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"GREAT IS TRUTH AND IT SHALL PREVAIL"

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KASHMIR: INTERNATIONAL COCKPIT THE VITAL WORLD-ISSUES AT STAKE

When President Truman and Prime Minister Attlee made an appeal to India and Pakistan to submit to arbitration on the Kashmir issue, what had appeared to many people a purely local affair, a merely Indo-Pak problem, stood out in its true colours as a question of international importance. To see precisely the pattern, so to speak, of this importance it is necessary to cast a look backward at the very creation of the two dominions that are now contending over Kashmir.

Pakistan and Kashmir from Britain's Viewpoint

Pakistan, no doubt, was a child of Mr. Jinnah's brain, but every child has a mother as well as a father. The two-nations theory on which Mr. Jinnah sought to build Pakistan was assiduously encouraged by the British Government, first as a means of dividing and thereby weakening the country it desired to keep within its power, but afterwards as an instrument by which it could secure in South Asia a bastion against Soviet expansion. While Congress was foolishly sitting on the fence between Russia and the western democracies, even casting sympathetic glances towards the former, the Muslim League under Mr. Jinnah's leadership cleverly produced the impression of being distinctly anti-Soviet on grounds of religion and also of gratitude to the British for open or secret support against Congress. The partition of India, therefore, seemed to assure Britain of an excellent military base from which Russia's aggressive designs in the Asian continent could be counteracted.

With China going Communist, Pakistan became doubly valuable for the western democracies, especially as India had not yet shed her somewhat pro-Soviet inclinations. Pakistan's growth in value turned western eyes more anxiously upon Kashmir. For, in Kashmir there was a common border between Russia and South Asia, leading directly to the Indian sub-continent. Moreover, the region around this border was of great strategic significance for a swoop down either on India or Pakistan. Pakistan coveted Kashmir not only because she had the fear-complex in an acute form but also because, as Pandit Nehru has lately declared, certain parties in Pakistan have always been acutely war-minded and set up the slogan: "First Kashmir, then Patiala and then on to Delhi." But it was not Pakistan alone that wanted Kashmir within her fold: Britain too did so, in the belief that world-safety called for the accession of this province to the Muslim Dominion.

Russia's Relations with India and Pakistan

The partiality of Britain and also America for Pakistan in the Kashmir affair was a matter of considerable pain to India. But surely, at that time, India herself was half to blame for the western democracies' attitude. Unable easily to give up her animosity against what she named Anglo-American imperialism, she had seen in the strength of the Red Army in Europe the only real reason why Britain had made friendly gestures to her: she suspected that if the Red Army were to be defeated in Europe, Britain and other "imperialist" countries would stretch again a greedy hand towards Asia. Consequently, India planned never to come into conflict with Soviet interests. With such an outlook she was bound to drive the western democracies into Pakistan's camp. She, however, counted on Russia to exert international pressure on her behalf. When she took the Kashmir dispute to the U.N.O., she expected that Russia would throw her whole weight against Pakistan. Russia did nothing of the sort. The

Soviet press, on the outbreak of hostilities in Kashmir, had indicted Pakistan with brutal aggression against the people of Kashmir, but in the U.N.O.'s Security Council Russia refused to vote against Pakistan. She remained neutral. This was a terrible eye-opener for India and it precipitated the realisation that had been slowly growing—namely, that Russia had little in common with India's cultural no less than political aspirations. A definite trend towards the western bloc took place in the mind of India's government: she still desired not to be mixed up in European power-politics but she could not help understanding on what side her own cultural and political interests lay. As a result, Nehru opted to remain within the Commonwealth even while affirming his country's independent republican status.

A little foresight should have told India that Russia would always have been too shrewd to come out openly against Pakistan. Firstly, she has a considerable Muslim population of her own in Tadjistan, Turkmenstan and her other Central Asian republics. Secondly, she was not any too sure about India herself, dependent as India was in so many respects on Britain. Thirdly, she was not meeting with all the success she had hoped for in the issue of the Berlin-blockade, and would not therefore miss any chance offered by circumstances to feel for an opening in Asia. Fourthly, there was something in the Pakistani mentality that struck Russia as being opportunist and easily temptable, besides being not really in tune with the spirit of the West. Thus it was not unnatural for Russia to stand aloof from India's protest in the U.N.O. and to wait and see whether any developments would bring the important north-western parts of Kashmir within her sphere of influence. And when India chose to retain her link with the Commonwealth, Russia as good as made up her mind to take a hand against her as soon as the slightest opportunity came along. Not a slight but a huge opportunity presented itself when Pakistan and Afghanistan developed a controversy over the Durand Line. If Afghanistan's claims were granted, Pakistan would be broken up beyond repair, for the former demanded the whole of the region between the Indus and the hills as her *terra irridenta*. Now Russia threatened to back up Afghanistan and supply her with arms. Pakistan, in mortal terror, changed her policy overnight: hence the projected visit of Liaquat Ali Khan to Moscow in November in response to Stalin's invitation. Furthermore, Pakistan had been feeling rather slighted and neglected ever since the Commonwealth Conference where Nehru had been made much of and Liaquat Ali Khan had to play a very small second fiddle. Soviet friendship would not only teach the western *kaffirs* to be more attentive but also get Pakistan concrete military aid both from Russia and from Czechoslovakia which is a prominent armament-producing country and is totally under Stalin's thumb. The buying of very expensive arms from Italy would be obviated and there would be a first-rate equipped army ready to face all emergencies. Pakistan has grabbed the hand of friendship stretched out by Stalin: the *Dawn*, her mouthpiece, has even announced that Pakistan will be prepared to change her ways of living and approximate as much as possible to the Russian ideology. All this must be veritable vodka to Stalin. Not that he cares a rouble for Liaquat Ali Khan: he would take the first chance to eat up Pakistan, but at the moment it pays him to play at being cordial neighbours. At the least, Pakistan will refuse to lend a base in Gilgit to the Anglo-American powers; at the most he himself, with Pakistan's friendliness towards him, will hover near enough to Gilgit to send a shiver up the spines of both Truman

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THE FOOD DRIVE AND VILLAGE RECONSTRUCTION

BY "CHANAKYA"

As a practical statesman, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru has been insisting that the highest priority must be given to the basic problem of food and all energies must be harnessed to this end. For the last few years there has been much talk and propaganda about "Grow more food." Yet the people do not produce enough food for their requirements and therefore we have to import food grains, for which we have to pay heavily. If we continue to send out crores of rupees, we shall not be able to fulfil our development programme. Then there is the possibility of war in which case we will not be able to get imports; even all development projects may have to be suspended.

Recently in a nation-wide broadcast, the Prime Minister declared: "We must make arrangements to overcome the food shortage by increasing production. We will have, therefore, to produce or perish." This grave warning was felt necessary as in the opinion of the Prime Minister, "the Grow More Food campaign has lost its initiative." Why does this happen? Why does not the drive for food get sufficient force? To solve the food problem the Government secured the services of Lord Boyd Orr who is a food expert and on his suggestion they have appointed a Commissioner of Food, Mr. R. K. Patil, at the centre. Since his arrival, it is said, a new spirit has been infused into the campaign. But the new spirit has to be infused more at the bottom than at the top. Commissions and Councils at the highest level, however necessary or useful they may be, cannot solve the food problem unless the actual cultivators and tillers of the soil can be roused from the slough of despondence.

Where Lies the True Remedy?

The Prime Minister has asked everyone to be a cultivator, in the truly Gandhian way; people are asked to use garden lands for growing vegetables and even to use wooden boxes where land is not available. That sort of appeal only serves to emphasise the desperateness of the situation, but for the true remedy we must turn to the villages. It is the cultivators and the actual tillers of the soil that must produce more and it is

they who have lost all initiative. They do not get sufficient food, their standard of life is very low, they live mostly like animals with little hope of improving their lot; they have to work in the fields even when they are actually suffering from malarial fever or other diseases. The loss due to malaria alone in India has been estimated in terms of money to be near 100 crores of rupees every year. No mere propaganda and advice can bring any incentive to their weak and lifeless limbs and hearts. The villagers have no faith in themselves, they have lost the habit of united work for the common good, the only thing that can arouse any enthusiasm in them is factions and quarrels and all these are signs of death and decay. Unless this decaying process is checked, and that without delay, all appeals for growing more food and all planning on high levels will come to nothing.

How is Solid Constructive Work Done?

It is not that the Prime Minister is not aware of this aspect of the problem. Indeed in his broadcast he asked young men and Congress workers in particular, to go to the villages and work for increasing food production. But where are young men to be found for doing real constructive work in the villages? Congress workers have become accustomed only to political work and agitation. It is not by lectures and claps and sermonizing to the village people that anything constructive can be done. If you want to

work in the villages you must take a natural profession, go and settle among the village people and be one of them. When they see that you are a practical man, they will begin to trust you. If you want to do work in the villages you must leave off all idea that it will be done very soon. It is a very laborious work. All this idea of theatrical success and lightning-flash-like work are most unpractical. You have to stick to your work through all difficulties. It requires patience. Political agitation has a different law. It requires you to put a new idea before the public, then you go on hammering that idea in, wait till it catches the popular imagination and gets connected with their vital interest. Then you have to wait for the psychological moment when you can get to your objective. That is political agitation. It is a useful thing in a nation's life. But solid constructive work is quite different. In Russia what they did was that the workers began to settle in villages, some as doctors, some as teachers, some in some other capacity doing their work and trying to raise the life-level there, bringing new light and new awakening. It is to be done slowly. The idea that somehow it will get done in one year or two—like "Swaraj in one year"—is all egoistic ignorance. Solid work is to be done under the law of the physical plane. Political agitation may be said more to belong to the vital plane and proceed according to the law of the swift life-force.

But if the villages cannot be reconstructed within one or two years, how are we to stop food imports after 1951? Are we to impose upon the under-nourished millions of India a further measure of austerity that will reduce their already meagre rations to below the subsistence level? Our contention is that though it is desirable to stop all imports of food grains after 1951, we should not take the

stand that whether self-sufficiency has been attained or not, imports will be stopped. These things cannot be done hurriedly. We may have to import food for a few years more, but we should proceed on the right lines and village reconstruction seems to us to be the right line. If war breaks out, we shall not be able to import materials for our big development projects, so we should now concentrate on finishing minor irrigation works which will also be helpful in village reconstruction as they will give immediate employment to many villagers, at the same time substantially contributing to greater food production.

Who Can Best Do Village Reconstruction?

But this all-important work of village reconstruction cannot be left to the Government, it must be earnestly taken up by non-official organisations. All who work under the Government expect to be well paid, and the Government have not enough resources to employ paid workers for the reconstruction of seven lacs of villages in India (we are including Pakistan in our calculation). Workers have to be recruited who will settle in villages taking up a natural profession, and they must be prepared to live on whatever they can earn by that profession. It may so happen that a village worker will be able to earn nothing at the beginning, but if he does some useful work, the villagers will gladly share their food with him and give him a lodging among themselves: he must be satisfied with that. A village worker must be inspired by the true spirit of Karmayoga as described in the Gita—he must be prepared to do any work without any attachment to the fruits, regarding that work not as a profitable business but as a means of self-perfection which is the true

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and Attlee, not to mention the naughty Nehru who had the effrontery to keep India within the Commonwealth and who persists in preventing the Indian Communists from turning his country into a chaos.

