought about our deliverance will also be written. Sri Aurobindo will live among us for ever through his spiritual teachings. He has been to us like a star of freedom and wherever we may be we can look to him for guidance..." (Inaugural Speech on August 15.)

"... We can show our reverence for Sri Aurobindo by pursuing the path which he has pointed out. A great prayer will go forth these days from every hearth and home in India, and I expect from many hearths and homes outside India, that Sri Aurobindo may be spared many more years to bless us and to show us the path of wisdom and enlightenment because in him we find the soul of India itself enshrined... It will be an impertinence for me to recall to you the leading events of his life since his birth on the 15th August, 1872. These events have already woven themselves into the story of our national life. It is not mere coincidence that Independence of India was proclaimed on that very date 75 years later, and for centuries to come, generation after generation of Indians will celebrate on the same day these two events together—the birth of Sri Aurobindo and the birth of Independence of India..." (Broadcast from All-India Radio on August 18.)

MR. JUSTICE N. C. CHATTERJEE,

President of the General Conference in Calcutta:

"India's greatest poet, Rabindranath Tagore, paid his reverential homage to

Sri Aurobindo in his inimitable words of poetry and music:

Aurobindo, Rabindrer laha namaskar.

(Aurobindo, accept the salutation of Rabindra.)

On this auspicious occasion India offers her humble salutation to Sri Aurobindo as the real uplifter, the true path-finder, the prophet of Indian nationalism, the high-priest of Mother India, the maker of India's Renaissance, the God-man who is sowing the seeds of immortality, who is showing us the way to dynamic living, a new order of things, a new life of truth and beauty and a new horizon of true greatness, love and harmony. "There is a Light that leads, a Power that aids." ... All eyes turn for light and guidance to the great Seer who by the unceasing Sadhana of his life worked and struggled for India's liberation, not merely from the bondage of an alien power, but for real 'Mukti', liberation from the slough of despondency and the spiritual atrophy which is laying its grip on India's lacerated soul. Sri Aurobindo has taught us that India can never fulfil her real destiny without following the instinct of divinity in us. Of all places and provinces, Bengal, the land of his birth, needs badly the magic thrill of his transforming touch. She is today torn, tormented and troubled and longs heartily for the re-appearance of Sri Aurobindo's hallowed personality in order to purify and transform her life and genius." (Presidential Speech.)

RAJA RAO D. N. ROY, OF LALGOLA,

General Secretary of the Conference:

"... Being a lover of humanity, Sri Aurobindo has not weaned himself from the mundane world; never has he said that the empirical world is unreal. His message is: All that exists is God or Vasudeva. The *weltanschauung* he preaches is not one of renunciation; rather is it one of fullness, of unbroken richness; it is an ideal of complex unmixed realisation of *Rasa*. Politics, sociology, economics, ethics—in short, all earthly things—will attain fullness in life when there will be a reorientation of our outlook. And we must awaken our entire consciousness if the descent of the Supermind is to be made possible. The body will not then be a mere abode of pleasure; rather will it be then a symbol of the divine rhythm. It is then that in all stages of mundane existence the Divine self and consciousness will be revealed and there will be the beginning of that divine transformation for which human life has been waiting for ever... I appeal to all to see that from this day the cult of Sri Aurobindo be placed on a firm footing, his ideal be firmly planted in our lives..." (Speech at the Conference.)

"In the auspicious early dawn of the fifteenth of August, the world experienced your mighty advent. Perhaps on that day great Nature with her whole consciousness welcomed you because you have realised the complete reality of her infinite sweetness so that you have flooded the world with the light of that knowledge and you have taken birth to make possible the advent of consciousness in her earthly form; you are the most perfect son of Supreme Nature; at your feet a thousand obeisances... The attainment of India's freedom on the fifteenth of August which was your birthday has significantly and undeniably made known that your birth, your spiritual striving and the freedom of India are inextricably joined together. You are the progenitor of New India; at your feet a million obeisances

... Oh Seer of the age! Oh Master of the Knowledge! Oh Lord of Love! On the crystal pedestal of our heart we have erected your jewelled throne on which being seated, by the sound of your own conch-shell of Wisdom lead us along the knowledge-brightened pathway marked out by you so that by the power of your grace we can utter these words alone: 'What shall I do with that which does not lead me to the Shrine of the Immortal?'" (Broadcast from All-India Radio.)

DR. P. N. BANNERJEE,

Vice-Chancellor of Calcutta University:

"... I suggest the establishment of an Aurobindo Institute with its permanent centre in Calcutta because Sri Aurobindo after all is the son of Bengal. That institute should have branches all over India and all over the world. His message of peace and goodwill has been interpreted as the Spirit of India and has reached every corner of the globe... Sri Aurobindo not only brought nationalism to India but also spiritual regeneration..." (Speech at Hazara Park on August 18.)

