

# MOTHER INDIA

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"GREAT IS TRUTH AND IT SHALL PREVAIL"

ALTERNATE SATURDAYS

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## ATOM BOMB, WORLD PEACE AND INDIA

1952 was the dreadful year predicted by the United States experts as the one in which Soviet Russia would have the atom bomb. 1949 has proved them wrong by full three years. This is not surprising: what is surprising is the optimism with which those experts put off into the future the evil day. They might have learnt, from the swiftness with which America herself discovered the secret, that in such life-and-death matters the tempo of progress can be terrific. Within less than a decade of Einstein's declaring the manufacture of the atom bomb to be as good as impossible there were Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Now Stalin stands armed with the power that may make a Hiroshima of London and a Nagasaki of New York. The eastern bloc and the western—sworn enemies of each other—have either of them the means of precipitating a world-war which would write in letters of primal fire a *Finis* to civilisation.

### Atomic Warfare and Russia's Intentions

In view of this destructive equality what are the prospects of world-peace? Dr. Otto Hahn, one of the chief brains in the atom bomb research, exclaimed: "Thank God Russia has found the secret! Now there will be all the more reason to outlaw atomic warfare and preserve peace." It seems to us that, while efforts will be made to outlaw atomic warfare, agreement on the *modus operandi* is most unlikely and, even were it reached, it would not mean the establishment of peace on earth any more than the agreement to avoid the use of poison gas implied it. Really to outlaw atomic warfare there must be a body of international observers with access to all atomic plants in the world. Such access would involve the abolition of the Iron Curtain in industrial-cum-military matters. Will Russia allow it? The Iron Curtain in industrial-cum-military matters is part of a general black-out by which Stalin seeks to sever Russia from the democratic West. There are two motives behind the black-out. One was well expressed by Churchill when he said: "Russia fears the friendship of the West more than its hostility." For, friendly intercourse will completely topple over the structure of despotic doctrine and partisan propaganda by which the mind of the Russian masses is kept untouched by the facts of democratic life in England, France and America. The other motive is rapid armament-production of various kinds with the utmost secrecy in order to prepare for aggression at the opportune time. A body of international observers would baulk this motive. The chances, therefore, of atomic warfare being outlawed to the satisfaction of the western powers are indeed very remote.

Will there be, then, a blow-up in which nuclear fission will shatter our civilisation to smithereens? Most probably not. Russia even is not so mad as to take the risk of a world-destruction in which Stalinism will be as much a casualty as any other "ism". But there is no doubt that if she somehow gets ahead of the U.S.A. in atomic weapons and if the odds are against her suffering equal destruction with her enemies she will not scruple to employ them. During the last war Hitler did not resort to poison gas because he knew how ready the Allies were to retaliate with equal if not greater deadliness. Besides, Hitler was a bit of a hysteric and his own experience of being gassed in the first World War gave an extra edge to his fear of retaliation on even a lesser scale. Stalin is too cold-blooded to be "nervy" on any account, and definite atomic superiority will send him nuclear-fissioning all over the world without a qualm if he felt that ordinary means of devastation would not win him a swift victory. When we make this statement we are not letting any impulsive phobia run away with our reason. We make it after careful consideration of all that can be urged to the contrary: we are perfectly aware that a keen mind like Sir Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan has used eulogistic language about Russia's ideals and intentions and very recently suggested a meeting of Six Powers to work out the desire for

peace which he believes to be in the heart of each one of them. We have been told that Russia's ultimate aim is identical with India's own, that she suppressed religion because the kind of religion she suppressed was an instrument of the capitalists or the feudalists, and that everywhere in Russia there is a horror of war and a love of peace which only suspicion of the motives of the western nations prevents from finding practical expression. It is our conviction that here are three fallacies that must be dispelled.