The Mistake of Truman and Attlee

Truman and Attlee have succumbed to the cold war waged by Russia and Pakistan. Their arbitration-appeal clearly indicates a desire to appease Pakistan by reopening the question whether there should be disbandment and disarmament of the "Azad" Kashmir bandits and by suggesting the partition of Kashmir so that the strategic north may remain with Pakistan and that Pakistan, thus appeased, may drop the idea of the proposed *entente cordiale* between herself and Russia. We must not blame the American President and the British Premier too much: hurriedly thinking in terms of international politics, they have failed to gauge the uncertain nature of Indo-Pak relations as well as the true posture of the Kashmir dispute. They fear lest the dispute should spell the establishment of Soviet influence in Gilgit and the areas around—with perilous possibilities as regards the whole of South Asia. But, while understanding their intense concern for the world at large, we must point out their grave mistake. Luckily, Nehru has stood like a rock and, against his firm conviction that under no circumstances can India compromise, Truman and Attlee are likely to get jolted into a realisation of the folly they were countenancing. To partition Kashmir would not cut across Stalin's scheme to penetrate into Pakistan and cast a grim shadow over India. The claim of Afghanistan will still serve as a counter for putting his own demands across. There is no law against supplying arms inexhaustibly to the Afghan Government, and Pakistan would be pretty helpless against an enemy backed by Russian resources. If England and America try to placate Pakistan they will hardly succeed in restraining the endless ambition of Russia who is resolved to make Kashmir a stepping-stone to the aggrandisement of her ideology in both Pakistan and India. What England and America will only achieve is India's utter enfeeblement and the dissolution of the democratic party of the Muslims under Shaikh Abdulla, who are giving the *coup de grace* to the two-nations theory. Nehru knows all this and therefore has rejected the fatuous proposal for arbitration. If only he could throw the real situation into clear relief before the eyes of Truman and Attlee, the deadliest danger to which India and the rest of South Asia have been exposed up to now will be averted.

Nehru's Vision and True World-Peace

If Truman and Attlee are genuinely desirous of saving the international situation in Kashmir from becoming explosive, they should adopt here the same policy that they did when Russia blockaded Berlin. The least appeasement then would have resulted in a major defeat of the cause of true world-peace. At present it is not by giving in to Russia and her friends that world-peace can be maintained with honour: a determined and fully armed front has to be shown, for only the readiness to meet the Russian monster serves as a restraining force on the advance of the Godless and soulless darkness that is made visible by the Red Star. The recent disclosure that Stalin has the atom bomb should make no difference. On the contrary, now that Russia is almost evenly matched with the U.S.A., there is all the more reason for eschewing a policy of appeasement which may enhance her sense of power and encourage her ambition. If, against the cordial relations sought to be established between Stalin and Liaquat Ali Khan, there is pitted a staunch friendship between Nehru and the heads of the American and British Governments—if Truman and Attlee insist with Nehru on spurning the idea of Kashmir's partition and on holding a free plebiscite whose *sine qua non* is the disbandment and disarmament of the "Azad" forces, Russia will know that her support to Pakistan will avail her nothing in securing a sphere of influence in the Gilgit-region and that any further egging on of either Pakistan against India or Afghanistan against Pakistan will mean ultimately an atomic world-war involving America and Britain and herself. Realising this, she will drop her aggressive attitude, relax the tension she is creating and leave interfering in a direct manner with South Asia as she has left interfering in a direct manner with Western Europe. Kashmir is today as much an international cockpit fraught with terrible possibilities of democracy's defeat on a world-scale, as Berlin was a little while ago. Let the western powers adopt the same method as they did in that test-case and history will happily repeat itself. We should be thankful that we have amongst a statesman like Nehru whose eyes are not blind to fundamentals and whose international standing is high enough to bring him respectful hearing from both Truman and Attlee. On his vision and resolution the safety of the world appears to hinge. The mind and heart of every true Indian is with him in this crisis and we wish his coming visit to the U.S.A. unqualified success in taking the blinkers off the eyes of the American President.

THE REAL GANDHIJI

AN IMPARTIAL ESTIMATE OF HIS GREATNESS

By "LIBRA"

October 2 is the day of Gandhiji's birth, an event that has had a large significance for India. But what exactly is the significance? The question is not very easy to answer, both because of Gandhiji's many-sidedness and complexity and because of the hero-worship he inspired by his self-discipline and self-sacrifice. But a correct answer is needed. The present article makes an attempt to get down to his fundamental character and the precise sense in which he was great.

In psycho-analytic practice there is a well-known method of testing our instinctive responses, plumbing our spontaneous idea-associations. A number of carefully chosen words are spoken to us and we have to blurt out without a moment's thought the words that rise up in our minds. Well, if any Indian is psycho-analytically pelted with the term "Swaraj", the rebound in most cases will be the name "Gandhiji".

You would say this is but natural. Yes, natural it is, since Gandhiji stood in the forefront of the political scene here for the last three decades. And yet the response, the association is wrong. It would be right if there were the mention of a leader like Tilak who bent his whole leonine energy towards the attainment of Swaraj, who was a Swarajist first and last, who had no other life-passion than to free India from the British and who considered all means legitimate in breaking the fetter of foreign domination. With Gandhiji, Swaraj was never the be-all and end-all. No doubt, he wanted India to be politically independent, but never unconditionally, never by any kind of means. Either certain conditions must be observed by us, certain means adopted, or else no Swaraj was to be desired and worked for. There was in Gandhiji's vision an ideal which seemed to him larger than India's political freedom—and that ideal was what he strove after and sought to represent: if Swaraj could be subsumed under that ideal, if it could attune itself to this "greater glory," then alone was it worth having!

Not Swarajist but Humanist

Gandhiji was not first and last a patriot or a politician. He was above everything a moralist and humanist. What was his charge-sheet against the British rulers? A patriotic politician would announce that even if there were nothing to hold up against British rule on the score of moral or humane conduct, self-government would still be the goal: it must be won for its own sake because it is an inalienable right of every nation. Gandhiji's attack on British imperialism was not essentially on the ground that India must be governed by Indians. It was rather on the ground that England had misgoverned India.

If the British sovereignty had really been what it claimed to be—*mabap raj*, fatherly and motherly rule—it is questionable indeed whether Gandhiji would have launched into politics. He was at heart a champion of the down-trodden and the ill-treated, and his main accusation against John Bull was not the foreignness of the fellow but the crudity of the chap. And it is characteristic of Gandhiji that, while not forgetting the political misdeeds, he gave prime place on his black list to the misdeeds that were economic.

After the first world war, he did not mention as the chief blot on British rule the Rowlatt Act, the Jallianwalla Massacre, the broken promise of the British Premier to the Muslims of India and the sham unsatisfactory reforms. He mentioned in words of the intensest fire and the most glaring light the appalling poverty which was the result of systematic exploitation of our masses by the British. In the celebrated trial

in which he showed the causes of his disaffection for the Government, this deliberate impoverishing of the bulk of his people, this continual and cold-blooded degrading of millions below the bare subsistence level in order that a few may wax rich was declared to have principally alienated him from his masters. Even more characteristic of him was his grouping together with the crime of his masters the crime of his own countrymen who shared the exploiter's mentality and never scrupled about grinding the faces of the poor.

The passage is memorable, for in it is summed up the real Gandhiji: "No sophistry, no jugglery in figures can explain away the evidence, the skeletons in many villages, present to the naked eye. I have no doubt whatsoever that both England and the town-dwellers of India will have to answer, if there is a God above, for this crime against humanity which is perhaps unequalled in history."

The castigation of the Indian exploiters, and not solely the British, is a clue that leads us straight to his most humanitarian campaign, the one against Untouchability—a campaign whose thrust was at the Indian though the foreigner also was taken to task for setting up a separate electorate for the Untouchables and thus perpetuating them as a class. Gandhiji's battle with conventional India ran parallel to his battle with John Bull. He solemnly thought his country deserved to be tyrannised over by the British because of the heinous sin she had committed for centuries against so many millions of her own people by looking down upon them as pariahs, as outside the pale of social intercourse, as worse than beasts of burden. Unless we set about putting our own house in order we are not fit to be free: this is what Gandhiji said time and again. Never did he spare his countrymen the scorpion whip: he lashed them without fear, he stung them relentlessly into consciousness of guilt. He was no flatterer: he did not play up to his audience: he was a just and bold critic of India. Even about the scurrilous book by Miss Mayo he said that it was a book Englishmen should put out of their minds but Indians must take to heart, for though it was in many respects a malicious exaggeration with not half a glance to spare for the good side of our land, it did drive home a few facts, a few truths. And the worst fact, the most painful truth about us was, in Gandhiji's eyes, Untouchability. To remove the bar sinister of the Untouchables was to be our duty side by side with removing the yoke of the Britisher, who was inclined to treat us as untouchables. "Fail in this moral and humane duty", said Gandhiji in effect, "and you do not merit to be set free. Social reform must go hand in hand with work for Swaraj: without social reform Swaraj is not worth a straw!"

Can Non-Violence be the Master Ideal?

Nor is the attack on the pariah system the sole distinguishing mark of Gandhiji being basically something else than an embodiment of Swarajism. There is the insistence, in season and out, on non-violence, *ahimsa*. According to him, we simply had to oppose the British for the economic as well as political chains put on us by them, but the chains had to be snapped in the right way and not the wrong. The moment we chose the wrong way we would forge worse chains for ourselves and it would be much better to endure the lesser evil than create the bigger. A man is truly man, in Gandhiji's view, when he restrains himself and not when he retaliates. We must fight without rancour and without staining our hands with brute force. Every injustice has to be combated but unto one's own death, never unto the death of one's opponent. Blood must be spilled for a noble cause, but it must be our own blood. One remembers how at the height of his Civil Disobedience Movement in 1922, with the entire nation steeled to resist the British Government and bring the proud rulers to their knees, Gandhiji cast away the prize nearly in his hands and stopped the campaign just because at Chauri Chaura the populace, inflamed by armed police repression, ran amok and committed acts of gruesome violence.

This sudden drawing of reins by Gandhiji brings out sharply the fact that as a politician he was not always the master-guide. What he did in 1922, like several other acts in his career as India's leader, was, from the political standpoint, shortsighted; he might have striven to check further violence without stemming the enthusiastic tide of nationalism and frustrating the highly wrought millions he commanded. Besides, the too acute recoil from violence of any kind is a dangerously confusing emotion, in a world where there are so many diabolic presences. The inadequacy of the dictate to abjure violence was most revealed when in the last war Gandhiji advised England to fling off arms and melt Hitler's heart by letting him ride roughshod over her. Its defect was laid bare again with terrible vividness when he talked of India fighting the Jap invader with non-violence. He did not realise the threat to world-civilisation by the Fascist maniacs and how limited and ineffective complete non-violence would have been against their blind brutality. Begloured by his own pet doctrine, he could not see the Inferno that was the heart of Fascism and thought that here was only another form of the imperialistic ambition which had marched through history so often and which was never quite impervious to the influence of heroic self-sacrifice and passive resistance on its opponent's part. Many Indians committed the same mistake, but except the taking up of arms on behalf of Fascism nothing could have been more Himalayan a blunder than the pitting of *ahimsa* against a Hitler.