DR. RADHA BINOD PAL:

"In these days of doubts and difficulties, if we can at all safely turn our eyes for guidance to any one, it should be to this superman, Sri Aurobindo, the overpowering influence of whose genius appears indeed in the light of divine inspiration, the only superman who has succeeded in ridding himself of any ambition for power..." (Speech at the second-day sessions in Calcutta.)

DR. R. K. MUKHERJEE:

"... The work the great Seer has been doing in seclusion has benefitted humanity as a whole which looked up to him for guidance. We hope that Sri Aurobindo's prophecy that India will again emerge as a united country will come to be true like his two other prophecies made during the last world war..." (Speech at the second-day sessions.)

DR. KALIDAS NAG,

Chairman of the Reception Committee, Calcutta:

"The synthesis of Knowledge, Action and Devotion is Sri Aurobindo's most permanent contribution to India and the world. Silent though he is, he is slowly revealing to us, with ineffable art, the eloquence of silence. The ears of the common men and women will gradually catch the rhythm of that sublime improvisation. The rest of the world, distracted by hate and fear, violence and vindictiveness, will learn to tune its mind and its soul to the eternal symphony of India..." (Speech at the sessions.)

PATTABHI SITARAMAYYA,

President of the Indian National Congress:

"It is the prophet that inspires, the philosopher that guides and the politician that works. But the philosopher and prophet who have never been apprenticed as the politician stand divorced from the realities of the world. Sri Aurobindo has, however, gone through the whole gamut though in an exceedingly brief interval. By 1910 the politician became the philosopher and, by his supreme *sadhana*, stands today as the Prophet of Indian Nationalism." (Message to the Conference.)

G. B. PANT,

Premier of United Provinces:

"Rishi Aurobindo has not only made his remarkable contribution to freedom's

struggle but has also renovated the spiritual values and attainments for which India occupies the highest place in the comity of nations." (Message.)

S. P. MOOKHERJEE,

India's Minister for Industry and Supply:

"It is a happy augury that the anniversary of our Independence coincides with the anniversary of Sri Aurobindo's birthday. He embodies in a peculiar sense the creative and ever-resurgent soul of India. At a time when moral squalor and spiritual degeneration, hatred and greed, seem ready to bring us down, the light of Pondicherry glows with a steady shine—beacon to India as to the world at large." (Message.)

JAYAPRAKASH NARAYAN,

Leader of the Socialist Party:

"To those of us who were privileged to be soldiers of Indian freedom, Sri Aurobindo is not only one of our greatest spiritual leaders but also one of the pioneers of the struggle for freedom." (Message.)

B. G. KHER,

Premier of Bombay:

"The life of Sri Aurobindo is a great inspiration to all Indians. Like the sages of old, after having devoted his youth to the uplift of his countrymen he has in his maturity devoted himself to the search of God. May he live long and may the fruit of his ripe knowledge and experience lead to the betterment of human relations." (Message.)

M. S. ANEY,

Governor of Bihar:

"Sri Aurobindo is one of the world's greatest spiritual teachers. Those who want to see light and be relieved of the darkness in which they are enveloped, can find in his teachings clues for progress in that direction." (Message.)

DR. JIVRAJ MEHTA,

Minister of Health, Bombay:

"Although Mahatma Gandhi is no longer with us, it is a matter of pride that a sage like Sri Aurobindo is still with us to bear the torch and guide us to our cherished goal."

DR. AMARNATH JHA,

Ex-Vice-Chancellor of Allahabad University:

"I have for many years now been a devoted student of Sri Aurobindo's works and I cannot by any words hope to repay the great debt which I owe to his writings." (Message.)

K. M. MUNSHI,

Member, Constituent Assembly:

"I join you all in paying my humble tribute to Sri Aurobindo, my old Professor of Baroda College—Prophet of Indian Nationalism and the far-seeing Yogi who out of all men of our generation can be acclaimed to have attained *Kaivalya* and by his teachings given validity to Aryan culture in modern times." (Message.)

DR. TAN YUN SHEN,

Director of China Bhabana, Shantiniketan:

"It is the birthday of a great personality, a revolutionary at first, then a writer, a poet, a philosopher, an ascetic, a seeker." *Continued on page 12*

THE NATION'S HOMAGE TO SRI AUROBINDO

Continued from page 11

a mystic, a sage and saint and above all a spiritual guru of humanity and a messenger of the Divine — Sri Aurobindo." (Message.)

HAREKRISHNA MEHTAB,
Premier of Orissa:

"Sri Aurobindo is humanity's. On the historic plane he is the creator of the Life Divine for all time to come and for all the world to follow—far above the contemporary revolutionary age that was his creation in Bengal or succeeding periods." (Speech at Celebrations in Cuttack.)