### The Mind of Stalinism and Peace-Prospects

Russia proposes to alleviate the economic lot of her masses. India too sets up the objective of economic welfare of the kisans and the majdoors. But the conclusion that therefore India and Russia are quite alike in their aims is a gigantic *non-sequitur*. First of all, Russian economics is Communist. It is impossible to read Communism into Indian economics. The most we can say is that the economic policy of our Government has marked leanings towards Socialism. Between the Socialist and the Communist economic doctrines lies a considerable gap of difference, as often stressed by the British Premier Attlee and his colleagues. The gap does not save the Socialists in India from playing unconsciously into the hands of Communist forces, but the fact remains that, even in matters economic, India at her most Socialist cannot move arm-in-arm with the Russia of Stalin. And Russia knows this very well and loses no opportunity of misrepresenting India as a stooge of reactionary Imperialism and Capitalism. The Moscow-controlled World Federation of Trade Unions keeps on shouting that there is no civil liberty in India and that the Government has suppressed even legitimate trade union activity. Secondly, no economic ideal can be the mainspring of Indian civilisation. India's world-view is spiritual—in the sense not only of belief in an absolute moral guidance that has to be found within but also of aspiration to unite with a divine consciousness through mystical practice. Russia's world-view is fundamentally economic—and it is so because it is based on a materialist philosophy and is totally anti-mystical. To say that the Communists kicked out religion on the score only of the Russian Church's support to Czarist autocracy and to the vested interests of the rich few is to forget that the philosophy of the Communists is Dialectical Materialism and has not the slightest room for any of the things that mean so much to the Indian consciousness—soul, freewill, immortality, God, Yoga. Indian philosophy may be a subject of study in Russia's academic circles, but the significance given to it is merely historical and it is never allowed to influence the mind of Russian youth. If religion in any form is tolerated among the people, it is on grounds of expediency and after completely neutralising its influence on actual life: it is permitted only as a private mental and emotional habit expressing itself in certain ceremonial gestures and never as a force in art or philosophy, civics or statecraft. If any two countries stand poles apart in mind, it is Russia in which Stalin is the dictator and India in which Sri Aurobindo promises to be the shaping power.

As for Russia's desire for peace, we may grant that the common man in that country is scarcely in favour of a phenomenon which in modern times brings miseries to the victor no less than the vanquished. We may also grant that the last war has left Russia so devastated that her Government is in no hurry to run fresh risks at the moment: peace is a paying proposition just now. We may further grant that in spite of having a splendid land army and even the secret of atomic energy she is none too anxious to rush into battle since she is unsure of coming out on top: it is diplomatic to promote peace. But we must understand that ultimately the common man has no voice in determining his country's foreign policy and

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# ATOM BOMB, WORLD PEACE AND INDIA

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he will march in line with Stalin's wishes. We must understand too that, to discover whether Russia wants peace or no, we must get behind opportunist pacifism to the core of the Communist theory. We must distinguish this core from the tactics and the strategy of Communism. The tactics change all the time, they follow the movement of world-events; the strategy alters pretty often, it also adjusts itself to the need of the moment though with a certain prevailing trend. It is Stalin the strategist and much more Stalin the tactician who talks of peace and, in proof of his good intentions, flaunts before the world through his deputies the various interviews given to western newspapermen and authors—Roy Howard, Elliott Roosevelt, Harold Stassen, Walter Duranty, King and others. But it has been pointed out by shrewd students of the Soviet dictatorship that if Stalin really held the views aired by him in these meetings they would be incorporated in the official publications of his writings which are used to indoctrinate the Russian people. These writings are collected under two titles, *Problems of Leninism* and *The History of the All-Union Communist Party*. Eleven editions of the former have appeared, the latest a printing of 4,000,000 copies in 1947. Between 1938 and 1946, 31,000,000 copies of the other work are said by *Pravda* to have been printed. Not a single idea favouring peaceful relations peeps out of the pages of these books. Not even the interview with Mr. King of Reuters as late as 1943 has made Stalin modify by one jot the war-mentality shown in these compendiums of basic doctrine which are compulsory courses in every Soviet school. The gist of this doctrine so far as foreign policy is concerned is: "After consolidating Marxism in Russia, inspire revolutionary movements in other countries, help them to overthrow by violence the existing governments, and in the event of necessity come out even with armed force against these governments until Marxism is established everywhere." Internal war in all non-Marxist countries and, if this is insufficient, direct hostilities with them: such is the core of Stalin's foreign policy. The passage from Lenin which he has underlined again and again is: "We live not only in a state but in a system of states, and the existence of the Soviet Republic side by side with the imperialist states for a long time is unthinkable. In the end either one or the other will conquer. And, until that end comes, a series of the most terrible collisions between the Soviet Republic and the bourgeois states is inevitable."