Did Gandhiji Embody the Soul of India?

The idealisation of non-violence at all costs serves also to throw into relief the precise meaning of Gandhiji's saying: "Politics are to me subservient to religion." If religion primarily signified to him non-violence, then it is doubtful whether he can stand wholly as a representative of what India has historically understood by religion. In the golden age of Indian spirituality, the Vedic times, the arts of war were not taboo. Even in the Asrams of the Rishis archery was taught—surely not just to hunt animals (though that too would be contrary to non-violence). It was taught essentially in order to fit men for violence in a right cause. The emphasis was always on being right, not on being non-violent. The holiest figures in Indian tradition, Rama and Krishna, were mighty warriors and urged men to battle against the enemies of *dharma*. To explain away their fights as being allegories of inner struggle between man's higher self and his lower is to forget that in part of mankind the lower self is not only dominant but also aggressive against those in whom the higher self is more active and that the inner struggle must necessarily get projected into an epic of physical combat. Even Buddha who among India's spiritual personalities put the greatest premium on non-violence did not enjoin it on all and sundry: he restricted it to the class of monks and, while conjuring humanity to return love for hatred, never discouraged violence in defence of a cause that was just. The absolute adherence to *ahimsa* was derived by Gandhiji from Tolstoy: it does not reflect the flexible and many-sided spiritual wisdom of original Hinduism.

There is also another fact which leads us to question whether Gandhiji, for all his veneration of the Gita, embodied vitally the soul of the Hindu religion. It was not only Swaraj that he deemed undesirable without unsleeping agitation and activity to demolish the barrier between the untouchables and the rest of our population: even Hinduism itself, the whole grand structure of spiritual aspiration towards the invisible Divine, was a mockery to Gandhiji so long as that barrier was not torn down. One of his often-quoted utterances is that he would far rather that Hinduism died than that Untouchability lived! Here is an outburst of moral and humanistic hysteria, a rushing to extremes by a conscience hypersensitive to social inequalities. Here is deplorable forgetfulness of the truth that, though social reformism is a fine passion, it cannot be the centre and core of man's upward endeavour. The main purpose of true religion is a change of the merely human consciousness into a divine consciousness by a progressive practice of the presence of God. Only when that presence is inwardly realised can social pestilences like Untouchability be radically removed. Till then, sincere

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efforts must certainly be made to abolish them by means of brotherly social behaviour, but to believe that a sore like Untouchability renders all Hinduism corrupt and futile and that, without the help of the fundamental transformation of consciousness that is Yoga, the root and not only one or another outward form of social iniquity can be plucked out is to confuse morality with religion and to prove clearly that one lacks the burning essence of not only the Hindu religion but also of all religion—the mystical cry for the Eternal and the Infinite.

Gandhiji and the True Spiritual Light

In view of this it becomes impossible to speak of Gandhiji, as so many do, in the same breath with Buddha or Christ. Christ and Buddha had an intensely developed social sense of brotherhood; but they had something more, and that something was not merely a mental and emotional acceptance of the Eternal and the Infinite as a sort of penumbra of the passion for social equality. Rather, this passion was radiated from a centre of consciousness that had deepened beyond the human into the immense reality of the Infinite and the Eternal. They were mystics, men who had Yogically realised God whether in His impersonal aspect of Nirvana or in His personal aspect as Lord and Lover.

Our feeling, that Gandhiji never had the mystical experience and the

spiritual realisation, is borne out in full by a comparison of what mystics of various ages have left on record with what Gandhiji put on paper about his own life. It is not possible to say that he may have kept silent about certain things: he made it a point to hide nothing, to confess and register whatever he experienced or did, and if any man's life was transparent to the world's eyes so far as his own knowledge of himself went, it was the life of Gandhiji as described in his autobiography *My Experiments with Truth* and some other writings of his in the periodicals he edited. If Gandhiji had gone through any mystical realisation, he would not have violated truth by omitting it from his account when he made it his professed aim to omit nothing. Of course, for the world to know that a man is a mystic the writing or declaring explicitly that he had gone through certain experiences is not necessary; there are other ways in which mysticism talks, manifests, comes into the open and it might be difficult to judge from this or that man's writings whether he was a mystic or no. But Gandhiji—by setting up as his autobiographical ideal an account which lays open all important details, and by yet failing to lay open anything mystical in his self-portrayal—leaves no shadow of a doubt that he never was a mystic.

Merely to get promptings, as Gandhiji said he did, from an inner voice does not constitute mysticism.

"The still small voice" in the form of what is called conscience is a common possession: it becomes very imperative in some people, but there is no undeniable spirituality implied by it, even if one has practised self-control and tried to avoid dishonesty. A voice of conscience can arrive from various recesses of our being: it can be just as often undivine as divine, and mostly it is neither in any specific sense, and not seldom there are several kinds of voices in the same individual, creating quite a confusion in the long run. Occasionally a voice from within becomes an extraordinary phenomenon, as if it were an objective dictate from some guiding power outside or beyond us. In his entire life Gandhiji knew this phenomenon only once: a voice suddenly woke him up in the middle of the night and whispered to him clear and cogent directions about a fast of twenty-one days in connection with certain social and political issues arising out of Untouchability. He wrote about it in *Harijan* a few years later (December 10, 1938) and ended with the words: "That kind of experience has never in my life happened before or after that date." The experience has been compared to those of the Saints. Even if it could be so compared, one such experience would not give a man the authentic mystical status. But in point of fact an experience like Gandhiji's carries by itself no guarantee of a mandate from on high. Any distinctive occult phenomenon is not neces-

sarily spiritual in origin any more than is an exceptionally willed abstinence or a keen urge towards philanthropy. The call received by Gandhiji to fast has nothing in it similar to the voices and the visions that are revelatory incidents in the exalted sweep of the Saints into the "unitive knowledge" which transcends and transfigures the human consciousness.

Absence of mysticism does not prevent a man from being great, and Gandhiji was great—but in the ethico-religious sphere, without the marked touch of the religio-mystical sphere which takes up both mind and heart into a greater and more gracious life. Just as Gandhiji was not primarily a patriot or a politician, he was also not fundamentally in the line of the illumined and ecstatic seers. It is these seers, these embodiments of spiritual realisation, who are the purest light of the world—and in that light has India of the ages striven most to live, and only by its gold of godhead will she be able to crown her long history and lead our broken half-blind earth to its fulfilment. Once we perceive this, we shall not fall into a blurring of values when we confront the future, for we shall be in a position to estimate correctly the significance of that frail yet unconquerable, ascetic yet compassionate figure whose memory his countrymen will always cherish.

THE FOOD DRIVE—Continued from page 2

goal of human life. If a worker regularly studies the Gita and tries to realise the teaching of the Gita in his life, he will win the spontaneous regard of the villagers, which will be of great help to him in the work which he wants to accomplish.

We shall mention here, by way of illustration, some of the village works which young men and women who dedicate themselves to the services of the country and the people can take up. If you are a student of Science, a B.Sc. or even an I.Sc. you can take some lands in the village and begin agriculture on scientific lines; if you want to do that to set an example to the villagers, you will get sufficient lands and all facilities from the Zamindars or tenure-holders. Scientific agriculture requires training, and we have very few agricultural colleges in the country for that purpose. But there are excellent books on scientific agriculture and with their help any student of science can train himself and at the same time carry on agricultural work with the help and co-operation of village experts. In course of time he can have a small laboratory of his own for soil analysis, pest control, preparation of compost and so forth. When the villagers will see that you can cure diseases of plants, select the proper variety of crops, improve the soil by proper manuring, they will begin to have trust in you and then you can do anything with them.

Another work is to go to the villages as a doctor. Most villages are practically without any medicine or doctor and there is no prospect at all that the Government will be able to provide these things within any measurable time. So the people must help themselves. It takes a long time to be a full-fledged doctor, but you can be a good compounder within a short time, and with that qualification you can start a charitable dispensary in a village, arranging with some qualified doctor who practises near about, so that he may attend the dispensary for one hour, say, two days in the week. Following this method medical aid can be brought to all villagers within a short time. And it is not necessary everywhere to have allopathic treatment; homoeopathy is popular in villages, it is far less expensive and Hahneman said that his system could be learnt in six months. So workers can

settle in many villages as homoeopathic doctors.

Not only men but women also have a great scope of working for village reconstruction, and indeed if we want to reconstruct our seven lacs of villages within the shortest possible time—and we must do that if we have to live and survive as a nation—we must be able to recruit thousands of self-sacrificing and patriotic men and women for this purpose. The increase of population is alarming and our young men and women can very well give up all thought of marrying for some time to come, and even if they happen to marry, both husband and wife can take up suitable village work and in this way the acute problem of unemployment also will be solved to a large extent. There is plenty of work to be done in this country and also plenty of persons who can do the work; what is needed is organisation, and this must come from the people themselves, if they want really to have freedom and be able to maintain it. In villages there is now a growing demand for female education and if any educated woman starts a girls' school in a village, the villagers will gladly provide her with boarding and lodging under respectable conditions, and she can also expect to have Government grants. We are not for separate schools and colleges for girls but we are not dealing here with that aspect of the question; we are trying to show how a prospective village worker can settle himself or herself in a village. Then there is a great demand for trained midwives in villages, and a girl who has studied up to the Matriculation standard can become a junior midwife within one and a half year and afterwards she herself will be able to train many such midwives in the village.

What Sort of Organisations are Needed?

But behind these workers there must be some organisations that will recruit and inspire them for such work, provide facilities for their training and then help them to settle in villages and carry on their strenuous work. And such work must not be mixed up with politics; that was the mistake because of which the Congress has not been able hitherto to do any constructive work worth the name. We do not mean that the socialists or the communists have

done anything better; they all go to the villagers not really to improve the lot of the villagers but to exploit them to achieve party ends. The Prime Minister's fervent call to every individual for co-operation in the matter of growing more food can be effectively answered only if non-official organisations come forward to take up constructive work for the sake of constructive work and not for any ulterior political motive. It is not a long list of what is to be done in the villages that is the desideratum; what is necessary is to infuse a new spirit in the hearts of the villagers; when they are thus awakened they will form their own programme of construction themselves according to their needs and possibilities. A new light, a new life-giving message has to be brought to the villages, and certainly communism or socialism is not that message. The masses in some instances are turning towards these things as they are being misled by slogans and they do not see any other way of improving their lot. It is only the call to a higher divine life to be achieved through spirituality that can bring a new awakening in India because that is the call of the true soul of India, a mission to fulfil in the world for which India has lived and worked for millenniums.

Have We Proper Democratic Institutions?