PANDIT SUMITRANANDAN PANT:

"The greatest contribution of Sri Aurobindo is that by his theory of Supermind he has bridged the gulf lying between the concepts of idealism and materialism. Sri Aurobindo has given us a new message—the message of unity. He has shown us a path of complete identification with humanity below and the Supreme Being overhead." (Speech at Public Meeting, Allahabad.)

MR. K. RAJAH AIYAR,
Advocate-General of Madras:

"... Sri Aurobindo has both an individual appeal and a mass appeal.... From all accounts persons who come into contact with Sri Aurobindo experience a magnetic attraction to seek happiness in his Ashram." (Speech as president of the Sri Aurobindo Study Circle's Meeting, Madras.)

DR. MOHAMMED HATTA,
Prime Minister of the Indonesian Republics:

"Sri Aurobindo is a man, who is living the life of service for humanity, peace, brotherhood and social justice. His birthday is also the birthday of sovereign free India. We rejoice with the Indian people on this great occasion." (Message to a public meeting under the auspices of the Bihar Provincial Students' Cultural Congress at Patna. Messages were read out from also Sheikh Abdulla, Prime Minister of Jammu and Kashmir, Janab Asaf Ali, Governor of Orissa, and Raja Mahendra Pratap.)

In Konnagar (Dr. Hooghly, W. Bengal) —Sri Aurobindo's paternal home—the celebrations were organised by the local Patha-Chakra (Study Circle). The Municipality of the place renamed the street of his home: "Sri Aurobindo Street".

In Benares the celebrations were presided over by Dr. P. Parija, Pro-Vice-Chancellor of the Benares Hindu University. Speeches in English were delivered by Dr. S. K. Maitra and Prof. J. S. Yajnik. Sri R. S. Shukla spoke in Hindi.

In Kanpur the Sri Aurobindo Chakra convened a special meeting under the presidency of Prof. Ram Chandra Shukla. Shrees Raghu Nath Parsad Gupta, Prayag Narain Tripathi, Narendrajee Singh, Mohan Lal Vidyarthi, Bakhshi, A. K. Mukherjee, Narayan Das Jhunjhuniwala and Mr. Leonard Schiff spoke.

In Delhi under the auspices of the Sri

Aurobindo Mandir there was a large gathering—with devotional songs, meditation, a talk by Sri N. N. Kaul, and finally a film about life in the Ashram.

In Bombay, the Sri Aurobindo Circle held a big meeting in Sundrabai Hall at 5 P.M. Sir Chunilal Mehta presided, and delivered the opening speech. Dr. J. Chubb, Professor of Philosophy at Elphinstone College, was the next speaker. Seth Keshavdeo Poddar gave a talk in Hindi. There were devotional songs by Sris Pinakin Trivedi and Nirmal Bhattacharya, and the exhibition of a large number of slides by Mr. Solena, showing Sri Aurobindo at different periods and the important places connected with his life and the various activities of the Ashram. A commentary on the slides, written by Mr. K. D. Sethna, was read by Dr. Chubb.

Sri Aurobindo's birthday was celebrated at also the following centres in India:

Sri Aurobindo Pathamandir,
15, College Square, Calcutta.

Sri Aurobindo Circle,
1, Rakhai Ghose Lane,
Belighata, Calcutta.

Dr. Bankubehari Ghose,
14, Duff St., Calcutta.

Bireshwar Mitra,
25, Nandoram Sen St., Calcutta.

Sri Aurobindo Niketan,
C/o Box 85, New Delhi.

Sri Aurobindo Mandal,
Athadaman, Rudranagar P.O. (Basti—
U. P.)

Sri Aurobindo Sadhanalaya,
Panna (Vindhya Pradesh).

Sri Matri Kendra,
41 Chatta, Delhi Gate, Ghaziabad.

Madhurachenna, P. O. Halsangi,
(Bijapur Dt.).

Mohini Mohan Dutt, Boalkhali,
Shakpura, (Chittagong Dt.).

Ananta Kumar Sarkar, P. O. Khagra.

Basishta Narayan Rai,
Kadam Kuan, New Area, Patna.

Arunendu Nandi, Dinajpur (W. Bengal).

Sri Aurobindo Sadhanpith,
Shakpura, Chittagong.

Sri Aurobindo Sangha,
Khulna, E. Pakistan.

Sri Aurobindo Library,
369, Esplanade, Madras.

Sri Aurobindo Society, Jamshedpur.

Usha Bhattacharya,
Lady Keen's College, Shillong.

Capt. D. S. Patil,
Indra Nivas, Gadag.

J. K. Roy,
Sri Aurobindo Study Circle,
P. O. Singrail, Dt. Mymensingh
(E. Bengal).

N. N. H. P. Hall, Darjeeling.

Sri Arvind Swadhyaya Mandir, Anand.

Sri Aurobindo Pathamandir,
Khirar, Midnapur, W. Bengal.

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