In the light of Stalin's central theory which stays unmodified by his tactics and strategy it is absurd to take his talks of peace seriously. The western democracies may parley with him if that can be of any profit to them, but they must never go to sleep over essential Stalinism which would be robbed of all *raison d'être* without ceaseless effort on its part for a violent world-revolution. If this revolution fails to come off, and ultimately Stalinism stands frustrated, the sole reason will be, on the surface, the armed readiness of the democracies to crush the Marxist challenge and, below the surface, the operation of subtle spiritual forces undreamed of by Marx.

## The Two Blocs and India's Role

The democracies of the West are not only ahead in the atomic arms race and in general air power but also in a fairly strong position in several other respects. The dozen nations grouped by the Atlantic Pact possess jointly, as against the Soviet Union and its European satellites:

- (1) Nearly fifteen per cent more man-power;
- (2) More than three times as much capacity for producing steel;
- (3) Over twice as much production of coal;
- (4) Eight times as much oil;
- (5) Almost thirty-four times as much ocean-going merchant tonnage;
- (6) Nearly thirty times as much wheeled transport;
- (7) Enormous preponderance of naval force—731 active ships of the U. S. A. concentrated in the Atlantic.

The only disadvantage is in respect of armed forces: the Russian bloc has roughly twenty-five per cent more men under arms. And this advantage must now be considered enhanced by the openly announced "gang-up" of Mao Tse-tung's Red China with the Soviet Union. The balance, too, of man-power and raw material is disturbed thereby and can be redressed only if the western democracies can count on the multitudes and resources of India and a South-East Asian bloc is formed, internally independent of the western powers but ideologically linked to them and prepared to add its war-potential to theirs. India especially is of crucial importance, now that Pakistan is beginning to look upon the Crescent as merely the Russian Sickle without its handle and Russia is looming over the heights of North Kashmir which Pakistan is holding with her "Azad" Kashmir henchmen and refusing to submit to any plebiscite. India must leave no doubt in the mind of the United States and the other Atlantic nations that she is one with them in their resolve to stem Stalinism, and she must convince President Truman that the policy of appeasing Pakistan will not help him to keep Russian influence from pervading the Muslim dominion in the near future. In our last issue we urged on Pandit Nehru this double mission during his visit to the United States. His clear and uncompromising vision of the Kashmir situation is of enormous help at the present juncture of world-politics. He must put it to the fullest constructive use in the councils of the nations. But to carry to the West the whole spirit of essential India and make his vision a light to the world he must get rid of two obstacles of his own—the lingering illusion he harbours about the

real nature of Communism and the inadequate notion he entertains of what spiritual forces are.

The lingering illusion which cut apart Stalin from the machinations of the Communist Party in India and thought them to be not true but perverted Stalinism is almost on the way out: only an old association, in his mind, of the western European powers with shameless imperialism and unbridled capitalism gives it still a ghostly sustenance and creates a hoping against hope that Russia is not so anti-civilisation as signs everywhere go to prove and that a highly cultivated intellect like Sir Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan will bring back news of some saving grace. Increasingly Pandit Nehru must be seeing that the Communist Party in India carries out the secret mandates of Kremlin and is bent on violently overthrowing, besides the present Government, the principles of many-sided freedom and the ideals of inner perfection that are the glory of India. Its extra-territorial inspiration and allegiance are pretty patent, and the scathing charge-sheet lately published by the Home Ministry may be taken as at last a recognition of its true colours, a recognition which will be Nehru's own in full if, as expected, the charge-sheet is a prelude to an all-India ban on the Party. The other obstacle is somewhat harder to remove, being of finer stuff. It can be observed in yet a strong form in one of the most recent statements made by him. "The option before the world today," said he on October 2 in Old Delhi, "is between the atom bomb and the Gandhian path of unity, love and co-operation." What he calls the Gandhian path is deemed by Nehru to sum up the spiritual forces that are India's. But surely there is a serious misconception in equating the Rig Veda, the Upanishads, the Gita and the whole thought and aspiration of Vaishnavism and Tantricism with the commandment of co-operation, love and unity among human beings. Rather, the essential message of India is that these things are not in themselves the *summum bonum* and that they are not possible, either, unless we work them on a basis of the true *summum bonum*—mystical experience in which the one perfect Godhead, at once transcendent and universal and individual, is concretely realised in His aspects of both calm and activity.