The ancient glory of India and her true task has to be brought before the people of India in a new light. To give a fillip to the people to carry out this task we must create a helpful outer framework in the form of proper democratic institutions—that is, institutions in keeping with the real Indian genius. The Premier of Madras said recently: "For the masses of India, the two years that have passed since political freedom was achieved have witnessed hardly any change in their condition. They had built high hopes when freedom was won, but its glow is still to reach them." Very true. But he can immediately bring that glow to them by allowing the villagers to manage their own affairs. The Constituent Assembly have accepted the ancient Indian ideal of village panchayat, but the thing that the Congress Government is creating in the different provinces in that name is not at all the genuine article. They are creating panchayats by law, but in ancient India they were of popular origin. From a review of the functions of these bodies, it becomes clear that a vast sphere of

administrative work was occupied by various types of self-governing bodies in ancient India, leaving to the central government but very few points of contact with the ordinary concerns of the daily life of the people. It is indeed the case of a monarchy limited by a vast democratic organization which made itself responsible for the welfare of the masses. The State recognised the local bodies and exercised some control over them but that control was an irreducible minimum and concerned matters like the protection of life and property and realisation of the revenue for the proper execution of that duty. There was a genuine freedom for the panchayats—a freedom different from that which is granted in Western polity which we are imitating today.

In Local Self-Government in Ancient India, Dr. Mookerji brings out well the difference between the two freedoms. The predominant tendency in the West has been to bring within state-control all the main departments of social life and national activity. Not that no room is left for autonomous local and municipal bodies. It is physically impossible in the larger states to deal with the manifold life from one central government. In fact, in the most progressive western countries the largest part of their government is being administered locally. But even so, the grip of the Centre is present: the local bodies "owe their form and constitution to a process of decentralisation, delegation or devolution of powers determined by the national legislature": they are ultimately but "wheels of a common machine, parts of a single plant". In ancient Indian polity they have a different status. They are not created consciously by a fully developed and completely constituted state: they have "an independent origin and growth out of fluid and inchoate conditions of tribal life and organisation. When the state comes to supervene or be superimposed upon them it has to treat with these more or less on terms of equality and recognise their pre-existing rights by conventions and agreements which operate as charters regulating their mutual relations. Thus the varied interests of the communal life, such as administrative, judicial, civic, commercial or industrial, are assured by the voluntary co-operation of independent and integral units of a common body politic."

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.

"TURN and face the danger!", Thou hast said to me, "Why dost thou wish to turn thy look away or fly far from action, away from the fight, into a profound contemplation of Truth? It is its integral manifestation that has to be realised, it is its victory over all the obstacles of blind ignorance and obscure hostility. Look straight at the danger and it will vanish before the Power."

O Lord, I have understood the weakness of this most external nature which is always ready to surrender to Matter and to escape, as a compensation, into a supreme intellectual and spiritual independence. But Thou expectest from us action, and action does not allow of such an attitude. It is not enough to triumph in the inner worlds, we must triumph even in the most material worlds. We must not run away from the difficulty or the obstacle because we have the power to do so by taking shelter in the consciousness where there are no longer any obstacles... We must look the danger straight in the face, with a faith in Thy Omnipotence and Thy Omnipotence will triumph.

Give me integrally the heart of a fighter, O Lord, and Thy victory is sure.

"To conquer at any cost" must be the present motto. Not because we are attached to the work and its results, not because we are in need of such an action, not because we are incapable of escaping from all contingencies.

But because such is Thy command to us. But because the time has come for Thy triumph upon earth. But because Thou willest an integral victory.

And in an infinite love for the world... let us fight!

September 5, 1914.

THE MOTHER
Prayers and Meditations.

* * *

WITH fervour I salute Thee, O divine Mother, and with deep feeling I identify myself with Thee. United with our divine Mother, I turn towards Thee, O Lord, and I salute Thee in a mute adoration; in an ardent aspiration I identify myself with Thee.

Then all becomes a marvellous Silence, Being is absorbed in Non-Being, all is suspended, held still and immutable.

How to express the inexpressible?

September 13, 1914.

THE MOTHER
Prayers and Meditations.

* * *

Into a wonderful bodiless realm he came,
The home of a passion without name or voice,
A depth he felt answering to every height,
A nook was found that could embrace all worlds,
A point that was the conscious knot of space,
An hour eternal in the heart of Time.
The silent soul of all the world was there:
A Being lived, a Presence and a Power,
A single Person who was himself and all
And cherished Nature's sweet and dangerous throbs
Transfigured into beats divine and pure.
One who could love without return for love,
Meeting and turning to the best the worst,
It healed the bitter cruelties of earth
Transforming all experience to delight;
Intervening in the sorrowful paths of birth
It rocked the cradle of the cosmic Child
And stilled all weeping with its hands of joy;

It led things evil towards their secret good,
It turned racked falsehood into happy truth;
Its power was to reveal divinity.
Infinite, coeval with the mind of God,
It bore within itself a seed, a flame,
A seed from which the Eternal is new-born,
A flame that cancels death in mortal things.
All grew to all kindred and self and near,
The intimacy of God was everywhere,
No veil was felt, no brute barrier inert,
Distance could not divide, Time could not change.
A fire of passion burned in spirit-depths,
A constant touch of sweetness linked all hearts,
The throb of one adoration's single bliss
In a rapt ether of undying love.
An inner happiness abode in all,
A sense of universal harmonies,
A measureless secure eternity
Of truth and beauty and good and joy made one.
There was the welling core of finite life;
A formless spirit became the soul of form.

All there was soul or made of sheer soul-stuff:
A sky of soul covered a deep soul-ground.
All here was known by a spiritual sense:
Thought was not there but a knowledge near and one
Seized on all things by a moved identity,
A sympathy of self with other selves,
The touch of consciousness on consciousness
And being's look on being with inmost gaze
And heart laid bare to heart without walls of speech
And the unanimity of seeing minds
In myriad forms luminous with the one God.
Life was not there, but an impassioned force,
Finer than fineness, deeper than the deeps
Felt as a subtle and spiritual power,
A quivering out from soul to answering soul,
A mystic movement, a close influence,
A free and happy and intense approach
Of being to being with no screen or check,
Without which life and love could never have been.
Body was not there, for bodies were needed not,
The soul itself was its own deathless form
And met at once the touch of other souls
Close, blissful, concrete, wonderfully true.
As when one walks in sleep through luminous dreams
And, conscious, knows the truth their figures mean,
There where reality was its own dream,
He knew things by their soul and not their shape:
As those who have lived long made one in love
Need word nor sign for heart's reply to heart,
He met and communed without bar of speech
With beings unveiled by a material frame.
There was a strange spiritual scenery,
A loveliness of lakes and streams and hills,
A flow, a fixity in a soul-space,
And plains and valleys, stretches of soul-joy,
And gardens that were flower-tracts of the spirit,
Its meditations of tinged reverie.
Air was the breath of a pure infinite.
A fragrance wandered in a coloured haze
As if the scent and hue of all sweet flowers
Had mingled to copy heaven's atmosphere.
Appealing to the soul and not the eye
Beauty lived there at home in her own house,
There all was beautiful by its own right
And needed not the splendour of a robe.
All objects were like bodies of the Gods,
A spirit symbol environing a soul,
For world and self were one reality.

SRI AUROBINDO
Savitri, Book II, Canto XIV.

SRI AUROBINDO, THE LEADER OF THE EVOLUTION

PART II OF "THE WORLD CRISIS AND INDIA"

BY "Synergist"

A SHORT BIOGRAPHY*

Continued from previous issue

SPIRITUAL LIFE

Sri Aurobindo began his Yoga in 1904. Even before this he had already some spiritual experiences and that before he knew anything about Yoga or even what Yoga was. For example, a vast calm descended upon him at the moment when he stepped first on Indian soil after his long absence, in fact with his first step on the Apollo Bunder in Bombay. This calm surrounded him and remained for long months afterwards. There was also a realisation of the vacant Infinite while walking on the ridge of the Takht-i-Suleman in Kashmir, the living presence of Kali in a shrine on the banks of the Narmada, the vision of the Godhead surging up from within when in danger of a carriage accident in Baroda in the first year of his stay etc. But these were inner experiences coming of themselves and with a sudden unexpectedness, not part of a sadhana. He started Yoga by himself without a Guru, getting the rule from a friend, a disciple of Brahmananda of Ganga Matt; it was confined at first to assiduous practice of Pranayam (at one time for six or more hours a day). There was no conflict or wavering between Yoga and politics; when he started Yoga, he carried on both without any idea of opposition between them. He wanted however to find a Guru. He met a Naga Sannyasi, one of the heads, in the course of this search, but did not accept him as Guru, but was confirmed by him in a belief in Yoga-power when he saw him cure Barin in almost a moment of a violent and clinging hill fever by merely cutting through a glassful of water crosswise with a knife while he repeated a silent mantra. Barin drank and was cured. Sri Aurobindo also met Brahmananda and was greatly impressed by him; but he had no helper or Guru in Yoga till he met Lele in Baroda and that was only for a short time. Meditating only for three days with Lele, he followed his instructions for silencing the mind and freeing it from the constant pressure of thought; he entered into an absolute and complete silence of the mind and indeed of the whole consciousness and in that silence had suddenly the enduring realisation of the indefinable Brahman, Tat, in which the whole universe seemed to be unreal and only That existed. This silence he kept for several months and it remained always within him; for when activity returned, it proceeded on the surface and within him all was calm. But at the time there was not the slightest activity of any kind even on the surface; there was only a still motionless perception spiritual and mental in its character. But this was not what Lele wanted, for he wanted the silence only in order that the inner voice of the heart might be heard without any thought interference; so he did his best to get him out of this Advaitic condition. A meeting was to be held in Bombay to hear Sri Aurobindo speak and he asked Lele how he was to speak when not even the shadow of a passing thought could arise in him. Lele told him to make namaskar before delivering a speech to the audience and wait and speech would come to him from another source than the mind. So in fact, when he was about to address the meeting, speech came. It should be noted however that Sri Aurobindo was not at any time in trance and something saw all that happened and spoke and acted according to need without the necessity of any conceptual thought or personal volition. Ever since all the mental activities, speech, writing, thought, will and other kindred activities have so come to him from the same source above the brain-mind; he had entered into the spiritual mind and what he afterwards called the overhead consciousness. This was his first major and fundamental Yogic realisation and experience and the true beginning and foundation of his Yoga. *

Sri Aurobindo himself once wrote in a letter about his practice of Yoga: "I began my Yoga in 1904 without a Guru; in 1908 I received important help from a Mahratta Yogi and discovered the foundations of my sadhana; but from that time till the Mother came to India I received no spiritual help from anyone else. My sadhana before and afterwards was not founded upon books but upon personal experiences that crowded on me from within. But in the jail I had the Gita and the Upanishads with me, practised the yoga of the Gita and meditated with the help of the Upanishads, these were the only books from which I found guidance; the Veda which I first began to read long afterwards in Pondicherry rather confirmed what experiences I already had than was any guide to my sadhana. I sometimes turned to the Gita for light when there was a question or a difficulty and usually received help or an answer from it. It is a fact that I was hearing constantly the voice of Vivekananda speaking to me for a fortnight in the jail in my solitary meditation and felt his presence. The voice spoke only on a special and limited but very important field of spiritual experience and it ceased as soon as it had finished

saying all that it had to say on that subject."