Gandhiji himself, although no mystic in the fundamental sense, recognised at least that faith in the Divine and constant prayer to Him are absolutely necessary if unity, love and co-operation are to be attempted. Nehru, though greatly moved by Gandhiji's personality as a man of faith and prayer, tries curiously enough to separate the human virtues he enjoins from the foundation Gandhiji perceived of them in a Power more than human. Perhaps this is due to the very fact that Gandhiji was not a mystic proper but only a religious man and set too much store by self-control with the help of the merely mental will and the moral conscience, without the wide ecstatic afflatus of the Saint's and the Seer's God-union. Whatever be the cause, the error is there and proceeds on the assumption that mankind, by taking thought, can practise unity, love and co-operation. One Gandhiji in the midst of millions may have a will strong enough and a conscience sufficiently compulsive to make him a friend to all; but even such general friendliness cannot escape the danger of moving according to certain all-too-human *idées fixes* and thereby producing what may very well be wrong results. If authentic unity, love and co-operation are to come, mankind must strive to put itself in rapport with a divine consciousness and draw its guidance from those who have inwardly united with the Eternal and the Infinite. No doubt, the world in its present state must find it exceedingly hard to achieve that rapport, but incessantly the truth must be preached and an endeavour made to encourage man to persist after it until it grows his very flesh and blood. That is the only way to lead the world to its genuine goal, spread far and wide the essential message of India and create a vast field for the subtle working of really spiritual forces in the tension between democracy and totalitarianism in this age of the atom bomb when peace is so vital to civilisation.

## A COMMENT—Continued from page 3.

attained only through altruism and the sharing of all worldly possessions." We are afraid this is too humanist to be Aurobindonian or even traditionally mystical. Altruism is certainly part of spiritual practice and the welfare of humanity is certainly a result of true Yoga and we may say that unless mankind and the world are taken into account no Yoga can solve the crisis with which we are faced today. Sri Aurobindo's Yoga is eminently qualified to solve this crisis. But it is not fundamentally humanism: the central aim is to direct the consciousness to the Divine and go beyond even the altruistic motive and discover for altruism a more-than-human foundation. True spirituality is attained through much more than moral practice, and therefore the phrase (at the end of the article), "Purity and Love", does not by itself adequately convey either the mighty means of Yoga or the superb state of the Aurobindonian realisation. We are sure Professor Foucher is aware of this, as other portions of his article indicate. But his closing plea tends somewhat to blur the issue.

We hope he will forgive us for these remarks. He must not take them to be undervaluing the fineness of thought and feeling present in his appreciation of Sri Aurobindo.

The Editor.

# A CALL TO SUPERMANHOOD

## AN INTERPRETATION OF SRI AUROBINDO

By PROFESSOR A. FOUCHER

Membre De L'Institut

We have pleasure in being the first to publish in India this article received through courtesy of UNESCO. Professor A. Foucher has a distinguished name as an Indologist and scholar. What he has written will be of wide interest and is a most welcome sign that Europe is beginning seriously to appreciate in several respects the general trend, if not yet the precise details, of Sri Aurobindo's Yogic experience and philosophy. Professor Foucher's article takes as its starting-point the recent publication: SRI AUROBINDO, INDIAN POET, PHILOSOPHER AND MYSTIC by G. H. Langley (David Marlowe Ltd., London, for the Royal India and Pakistan Society).

India has given to humanity a succession of great thinkers whose works rank amongst the important philosophical writings of the world. The clear and interesting study which Professor G. H. Langley has devoted to Sri Aurobindo, shows that this Indian writer, who possesses a strong originality, is a worthy heir to the great thinkers of his country. A Bengali by birth, Sri Aurobindo was educated in England and none is more suited than he to attempt the synthesis of Indian wisdom and European Culture. He began his career as a man of action, and it was in prison, whilst meditating the Bhagavad-Gita, that he was first drawn to the life of contemplation which he has led for more than forty years in his retreat at Pondichery.

Sri Aurobindo is an existentialist in the sense that he accepts as an indisputable fact the existence of a world whose origins are beyond the reach of our comprehension but to which we belong whether we like it or not. He is moreover an evolutionist; in this universe which can be conceived as a system of contradictory forces, he discerns what physicists would term a "resultant". Fundamentally, he is an optimist, for he considers this dominant force to be progressive. Besides, this generally accepted theory is the basis of the traditional hierarchy of inanimate matter, vegetative life, animal instinct and, crowning all, human thought. Yet for this Indian philosopher, this conclusion is but a new point of departure. He recognizes no interruption in this progress towards an ever more perfect form of life. He is convinced that the supra-normal of today is but the normality of tomorrow, and he therefore calls for the coming of the superman.

### Superman Through "Knowledge by Identity"

How does he conceive this new being? In the simplest manner possible, the spontaneous development of our already realised possibilities into those which are most immediately realisable. For Sri Aurobindo, the future emerges from the past only because it is already present in a more or less latent form. Even the greatest scientists admit that our intelligence can only grasp the abstract and superficial aspects of things, never their es-

sence; we are familiar with the mathematical formula of cosmic energy but we have not solved the mystery which surrounds this energy. Yet, we feel within ourselves deeper sources of revelation, methods of acquiring knowledge whereby the subject is no longer opposed to the object but is intimately identified with it. We know that at certain times our intuitions have gone beyond the limits of our rational intellect. How else could one explain that sort of ecstasy, that state of complete absorption of our being, into which the contemplation of the work of a great artist or the music of a great composer plunges us, or that fusion of personalities which is the supreme achievement of love? Many unexploited possibilities inhabit our subconscious mind; their fulfilment would endow us with a supra-consciousness, a "knowledge by identity" which would enable us to enlarge our view and our mastery of the universe and to reconcile the differences which separate different factions of humanity. In short, our immediate aim must be to become one of those superior beings of which all faiths have had a vague fore-knowledge whether they termed them jinns, guardian spirits, angels, or Bodhisattvas. That is, according to Sri Aurobindo, what the Spirit of the Universe commands us. *Sursum Corda!*

### Rapid All-integrating Fulfilment

How could one not be tempted to pursue such an attractive ideal? No naturalist could find fault with his

doctrine, but if we were to ask him the length of time necessary for attaining such perfection he would no doubt reply: myriads of centuries. Such, however, is not Sri Aurobindo's opinion. As a poet, he immediately visualizes the objective; as a philosopher, his penetrating analysis has enabled him to unravel the means whereby it may be attained; as a mystic he claims that this state can be attained during one life's span by a process of sudden conversion. Furthermore, he claims to have already attained this state and to have acquired intimate knowledge. Unfortunately, such experience cannot be passed on directly but those whose eyes have been opened can help others to see more clearly. This is where ancient Indian wisdom comes in. Sri Aurobindo, however, has adapted it to the needs of our modern world. He is opposed to the Buddhist's escapism from an unacceptable world and refuses to accept Sankara's concept of human conscience immersed in the universe. According to him, progress must necessarily take into account former stages of evolution. He believes that the spirit cannot deny the Cosmic Universe, that the Soul cannot forego the Body, that intelligence cannot repudiate instinct any more than the supermind can deny reason. The man of the future, as he sees him, will always be a man, just as the man of today is still, to a certain extent, an animal. Sri Aurobindo does not contemplate the failure of human knowledge, for science itself urges us to go beyond its present limitations. Having made this concession to European ideas, Sri Aurobindo ascribes the progressive evolution which will one day raise the common level of humanity to a state which as yet is hardly conceivable, to yoga (ascetism), to bhakti (heightened condition of devotion in which man entirely abandons himself to the Supreme Being), to Indian discipline and mysticism. Let us accept his thesis and hope that this rising

tide of progress will not recede.

### The Problem of Human Unity

This all too brief summary does not do justice to the wealth of observation and ideas contained in Sri Aurobindo's description of the "Divine Life" of the future, in which he pours out the aspirations of his heart and the inspirations of his soul. We trust, however, that it will enable readers to grasp the general tendencies of this essay and to retain thoughts which will be of lasting benefit to them. For this is no speculation, no mere whimsey. On this planet of ours where distances have been so considerably cut down, nations are more interdependent than ever before.