Before coming to Pondicherry Sri Aurobindo had already realised in full two of the four great realisations on which his Yoga and his spiritual philosophy are founded. The first he had gained while meditating with the Maharashtrian Yogi, Vishnu Bhaskar Lele, at Baroda in January 1908; it was the realisation of the silent spaceless and timeless Brahman gained after a complete and abiding stillness of the whole consciousness and attended at first by the overwhelming feeling and perception of the total unreality of the world, though this feeling disappeared after his second realisation which was that of the cosmic consciousness and of the Divine as all beings and all that is, which happened in the Alipore Jail. To the other two realisations, that of the supreme Reality with the static and dynamic Brahman as its two aspects and that of the higher planes of consciousness leading up to the Supermind, he was already on his way in his meditations in the Alipore Jail. Moreover, he had accepted from Lele as the principle of his sadhana to rely wholly on the Divine and his guidance alone both for his sadhana and his outward actions.

Thus gathering the essential elements of spiritual experience that are gained by the path of divine communion and spiritual realisation followed till now in India, he passed on in his Pondicherry life in search of a more complete experience uniting and harmonising the two ends of existence, Spirit and Matter. Most ways of Yoga are paths to the Beyond leading to the Spirit and in the end, away from life; Sri Aurobindo's rises to the Spirit to redescend with its gains bringing the light and power and bliss of the Spirit into life to transform it. Man's present existence in the material world is in this view or vision of things a life in the Ignorance with the Inconscient at its base, but even in its darkness and nescience there are involved the presence and possibilities of the Divine. The created world is not a mistake or a vanity and illusion to be cast aside by the soul returning to heaven or Nirvana, but the scene of a spiritual evolution by which out of this material inconscience is to be manifested progressively the Divine Consciousness in things. Mind is the highest term yet reached in the evolution, but it is not the highest of which it is capable. There is above it a Supermind or eternal Truth-Consciousness which is in its nature the self-aware and self-determining light and power of Divine Knowledge. Mind is an ignorance seeking after Truth, but this is a self-existent Knowledge harmoniously manifesting the play of its forms and forces. It is only by the descent of this Supermind that the perfection dreamed of by all that is highest in humanity can come. It is possible by opening to a greater divine consciousness to rise to this power of light and bliss, discover one's true self, remain in constant union with the Divine and bring down the supramental Force for the transformation of mind and life and body. To realise this possibility has been the dynamic aim of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga.

During all his stay at Pondicherry from 1910 to the present moment he has remained more and more exclusively devoted to his spiritual work and his sadhana. In 1914 after four years of silent Yoga he began the publication of a philosophical monthly, the *Arya*. Most of his more important works, those published since in book form, the *Isha Upanishad*, the *Essays on the Gita*, *The Life Divine* and the *Synthesis of Yoga* (only the first part of the last title has since been published) appeared serially in the *Arya*. These works embodied much of the inner knowledge that had come to him in his practice of Yoga. Others were concerned with the spirit and significance of Indian civilisation and culture, the true meaning of the Vedas, the progress of human society, the nature and evolution of poetry, the possibility of the unification of the human race. At this time also he began to publish his poems, both those written in England and at Baroda and those, fewer in number, added during his period of political activity and in the first years of his residence at Pondicherry. The *Arya* ceased publication in 1921 after six years and a half of uninterrupted appearance.

Sri Aurobindo lived at first in retirement at Pondicherry with four or five companions. Afterwards more and yet more began to come to him to follow his spiritual path and the number became so large that a community of sadhaks had to be formed for the maintenance and collective guidance of those who had left everything behind for the sake of a higher life. This was the foundation of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram which has less been created than grown around him as its centre.

It may be pointed out in this connection that Sannyas was never accepted by Sri Aurobindo as part of his yoga. His Ashram at Pondicherry is a glaring contradiction to this popular idea of Sannyas connected with the name of an Ashram. Members of his Ashram are not Sannyasis, they do not wear the ochre garb or practise complete asceticism but are sadhaks of a life based on spiritual realisation, the ideal being the attainment of the life divine here on this earth and in the earthly existence.

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

LIGHTS ON LIFE-PROBLEMS

(16)

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: Though the truth of the individual soul has to be admitted in considering rebirth, is it not necessary to guard against the ancient tendency of over-emphasizing its importance?

A: The old idea of rebirth erred by an excessive individualism. Too self-concentrated, it treated one's rebirth and karma as too much one's own single affair, a sharply separate movement in the whole, leaned too much on one's own concern with one's self and, even while it admitted universal relations and a unity with the whole, yet taught the human being to see in life principally a condition and means of his own spiritual benefit and separate salvation. That came from the view of the universe as a movement which proceeds out of something beyond, something from which each being enters into life and returns out of it to its source, and the absorbing idea of that return as the one thing that at all matters. Our being in the world, so treated, came in the end to be regarded as an episode and in sum and essence an unhappy and discreditable episode in the changeless eternity of the Spirit. But this was too summary a view of the will and the ways of the Spirit in existence. Certain it is that while we are here our rebirth or karma, even while it runs on its own lines, is intimately one with the same lines in the universal existence. But my self-knowledge and self-finding too do not abolish my oneness with other life and other beings. An intimate universality is part of the glory of spiritual perfection. This idea of universality, of oneness not only with God or the eternal Self in me, but with all humanity and other beings, is growing to be the most prominent strain in our minds and it has to be taken more largely into account in any future idea or computation of the significance of rebirth and karma. It was admitted in old times; the Buddhist law of compassion was a recognition of its importance; but it has to be given a still more pervading power in the general significance.

Q. 2: It is a common belief that according to the law of karma a man's actions in one life determine the nature, circumstances and happenings of his next life. If the sum of past action was good, the life in the next birth is successful, prosperous and happy; if bad, the next life is unsuccessful, unhappy, full of suffering and misfortune. Is there any truth in this belief?

A: These are very summary popular notions and offer no foothold to the philosophic reason and no answer to a search for the true significance of life. A vast world-system which exists only as a school of sin and virtue and consists of a system of rewards and whippings, does not make any appeal to our intelligence. The soul or spirit within us, if it is divine, immortal or celestial, cannot be sent here solely to be put to school for this kind of crude and primitive moral education; if it enters into the Ignorance, it must be because there is some larger principle or possibility of its being that has to be worked out through the Ignorance. If, on the other hand, it is a being from the Infinite plunged for some cosmic purpose into the obscurity of Matter and growing to self-knowledge within it, its life here and the significance of that life must be something more than that of an infant coddled and whipped into virtuous ways; it must be a growth out of an assumed ignorance towards its own full spiritual stature with a final passage into an immortal consciousness, knowledge, strength, beauty, divine purity and power, and for such a spiritual growth this law of Karma is all too puerile. Even if the soul is something created, an infant being that has to learn from Nature and grow into immortality, it must be by a larger law of growth and not by some divine code of primitive and barbaric justice. This idea of Karma is a construction of the smaller part of the human vital mind concerned with its petty rules of life and its desires and joys and sorrows and erecting their puny standards into the law and aim of the cosmos. These notions cannot be acceptable to the thinking mind; they have too evidently the stamp of a construction fashioned by our human ignorance.

Q. 3: Is the soul then not governed by this Karmic law which is supposed to reward it for its virtues in past lives and inflict suffering

for its sins? Are not the results of a man's actions in his past lives visited on him in his present life?

A: It is not conceivable that the spirit within is an automaton in the hands of Karma, a slave in this life of its past actions; the truth must be less rigid and more plastic. If a certain amount of results of past Karma is formulated in the present life, it must be with the consent of the psychic being which presides over the new formation of its earth-experience and assents not merely to an outward compulsory process, but to a secret Will and Guidance. That secret Will is not mechanical, but spiritual; the guidance comes from an Intelligence which may use mechanical processes but is not their subject. Self-expression and experience are what the soul seeks by its birth into the body; whatever is necessary for the self-expression and experience of this life, whether it intervenes as an automatic outcome of past lives or as a free selection of results and a continuity or as a new development, whatever is a means of creation of the future, that will be formulated: for the principle is not the working out of a mechanism of Law, but the development of the nature through cosmic experience so that eventually it may grow out of the Ignorance. There must therefore be two elements, Karma as an instrument, but also the secret Consciousness and Will within working through the mind, life and body as the user. Fate, whether purely mechanical or created by ourselves, a chain of our own manufacture, is only one factor of existence; Being and its consciousness and its will are a still more important factor. In Indian astrology which considers all life circumstances to be Karma, mostly pre-determined or indicated in the graph of the stars, there is still provision made for the energy and force of the being which can change or cancel part or much of what is so written or even all but the most imperative and powerful bindings of Karma. This is a reasonable account of the balance: but there is also to be added to the computation the fact that destiny is not simple but complex; the destiny which binds our physical being, binds it so long or in so far as a greater law does not intervene. Action belongs to the physical part of us, it is the physical outcome of our being; but behind our surface is a freer life power, a freer mind power which has another energy and can create another destiny and bring it in to modify the primary plan, and when the soul and self emerges, when we become consciously spiritual beings, that change can cancel or wholly remodel the graph of our physical fate. Karma, then,—or at least any mechanical law of Karma,—cannot be accepted as the sole determinant of circumstances and the whole machinery of rebirth and of our future evolution.

Q. 4: What is the explanation of the sudden strokes of luck or fortune which are quite frequent phenomena in life? The popular belief is that they are rewards for the forgotten good actions of the past life. Similarly apparently inexplicable strokes of bad fortune are taken to be the results of sins committed in the past life. Is there some truth in this belief?

A: There is indeed in our life a very large element of what we call luck or fortune, which baulks our effort of result or gives the prize without effort; or to an inferior energy: the secret cause of these caprices of Destiny—or causes, for the roots of Fortune may be manifold,—must be no doubt partly sought for in our hidden past; but it is difficult to accept the simple solution that good luck is a return for a forgotten virtuous action in a past life, and bad luck a return for a sin or crime. If we see the righteous man suffering here, it is difficult to believe that this paragon of virtue was in the last life a scoundrel and is paying, even after his exemplary conversion by a new birth, for sins he then committed; nor if the wicked triumphs, can we easily suppose that he was in his last life a saint who has suddenly taken a wrong turn but continues to receive a cash return for his previous virtue. A total change of this kind between life and life is possible though not likely to be frequent, but to saddle the new opposite personality with the rewards or punishments of the old looks like a

Continued on page 8

LIGHTS ON LIFE-PROBLEMS —Continued from page 7

purposeless and purely mechanical procedure. This and many other difficulties arise, and the too simple logic of the correlation is not so strong as it claims to be; the idea of retribution of Karma as a compensation for the injustice of life and Nature is a feeble basis for the theory, for it puts forward a shallow and superficial human feeling and standard as the sense of the cosmic Law and is based on an unsound reasoning; there must be some other and stronger foundation for the law of Karma.

Q. 5: Is there no truth then in this theory of Karma which looks for vital-hedonistic returns for ethical actions and imposes that as the sole meaning of the universal Law of Karma?