The problem is now the same for all: will humanity allow itself to sink into a state of barbarity precariously based on a combination of interests and of greed, or will mankind, faithful to its vocation, listen to the teachings of its wise men and make the necessary effort to reach unity through a higher level of civilization? For humanity can no longer be blind to the fact (repeatedly underlined by prophets of all faiths), that this moral awakening, this state of complete harmony is impeded only by the selfishness of individuals or of groups of individuals. Salvation can be attained only through altruism and the sharing of all worldly possessions. It is striking to note that Sri Aurobindo's doctrine, which is entirely based on the individual and the improvement of his lot, leads to the condemnation of ego-centrism and the glorification of charity and of good will. It is therefore not surprising that Sri Aurobindo's disciples should consider this modern prophet as almost divine. The human caravan has its armies of stragglers, it has also its prophets and it is not by sheer chance that, through the ages, they have followed the same path, a path which, through Purity and Love, leads on to Joy.

## A COMMENT ON PROFESSOR A. FOUCHER'S ARTICLE

Professor Foucher's exegesis is both sensitive and eloquent. If there were more men like him the world would make sooner an approach to the light that is Sri Aurobindo. He has caught very well the balanced and unifying movement of the Master's system. But we feel the need to comment briefly on a couple of points in order to clarify the Aurobindonian position.

Professor Foucher writes: "Our immediate aim must be to become one of those superior beings of which all faiths have had a vague fore-knowledge whether they termed them jinns, guardian spirits, angels or Bodhisattvas." This appears to us a rather negative statement: it gives little indication of the Gnostic being, that is Sri Aurobindo's superman and that is not only a consciousness superior to the human, a consciousness of the Divine Spirit and not the mere mind, but also something which transcends all the conceptions so far formed of the Spiritual Man and which, by this transcendence, shows the possibility of the total transformation of earthly life—a transformation beyond the powers hitherto brought down by the

mystics into the human mould. It seems to us that Dr. Langley himself has nowhere explained with complete exactness the unique significance of what Sri Aurobindo calls Supermind or Gnosis.

The Supermind is the dynamic divinity that does much more than purify, elevate and finally lead to the unitive life, the life of essential oneness with the Eternal Spirit. It possesses the Truth of things not just in the sense of the Real as opposed to the False, or the Perfect that is never found in the world's formations, but in the sense of the Real and the Perfect of which all the formations of the world are evolving terms and which works ever to make these formations change into the stuff of their supreme counterparts or archetypes held in that Reality and Perfection. There can be a divinised mind, a divinised vitality, a divinised body, manifesting and figuring forth in full the light, power, bliss and immortality of the creative Godhead, the Gnosis from which all things have come.

The second point is Professor Foucher's statement: "Salvation can be

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# SRI AUROBINDO, THE LEADER OF THE EVOLUTION

PART II OF "THE WORLD CRISIS AND INDIA" BY "Synergist"

## SECTION II: THE SPIRITUAL VIEW OF EXISTENCE

### (a) SRI AUROBINDO'S IDEAL

In the preceding essays we examined briefly the salient ideas of Sri Aurobindo's spiritual metaphysic and the nature of his yogic work in the world. We saw that this work, which is a spiritual action carried on behind the veil of life's surface activities, is intimately connected with the evolution of the human race, because it is through his own spiritual development that he makes the emergence of the next evolutionary principle, the Supermind, possible. His spiritual work makes it imperative for him to become a bridge that spans the heights and depths of Being. The inconscient depths—because there lie the roots of all human limitations and difficulties, because it is these dark, obscure and intractable nether regions of human consciousness which keep man securely tied to his lower nature and prevent him from transcending his humanity and growing into a divine perfection, that have to be opened to the Light and Power of the Divine; the Supramental heights—because only the sovereign power of the highest spiritual dynamis can remove the impediments that stand in the way of the complete manifestation of the Divine in the human frame by conquering the resistance of the recalcitrant Inconscient and illumining it.

Now we shall examine in detail the world-view of Sri Aurobindo and the spiritual metaphysic upon which it takes its stand; but before we do so we shall see what he has to say about his ideal, and the respective parts the East and the West have to play in the future if the world is to attain a lasting unity—a unity not created through fear of self-destruction, on the political level, but a harmoniously integrated unity created through the realisation that all beings are emanations of the One Divine Being and are here on earth to work out His Will and co-operate with the purpose of existence.