A: A partial truth of fact, not of fundamental or general principle, may be admitted for this doctrine; for although the lines of the action of energy are distinct and independent, they can act together and upon each other, though not by any rigidly fixed law of correspondence. It is possible that in the total method of the returns of Nature there intervenes a strand of connection or rather of interaction between vital-physical good and ill and ethical good and ill, a limited correspondence and meeting-point between divergent dualities not amounting to an inseparable coherence. Our own varying energies, desires, movements are mixed together in their working and can bring about a mixed result: our vital part does demand substantial and external rewards for virtue, for knowledge, for every intellectual, aesthetic, moral or physical effort; it believes firmly in punishment for sin and even for ignorance. This may well either create or else reply to a corresponding cosmic action; for Nature takes us as we are and to some extent suits her movements to our need or our demands on her. If we accept the action of invisible Forces upon us, there may be also invisible Forces in Life-Nature that belong to the same plane of Consciousness-Force as this part of our being, Forces that move according to the same plan or the same power-motive as our lower vital nature. It can be often observed that when a self-assertive vital egoism goes on trampling on its way without restraint or scruple all that opposes its will or desire, it raises a mass of reactions against itself, reactions of hatred, antagonism, unease in men which may have their result now or hereafter, and still more formidable adverse reactions in universal Nature. It is as if the patience of Nature, her willingness to be used were exhausted; the very forces that the ego of the strong vital man seized and bent to its purpose rebel and turn against him; those he had trampled on rise up and receive power for his downfall: the insolent vital force of Man strikes against the throne of Necessity and is dashed to pieces or the lame foot of Punishment reaches at last the successful offender. This reaction to his energies may come upon him in another life and not at once, it may be a burden of consequence he takes up in his return to the field of these Forces; it may happen on a small as well as a large scale, to the small vital being and his small errors as well as in these larger instances. For the principle will be the same; the mental being in us seeking for success by a misuse of force which Nature admits but reacts in the end against it, receives the adverse return in the guise of defeat and suffering and failure. But the promotion of this minor line of causes and results to the status of an invariable absolute Law or the whole cosmic rule of action of a supreme Being is not valid; they belong to a middle region between the inmost or supreme Truth of things and the impartiality of material Nature.

Q. 6: What is then the essential meaning and purpose of the complex working of the law of Karma? What is its fundamental significance for our spiritual evolution on earth?

A: The reactions of Nature are not in essence meant as reward or punishment; that is not their fundamental value, which is rather an inherent value of natural relations and, in so far as it affects the spiritual evolution, a value of the lessons of experience in the soul's cosmic training. If we touch fire, it burns, but there is no principle of punishment in this relation of cause and effect, it is a lesson of relation and a lesson of experience; so in all Nature's dealings with us there is a relation of things and there is a corresponding lesson of experience. The action of the cosmic Energy is complex and the same Forces may act in different ways according to circumstances, to the need of the being, to the intention of the Cosmic Power in its action; our life is affected not only by its own energies but by the energies of others and by universal Forces, and all this vast interplay cannot be determined in its results solely by the one factor of an all-governing moral law and its exclusive attention to the merits and demerits, the sins and virtues of individual human beings. Nor can good fortune and evil for-

tune, pleasure and pain, happiness and misery and suffering be taken as if they existed merely as incentives and deterrents to the natural being in its choice of good and evil. It is for experience, for growth of the individual being that the soul enters into rebirth; joy and grief, pain and suffering, fortune and misfortune are parts of that experience, means of that growth: even, the soul may of itself accept or choose poverty, misfortune and suffering as helpful to its growth, stimulants of a rapid development, and reject riches and prosperity and success as dangerous and conducive to a relaxation of its spiritual effort. Happiness and success bringing happiness are, no doubt, a legitimate demand of humanity; it is an attempt of life and matter to catch a pale reflection or a gross image of felicity: but a superficial happiness and material success, however desirable to our vital nature, are not the main object of our existence; if that had been the intention, life would have been otherwise arranged in the cosmic ordinance of things. All the secret of the circumstances of rebirth centres around the one capital need of the soul, the need of growth, the need of experience; that governs the line of its evolution and all the rest is accessory. Cosmic existence is not a vast administrative system of universal justice with a cosmic Law of recompense and retribution as its machinery or a divine Legislator and Judge at its centre. It is seen by us first as a great automatic movement of energy of Nature, and in it emerges a self-developing movement of consciousness, a movement therefore of Spirit working out its own being in the motion of energy of Nature. In this motion takes place the cycle of rebirth, and in that cycle the soul, the psychic being, prepares for itself,—or the Divine Wisdom or the cosmic Consciousness-Force prepares for it and through its action,—whatever is needed for the next step in its evolution, the next formation of personality, the coming nexus of necessary experiences constantly provided and organised out of the continuous flux of past, present and future energies for each new birth, for each new step of the spirit backward or forward or else still in a circle, but always a step in the growth of the being towards its destined self-unfolding in Nature.

K. G.

Measuring the Unfound Thought

Measuring the unfound thought

I founder: there is no measure

Within these mind-scapes;

there is no leisure, no time

to stand or understand... wild shapes

intermingle, make quiet rhyme

With oddly gestures; wriggle, chuckle, through

heart-holes or arrow-shoot through will,

chill, chuck and hoot the reason-formings,

storming the well-pieced, well-collected,

respected sentiments of old;

of old—hell-priced, well-delecting

intellect in their lolled indifferences....

O crack, O smash through these perversions,

think straight, think swift;

rift of ages between will and desire

links us to unforgotten imperfections.

Spires of longing rise—oracle-landmarks,

star-pinnacles against solemn willed wronging,

columned light over desert tracks,

prophetic intuitions, cracking, cracking

the world's sand-dry assertions.

For lying curled in the body-waters,

the still lotus-spirit wills reconciliation;

ultimate unfolding of beauty,

last right of its being—

its ultimate myriad-petalled delight.

—TEHMI.

NEW TRENDS IN WESTERN THOUGHT

T. S. ELIOT ANSWERS QUESTIONS

BY RANJEE SAHANI

John O' London's Weekly

When a man becomes famous or notorious, legends gather round him. T. S. Eliot is said to be all sorts of things: a genius; a poseur; a copyist; an intellectual snob, and goodness knows what else.

Years ago, happening to attend one of the Sunday afternoon parties given by Professor Harold Laski, I heard him say to a band of student admirers: "Imagine a shabby-genteel room in Bloomsbury. At the head of the table sits the literary Mogul of these days, Eliot. At him gaze in wondering expectancy a dozen pallid young men with long hair. The Master is silent. Perhaps he is meditating on the problem that has been put to him for solution. At last he raises his head and says: "I think, gentlemen, I think I'll have another mug of beer."

The implication of this story is that Eliot's reputation is largely fictitious. He generally preserves wise silence and when he does say something he is not worth listening to.

All this seems to me the delirium of silliness. I have known Eliot for a number of years, and a more straightforward and clear-headed man it is difficult to find. He answers any questions you ask him as simply and directly as he can. And he shows no surprise when you differ from him on this or that matter. On the contrary, he is anxious to know what you think on a particular problem. This is merely another way of saying that conversation with Eliot is easy, natural, a question of give and take. He does not pretend to be an oracle. And he is not dogmatic. He advances his opinions shyly, but without any mock reserve.

Recently I asked Eliot those questions which a number of people in many parts of the world would like to ask him. He answered them freely. Indeed, I admire his patience; I worried him for more than an hour and a half. He only paused to light a cigarette or sip his tea.

Why (I began) is modern poetry obscure, and need it be so?

Eliot reflected a little and then said: "I think there are several different ways of being obscure. There is some obscurity that is a matter of pretence; the author is humbugging himself, trying to convince himself that he has something more profound to say than he has.

"Another reason for being obscure is the difficulty of expressing something genuinely felt. This applies to young writers. There is a little of this obscurity in *The Waste Land*. Things had to be said in that way or not at all. A poet becomes less obscure as he masters his craft.

"There is also the obscurity that is in the subject-matter. If the last two *Quartets* seem obscure to some, then the obscurity there is inherent in the ideas expressed.

"Then there is the obscurity of putting things in a new way. The same applies to painting. People used to seeing things expressed in one way have some trouble in seeing them differently.

"Finally, in the greatest works of art you never feel that you have reached a point where you understand everything. This applies to the Bibles of all nations. The more you meditate on the sayings of Jesus the more you find in them."

Are not the supreme virtues in poetry, first, beauty of sound, and, secondly, lucidity—that is, the swift passage of the poet's thought to the reader?

"I agree about the first part; but I think that beauty of sound cannot be isolated, and the swift passage of thought does not convey all the poet's intention; it is the swift communication of a vision or, rather, state of the soul."

Is broadcasting a good medium for poetry? and are you satisfied with the way in which your poetry and plays are "put on the air"?

"I don't think I have heard enough of other people's readings of my poetry to be able to judge their efforts; but broadcasting has proved an excellent medium for my plays; it suits my verse plays. Something is brought out that is not made manifest on the stage.

"Where the play is capable of stimulating the imagination of the reader, it can be in some respects better 'on the air'; the eye is not distracted by the scenery or the characters."

Why is it your instinct to chant verse in a monotone? In lines like "footsteps echoing in the memory, Along the passage we did not take", do you consciously introduce a discordant note in order to resolve it in the last line "into the rose-garden"?

"A great deal of the melodic arrangement is intuitive. As for chanting verse, for me the incantatory element is very important. So far as possible, the reciter should not dramatize. It is the words that matter, not the feeling about them. When I read poetry myself I put myself in a kind of trance and move in rhythm to the rhythm of the piece in question."

Why is religion inseparable from your thought?

"Why has an elephant four legs?"

Religion is the most important element in life and it is in the light of religion that one understands anything."

Will poetry ever be popular? If so, how?

"It all depends upon the audience we get—that is, the kind of society we have. I don't think it is the poet's business to worry about a select audience or a wide public. He must say what he is moved to say. That is all that should concern him."

What do you think of the idea of a National Theatre?

"I haven't devoted very much attention to it. I have no prejudices against the project; I have an open mind."

Your new play, what is it about, when is it to be produced, and are you satisfied with it?

"I am not satisfied with it because it is not yet finished. It is a verse play about modern life—similar to *The Family Reunion*, but somewhat more realistic. It has been announced for production at Edinburgh at the festival time."

You are appreciated in England, France, America and India. Is it for the same reasons?

"If poetry is good then there will be, so to speak, an element of identity in the various likings for it, but no two persons may like it for quite the same reasons. The same elements will be liked for different reasons. Similarly, different nationalities probably see different things in the same poem."

Which poets of the younger generation seem to you the most gifted or promising?

"That is the sort of question I never answer. I am a publisher and do not like making invidious distinctions. All I can say is that I think the poets brought out by my firm make as good a list as anybody's!"

Among the philosophers you put Jacques Maritain very high. Why?

Presence

1

Peace of a sudden. You are here,
Holding the horses, Charioteer.
They went three ways,
Their whipping manes in my face.
They step at your will,
And I am the car they roll
Into the Sun's light
(Purest gold, syringa-white)
Through the disc of it, and still on—
Still on,
Past the lies
To the peace
Of all seen, entered, occupied, known.

2

You having the reins, I travel through
All seen things to a that-shaped You;
All seen things—clovers, a scarlet fly—
Nodding towards me a God-shaped I.

JOYCE CHADWICK

"He has filled an important role in our generation by uniting philosophy and theology, and also by enlarging the circle of readers who regard Christian philosophy seriously."

You have said that there are no standards in criticism. Have you succeeded in establishing some to your satisfaction? If so, what are they?

"I don't know what I have said in the past on the subject. Anyway, a man's opinions change. What I seem to have accomplished in criticism is to have altered emphases and revived interest in certain writers."

I have read your last book on Tradition with immense interest and pleasure. It contains extremely valuable material, but parts of it are obscure. Why? And then, if I may venture to ask, why do you use so many clauses, sub-clauses and parentheses?