In the following essay Sri Aurobindo briefly explains the nature of the psychological tendencies of the East and the West, and advocates a syncretisation of their respective ideals. He states that the West has enthroned Matter as the fundamental Reality whereas the East has laid the highest emphasis on the Spirit, but that the new world-view will recognise these two not as incompatibles but as truths, the divergence between which should be healed. He concludes his recent Message to America by saying; "The ascent of the human soul to the supreme Spirit is that soul's highest aim and necessity, for that is the supreme reality; but there can be too the descent of the Spirit and its powers into the world and that would justify the existence of the material world also, giving a meaning, a divine purpose to the creation and solve its riddle. East and West could be reconciled in the pursuit of the highest and largest ideal, Spirit embrace Matter and Matter find its own true reality and the hidden Reality in all things in the Spirit."

But it must be clearly understood that by the reconciliation of Matter and Spirit Sri Aurobindo does not mean that Spirit should be brought in as a subsidiary power merely to help the intellectual, vitalistic and materialistic tendencies of the present unregenerate human life. Spirit and Matter are not fundamentally coequal and coexistent realities; like the other two operative powers in earth-existence, Life and Mind, Matter is a manifested principle of the One Spiritual Reality, and therefore, though as real as Spirit itself, is yet a derivative, not an ultimate. The ultimate is the Spirit, the source and basis of all manifestation.

As Sri Aurobindo admits the reality of this mental, vital, material world and tries to make the power of the Spirit bear upon it, he does not discard human values; he recognises their central truth and perceives them to be imperfect expressions, refracted ectypes in terrestrial creation, of the divine archetypes. Hence he makes one of the aims of his spiritual ideal to transfigure these values into their divine equivalents. He accepts life, but not in its present chaotic state with all its ignorant gropings and stumblings, and its distortions and perversions of truth, but endeavours to cleanse it of its dross and transmute it by the highest and most effective power of the Spirit, the Supramental Force, so that it can manifest the Divine Truth without distorting it. That is the reason why he insists on the new-birth of humanity into the Spirit, for without being born anew into the spiritual consciousness and learning to live in union with the Divine Being, the creation of a new order of existence upon earth will not be possible for men.

So it is clear that when Sri Aurobindo says that Spirit and life must embrace each other, he does not advocate the acceptance of the ordinary life with the pursuit and realisation of the Spirit added on to the other human aims and ideals, but the reconstruction of the whole of human life with the Spirit becoming its creative, formative and governing power.

#### Human Progress

"We believe in the constant progression of humanity and we hold that that progression is the working out of a Thought in Life which sometimes manifests itself on the surface and sometimes sinks below and works behind the mask of external forces and interests. When there is this lapse below the surface, humanity has its periods of apparent retrogression or tardy evolution, its long hours of darkness or twilight during which

the secret Thought behind works out one of its phases by the pressure mainly of economic, political and personal interests ignorant of any deeper aim within. When the Thought returns to the surface, humanity has its periods of light and of rapid efflorescence, its dawns and splendid spring-tides; and according to the depth, vitality, truth and self-effective energy of the form of Thought that emerges is the importance of the stride forward that it makes during these Hours of the Gods in our terrestrial manifestation.

There is no greater error than to suppose, as the "practical" man is wont to do, that thought is only a fine flower and ornament of life and that political, economic and personal interests are the important and effective motors of human action. We recognize that this is a world of life and action and developing organism; but the life that seeks to guide itself only by vital and material forces is a slow, dark and blundering growth. It is an attempt to approximate man to the method of vegetable and animal existence. The earth is a world of Life and Matter, but man is not a vegetable nor an animal; he is a spiritual and a thinking being who is set here to shape and use the animal mould for higher purposes, by higher motives, with a more divine instrumentation.

Therefore by his very nature he serves the working of a Thought within him even when he is ignorant of it in his surface self. The practical man who ignores or despises the deeper life of the Idea, is yet serving that which he ignores or despises. Charlemagne hewing a chaotic Europe into shape with his sword was preparing the reign of the feudal and Catholic interpretation of human life with all that that great though obscure period of humanity has meant for the thought and spiritual development of mankind. But it is when the Thought emerges and guides life that man grows towards his full humanity, strides forward on his path and begins to control the development of Nature in his destiny or at least to collaborate as a conscious mind and spirit with That which controls and directs it.