"The reason for the syntactical complications is a passion for avoiding over-simplifications and over-emphasis. As for the obscurity, it is difficult for me to say how far I have or have not mastered my own thought. That there is an extreme complexity of ideas I admit. But this I will say: the obscurity does not come from carelessness!"

Which play of yours do you consider the best, and why?

"*Murder in the Cathedral* is certainly the better of the two I have written so far; better technically; but that is due to the nature of the subject-matter. It is perfectly clear in this play where I am inventing and where I am sticking to the facts. The audience feels at ease. *Family Reunion* is not so well constructed, but it shows a development of verse-technique that has possibilities on the stage."

Do you think art is being commercialized?

"I don't understand the question. Not put in the right way. Good poetry has not been commercialized; good music has not been commercialized; and good sculpture has not been commercialized."

The influence of America on England, is it, according to you, good or bad?

"Both."

Do you know of any cultures beside the Western?

"Not very much, except that of India. Of course, any person of education knows a little about Chinese culture, which is a very great one."

What do you think of the achievements of India?

"India has already given something of the highest value to the world."

"What?"

"That without spiritual knowledge man is an incomplete being."

Which Indian books and writers have impressed you most?

"The Upanishads and the Bhagavad-Gita."

By this time Eliot had taken four cups of tea; and he did not say no when I offered him a fifth one. When he had finished it he sat smoking quietly. I watched him silently. Somehow he reminded me of the eagle I once saw at the Zoo in Bombay, its eyes fixed on the sun and its great wings beating up against a cage too small to hold them.

BOOKS in the BALANCE

ENGLAND'S FINEST NATURE-WRITER

THE JEFFERIES COMPANION, Edited by Samuel J. Looker, published by the Phoenix House, London.

Richard Jefferies lived only thirty-nine years, yet he saw more of the English countryside, its beasts and birds and skies, its men, women and children than most who have expressed themselves in writing. But he is a most unequal writer. Even in the same volume passages of the utmost beauty stand cheek by jowl with very commonplace passages. Hence the worth of Jefferies in its true quality is seen in a good selection; and such a selection is Mr. Looker's. A lifelong student of Jefferies, Mr. Looker has not confined himself to the very cream of Jefferies. He has selected passages from all the characteristic writings of his author so as to give a true idea of him; but at the same time he has taken care to see that the inclusions have all a purpose—the purpose of revealing Jefferies in his complete form.

Jefferies was born in a farm house in Wiltshire and he lived in close contact with the life of the country. It is true that he did not engage himself in farm work; but he made up for it by very close observation and lively sympathy with everything in the country. It was, however, only when he was twenty-four that his wonderful knowledge of the country was revealed, and that by a letter to the *Times* on the labourers of Wiltshire. Such first-hand information about the country as he showed attracted immediately the notice of the newspaper world and he got the opportunity for writing about his beloved fields and lands, the beasts, birds and men. For the rest of his life, though he wrote some fiction, his life-work was to describe the countryside in all its aspects.

Mr. Looker has not arranged the selections in the chronological order, presumably because he wants to give first a sufficient idea of Jefferies the man through his own memories. Hence passages from *Bovis* and *The Story of My Heart* come early in the volume. *Bovis* describes the life of his boyhood, idealized to a large extent. But in essentials it is true of Jefferies' own experiences. It is naturally objective and full of the simple charm of nature seen without artificial, even intellectual, colouring. *The Story of My Heart* is more subjective and reflects some of the simple mysticism that was to develop later. Questions of eternity and the follies of man occupy the mind of the writer. These, however, are found more fully in his *Essays and Studies* which make up the last section of the *Companion*. In between come selections from the early country books like the first notable book of his, *The Game-Keeper At Home*, and the best portions of his many works of fiction.

Characteristics As Nature-Writer

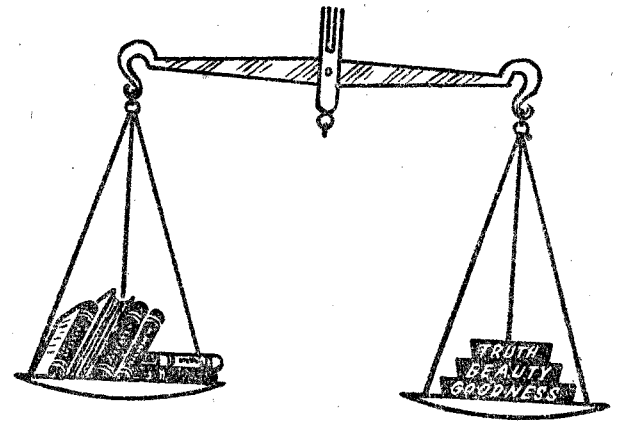
The outstanding characteristic of Jefferies as a writer is perhaps the accuracy and minuteness of his observations. His note-books have revealed how patiently and continually he was observing, noting and revising his impressions. One entry reads: "The goldfinches' wings are not golden—that is conventional, they are yellow". Innumerable notes of this kind were made by him day after day. This disposition of mind is reflected in the way in which he describes things. He goes on adding detail to detail and thus builds up his account. Here is a typical passage: "The reaper had risen early to his labour, but the birds had preceded him by hours. Before the sun was up the swallows had left their beams in the cowshed and twittered into the air. The rooks and wood pigeons and doves had gone to the corn, the blackbird to the stream, the finch to the hedgerow, the bees to the heath on the hills, the humble bees to the clover in the plain. Butterflies rose from the footpath..

Goldfinches tasting the first thistle-down rose from the corner....A hundred sparrows came rushing up into the hedge....Starlings ran before the cows....All creatures from the tiniest insect upward were in reality busy under that curtain of white-heat haze...."

But the mere knowledge or display of such details will not make a writer interesting. Jefferies wrote in detail because he loved intensely all that he saw in the country around him. That gives a feeling and a charm to all his descriptions even when most simple. A short typical passage may be quoted to illustrate this fact. He says, "A rabbit came to the mouth of his cave and sat there in wonder, gazing at them out of his full black eyes. A pair of wild doves came into the chestnut tree, and softly cooed at intervals. A great blackbird with his tawny bill splashed himself in a rill not three yards from their feet, and then sat on a bough, and plumed his feathers, and uttered his loud and defiant cry. The sky kingfisher flew over them on his way to his nest—a flying rainbow, glittering with crimson and blue—a streak of azure passing across the sight, as if he had been bathing in the sky." The art of passages like these—and they are innumerable—is delicate and remarkable. The author does not make any crude declaration of his feelings or affections, but the adjectives he uses and the very tones and suggestions show clearly that he is fondling and caressing the lovely little creatures he mentions. Our own hearts go out to them and the earth is no longer the same to us, as our awakened perceptions see beauty where formerly we had blindly, if not superciliously, passed by.

Deeper Thought and Human Sympathy

Not only that Jefferies himself was aware of stirrings of the heart besides the pleasures of the senses. He said, "Light and colour, freedom and delicious air, give exquisite pleasure to the sense; but the heart searches deeper, and draws forth food for itself....Desiring beauty so deeply, the desire in a measure satisfies itself. It is a thirst which slakes itself to grow stronger." But of this it is doubtful if Jefferies became quite clear in his mind. In fact some inconsistencies are evident in his deeper thought. At one moment he seems a pantheist. He says, "God is the bud on the tree, the flower under foot, the raindrop and the spray of the sea that flies in your face." At another time he says that he hates nature, that there is no value in nature except for man's seeing it there, and that he had wasted his life on trivialities, realizing only in the later years "the immensity of thought which lies outside the knowledge of the senses." Perhaps the following passage reveals best his real thought: "The supernatural mis-



A "MUST" FOR THE GITA-FOLLOWER

THE YOGA OF THE BHAGAVAT GITA by Sri Krishna Prem. Published in London by John M. Watkins. 12sh. 6d.

Another edition of this famous book is now made possible by paper and publishing conditions in England. Since its first appearance in 1937 there has been a steady demand for it throughout the English-speaking world, and this is not likely to diminish. As the work of one who was born an Englishman but who has found his spiritual home and enlightenment in India, it is almost unique.

In some ways it is, of course, quite unique; there has not been, from the West, a popular exposition of spiritual dynamics at the level attained by this book which has both its lucidity and authenticity. For the Englishman or woman who seeks the Light it is a jewel; it is in his own vein and atmosphere of mind, and he is being spoken to by his own blood brother. Not a brother who has acquired a foreign mind with his new surroundings—or who has deliberately put off his natural one—but one who brings the spiritual treasure of India to the English through the full understanding of both.

The book is, of course, a "must" for the English follower of the Gita; there is no substitute. "To anyone who has eyes to see, the Gita is based on direct knowledge of Reality, and of the Path that leads to that Reality..." as Sri Krishna Prem says in his Introduction. This being so, it is natural that he should make his commentary a manual for daily life, a practical, working treatise, which has nothing to do with oriental dialectics, or wrappings among the pundits.

Again, from the Introduction—"The point of view from which this book is written is that the Gita is a text-book of Yoga, a guide to the treading of the Path. By Yoga is here meant not any special system called by that name...but just the Path by which man unites his finite self with Infinite Being. It is the inner Path of which all these sepa-

called, the natural in truth, is the real. To me everything is supernatural. How strange that condition of mind which cannot accept anything but the earth, the sea, the tangible universe! Without the misnamed supernatural these to me seem incomplete, unfinished....No matter how majestic the planet rolls in space, unless a soul be there it is dead."

For all his philosophising in his later writings Jefferies is beyond his depths in them. Not that there is not a sort of intuition of the spiritual and the philosophical; but there is not much consistency or system in his deeper speculations. He is at his best in his observation and interpretation of nature from the point of view of its beauty and significance with a sufficient awareness of its suggestions of deeper feeling and thought. Everything in nature delighted and stirred him, and he could lay his hand on just what would give pleasure to the reader. There is little of selection or concentration in his art, but he had a sort of flair to evoke nature's simple charm. And this was done by very little of what is called artistry. In a beautiful essay on White of Sel-

rate yogas are so many one-sided aspects." That is what it is all about.

The sheer weight of its "commonsense" is one of the first impressions given by the book; and its sense is in the highest degree "common" because it is "universal". It is not for the ordinary reader; it is for the hard-working mystic who has at least some desperate sincerity, even if not much illumination to start with. If he will then take this book as his guide he will come by more Light than he might have thought possible.

As to how many great spiritual leaders there are in the world at this time it is idle to speculate. But when one of them writes books, this is important; if he writes in a particularly understandable way for the West, this is most important for the West.

The new edition is, apparently, little changed from the earlier one; the Light evidently shone brightly enough in 1937 to illuminate the scene as well then as now. One interesting addition is in the dedication, where Sri Krishna Prem now sets out the name of his Guru. All those who have found great help from Sri Krishna Prem's writings will join in respectful homage to his Guru to whom he dedicates his work.

The book is a typical Watkins product—beautifully bound and produced, and excellent value at 12sh. 6d.

A. L. CRAMPTON CHALK

borne he has analysed White's characteristics and most of them are his own also. "They seem so very simple, just as a boy might snatch a bloom of horse-chestnut and bring it home." This impression is due to this simple, pleasing and natural prose style in which he gives spontaneous expression to his observations and thoughts on the common and ordinary things around him. Even the men and women he has pictured are, in spite of all their attraction, such as you may meet on any common day. But Hodge and Roger, Cicely and Felice are delightful and pleasing persons. There was a great deal of humanity in the make-up of Jefferies which enabled him to get inside the skins of the farmers, labourers and reapers of the place. The vigour, the joy and pathos in the accounts of them are most remarkable. Thus it is a varied and fully representative picture of the life and beauty of the country that the works of Jefferies as a whole give. When read in proper selections the work of Jefferies will show him to be in many respects the outstanding "nature writer" of England.

P. L. STEPHEN

The Owl's Banquet

BY "MINERVA"

Our becoming independent of England should never lead to a chucking away of the English language. English is Pandit Nehru's medium of fullest and finest expression. It is the vehicle of Sri Aurobindo's greatest inspiration. And to many of us it is a sort of second mother-tongue. But let us accept the English language in a living way, take cognizance indeed of its true spirit but not be slaves to pedantic "Don'ts." Pedants and pedagogues themselves, if they happen to be in tune with that true spirit, are sometimes refuted out of their own mouths, as in that laying down of the law by one grammarian: "Prepositions should never be used to end sentences with."

A recent editorial in the *Times of India* carried the sentence: "On second thoughts Government have amended the order, and, according to the familiar official formula—too often an alibi for doing nothing—the matter is being examined in all its aspects."

It is surprising that none of our popular pundits have fallen foul of that word "alibi." It is here used instead of "excuse." If any purist's eye sees it, there will be quite a fuss. We shall be told that to mean "excuse" and say "alibi" is inexcusable and that this practice is an Americanism from which English should be kept free. But the *Times of India* can claim as its defending counsel no less a writer than J. B. Priestley. Here is what he wrote in *The New Statesman and Nation* of June 18:

"I am rather tired of being told that 'alibi' does not mean 'excuse'. In this use of words, I belong to Humpty-Dumpty's party. We can make words mean whatever we decide they shall mean. If a lot of us decide that a certain kind of excuse shall be called an 'alibi', then there is no point in any purist thumping his dictionary, if only because the next edition of that dictionary, if it is a good one, will have to admit that 'alibi' is not only a legal term but also defines a certain type of excuse, a rather pedantic, anxious but slightly shady kind of excuse. I imagine that 'alibi' was first used in this sense not by an ignoramus but by a wit, and that it is almost common usage now because people found they needed the term."

Priestley goes on to say: "Face up to' is messy, and no favourite of

mine, but it is absurd to declare, as the purists do, that it is merely a sloppy way of saying 'face'. To 'face up to' opposition is not merely to face it but to face it in a special kind of way. Any one of us might have to face a tiger, but few of us could successfully face up to a tiger. But this does not mean that unnecessary prepositions are not finding their way into our common usage. They are, in fact, our greatest import from America, together with a peculiarly nauseating type of popular song that I hate to hear our youngsters singing."

One wonders whether Priestley would belong to Humpty-dumpty's party with regard to a couple of usages that roused the ire of "JACKDAW" in *John O' London's Weekly* some time ago. "I want to protest," cried "JACKDAW", "against two apparently small matters which have a large implication—the gradual loss of accepted standards of culture in the true, not the pseudo-highbrow, sense. The first is the employment of the word Olympiad, and even its engraving on medals, to describe the Olympic Games. The word Olympiad has a long and honourable history. To quote from the first page of Sir Harris Nicholas's *Chronology of History*: 'The era of the Olympiads, so called from its having originated from the Olympic Games which occurred every fifth year at Olympus, a city in Elis, is the most ancient and celebrated method of computing time. It was first instituted in the 776th year before the birth of Our Saviour; and consisted of a revolution of four years. The first year of Jesus Christ is usually considered to correspond with the first year of the 195th Olympiad.' What has been for over 2,700 years the name of a measure of time has now been appropriated and quite wrongly applied to modern international Games, so that the eighth in this series witnessed in the summer of 1948 is referred to as the Eighth Olympiad. Is there any possible justification for this except mere illiteracy?"

"The second point is the pronunciation of the word 'economic'. By people of little Latin, less Greek and no English, this is persistently called ekkonomic instead of eekonomic. For years I have suffered this in silence, but last week I was informed by a tutor at the London School of Economics that he held that post—in terms of that mispronunciation—and it seemed to me that the time had come to voice a protest before the young are irremediably corrupted. The short 'e' is not even an alternative pronunciation—nor could it be from its derivation from the Greek *oi* and the Latin *oe*. I suppose Oedipus will soon be known as Eddy Pus."

Usages are ticklish matters and, except in rare instances, it is dangerous to dogmatise. Pronunciations change with time and also vary with places. Once it was the custom to pour ridicule on Elizabeth Barrett Browning's ear for rhyming "dawn" with "morn". Professor Saintsbury shook his head despairingly over this rhyme. But it is curious that Saintsbury should have missed those lines of William Morris who surely could not be accused of cockney ignorance:

Through the long twilight they pray for the dawn

Round the lone house in the midst of the corn.

And long before Morris there was the example of William Blake:

And the rustling birds of dawn
The earth do scorn.

The real fact seems to be that there is a difference between north English and south English. In North England the "r" in words like "morn" is pronounced more or less audibly, while in southern speech the "r" is silent. This can be noticed in many words. "Michael Field" writes:

Hark! Our ears have caught
Sound of breath and snort.

Kipling has:

And the ships shall go abroad
To the glory of the Lord.

Even words like "bore" has for the southern ear hardly a trace of the "r" except when the next word begins with a vowel. John Chadwick, known to his fellow disciples in Sri Aurobindo's Ashram as "Arjava", one of the most sensitive-eared of modern poets, rhymes "bore" with "law" in the stanza to *Maheshwari*:

Nor mote nor world may swerve
beyond Thy law,
O Veiled One: but starry incense
bore

Rumour of Thee from midnight's
ancient hill—

"Tranquil insistence with
compassionate will."

Many of our Indian dons outdo even English pedagogues in their anathemas on certain usages. If an Indian wrote: "Romeo and Juliet loved one another desperately," he would be at once told off by grammarian gurus that when two people are concerned the right phrase is "each other." And yet there is

hardly an occasion on which Somerset Maugham does not violate grammar on this point. Bernard Shaw too cares little for this rule. The English language is a flexible one and in certain matters the grammatically correct usage would be bad style. Take the words "every" and "each". Grammatically they are singular. But listen to Newman: "His great concern being to make every one at their ease." George Moore writes: "Every one of those belong to the Middle Ages." Jane Austen says: "Each had their favourite." How awkward it would be to aim at strict grammar and substitute "his or her" in the sentences of Newman and Jane Austen!

Consider also the ungrammatical appropriateness in Hazlitt's phrase: "Those sort of critical verdicts." English "as she is spoke" is no stickler after rigid laws. No Englishman in conversation ever says "Whom", even if grammatically wanted, when beginning a question. Yeats, in *Baile's Strand* writes: "Who is he coming to kill?" Meredith, in *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel*, has: "Who is he coming for?"

What about the question of "me" and "him" and "her" after the verb "to be"? Much depends on the occasion and the association. "That's not my body—it's me," writes St. John Ervine on page 507 of *Changing Winds*. On page 259 of *The Things We Are*, J. Middleton Murry says: "If I were her." But, as Robert Lynd somewhere remarks, how odd it would be to hear Hamlet say in any scene with the Ghost, "It's me, Hamlet."

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LEADERSHIP

By **NORMAN C. DOWSETT**

"He is a born leader," we often hear people say. But are leaders born? If we look at the attributes which are the outstanding characteristics of a leader, it will be seen that whatever the personality may be, these attributes are acquired; which tends rather to the fact that leaders are made, not born.

The basic principle of leadership is respect, as it is also the crown of leadership. This, one might say, is a paradox. Yet it is not so difficult to understand when we see from where the respect comes. In the first place the leader-to-be strives to be a good follower; he takes his work or play seriously and obeys orders conscientiously. He becomes therefore proficient in skill, acquires the right habit of concentrated attention and applies this to the action. Proficiency in itself demands respect, but when exercised in group activity it also creates a sense of co-operation which is the essence of good team-work.

A leader spends most of his time, not so much in leading but in being a good team-mate and is usually elected to leadership by demonstrating his superiority as a team-mate. Those who will never be good leaders, are so, because they are never really good followers, and are therefore not outstanding in their group or team.

Christ said: "Whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant" and demonstrated these words by washing the feet of his disciples.

A leader must always have the sense of service in mind. The ego in man wants to be served, not to serve, that is why one feels instinctive and immediate respect for one who is ready to serve without thought of reward; and this feeling of respect does more to promote co-operation than any order could do. It is the very heart and core of good leadership, and once established it endures the vicissitudes of change in action and time.

Then one hears, "yes, but most leaders have a personality." Let us analyse this word personality, what is it really?—A rather timid boy at school, who was not good at anything very much, except that he could bowl a very tricky 'leg break' at cricket, once bowled with such success that he became captain of the team. On the cricket field that boy had personality, fully confident

in his own ability; talk to him about cricket and he was an animated enthusiast. Then personality—shall we say?—is mostly confidence plus enthusiasm which expresses itself in action.

Enthusiasm and love for the work or play in hand is certainly infectious, it spreads to those around and makes itself felt in an urge to do likewise, and adds a fillip to the structure of co-operation.

We cannot all be good at everything but we could all be good at co-operating, and co-operation in any one direction can bring about the confidence needed to gain a proficiency which will play an important part in the co-ordination or team-work of the group. The will to always do something more than what is demanded of one is the true attitude of co-operation.

A good leader being first efficient himself will recognise the efficiency in another; he will therefore usually choose his officers well. He is, in his way, a master of experience, and will therefore be sympathetic towards those with less experience than himself. He will know when to listen with patience, when to move others to action, when to be firm and when to be lenient, and he will know the art of encouragement. Finally he will know how to lead by example. All animals are copyists, and the average man is no exception to the rule, he will learn far quicker and better by copying than by verbal instruction.

Again, a good leader would never ask his followers to do anything he could not do himself. The greatest leaders in history have all led by example rather than by instruction. If one would lead others in any walk of life to a higher state, then one must perfect oneself. The world will be quick to judge a man's words by the life he lives.

Most educational systems today insist on certain academical subjects being learned, whether the student wants them or not. Why then should

they not place as much importance on teaching the students, through group activities, the habits and principles of leadership, viz: team-work — co-operation — control and discipline, rather than leave these to the student's own choice?

There seems to be a dearth of leaders in all countries today, except perhaps in Soviet Russia, where group activities are organised on a vast scale. One might almost say that the whole structure of life in the U.S.S.R., both social and economic, is organised on strict "group activity" lines. God forbid that we should be governed by Marxist materialism and that our lives should be so regimented! But we can easily see that the system of "group activity" has its points in creating leaders.

If the Russian youth does not learn leadership at school he will soon learn something of it in his social or economic life.

The democratic governments would do well to consider this question more seriously with regard to training future leaders. It should be a question for serious discussion between governments and educational ruling bodies. It is in our schools and universities that the seeds of leadership must be sown. On our present leaders of government and education lies the responsibility for the future.

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