The progress of humanity has therefore been a constant revolution with its rhythm of alternative darkness and light, but both the day and the night have helped to foster that which is evolving. The periods have not been the same for all parts of the globe. In the historic ages of the present cycle of civilisation the movement has been almost entirely centered in the twin continents of Asia and Europe. And there it has been often seen that when Asia was moving through the light, Europe was passing through one of her epochs of obscurity and on the other hand the nights of Asia's repose or stagnation have corresponded with the days of Europe's mental vigour and vital activity.

But the fundamental difference has been that Asia has served predominantly (not exclusively) as a field for man's spiritual experience and progression, Europe has been rather a workshop for his mental and vital activities. As the cycle progressed, the Eastern continent has more and more converted itself into a storehouse of spiritual energy sometimes active and reaching forward to new development, sometimes conservative and quiescent. Three or four times in history a stream of this energy has poured out upon Europe, but each time Europe has rejected wholly or partially the spiritual substance of the afflatus and used it rather as an impulse to fresh intellectual and material activity and progress.

The first attempt was the filtering of Egyptian, Chaldean and Indian wisdom through the thought of the Greek philosophers from Pythagoras to Plato and the Neo-Platonists; the result was the brilliantly intellectual and unspiritual civilisation of Greece and Rome. But it prepared the way for the second attempt when Buddhism and Vaishnavism, filtered through the Semitic temperament, entered Europe in the form of Christianity. Christianity came within an ace of spiritualising and even of asceticising the mind of Europe; it was baffled by its own theological deformation in the minds of the Greek fathers of the Church and by the sudden flooding of Europe with a German barbarism whose temperament in its merits no less than in its defects was the very anti-type both of the Christian spirit and the Graeco-Roman intellect.

The Islamic invasion of Spain and the southern coast of the Mediterranean—curious as the sole noteworthy example of Asiatic culture using the European methods of material and political irruption as opposed to a peaceful invasion by ideas—may be regarded as a third attempt. The result of its meeting with Graecised Christianity was the reawakening of the European mind in feudal and Catholic Europe and the obscure beginnings of modern thought and science.

The fourth and last attempt which is as yet only in its slow initial stage is the quiet entry of Eastern and chiefly of Indian thought into Europe first through the veil of German metaphysics, more latterly by its subtle influence in reawakening the Celtic, Scandinavian and Slavonic idealism, mysticism, religionism, and the direct and open penetration of Buddhism, Theosophy, Vedantism, Bahaism and other Oriental influences in both Europe and America.

Continued on page 5.

On the other hand, there have been two reactions of Europe upon Asia; first the invasion of Alexander with his aggressive Hellenism which for a time held Western Asia, created echoes and reactions in India and returned through Islamic culture upon mediaeval Europe; secondly, the modern onslaught of commercial, political, scientific Europe upon the moral, artistic and spiritual cultures of the East.

The new features of this mutual interpenetration are, first, that the two attacks have synchronised and, secondly, that they have encountered in each case the extreme exaggeration of their opposites. Intellectual and materialistic Europe found India, the Asia of Asia, the heart of the world's spiritual life, in the last throes of an enormous experiment, the thought of a whole nation concentrated for centuries upon the pure spiritual existence to the exclusion of all real progress in the practical and mental life of the race. The entering stream of Eastern thought found in Europe the beginning of an era which rejected religion, philosophy and psychology,—religion as an emotional delusion, philosophy, the pure essence of the mind, as a barren thought-weaving,—and resolved to devote the whole intellectual faculty of man to a study of the laws of material Nature and of man's bodily, social, economic and political existence and to build thereon a superior civilisation.

That stupendous effort is over; it has not yet frankly declared its bankruptcy, but it is bankrupt. It is sinking in a cataclysm as gigantic and as unnatural as the attempt which gave it birth. On the other hand, the exaggerated spirituality of the Indian effort has also registered a bankruptcy; we have seen how high individuals can rise by it, but we have seen also how low a race can fall which in its eagerness to seek after God ignores His intention in humanity. Both the European and the Indian attempts were admirable, the Indian by its absolute spiritual sincerity, the European by its severe intellectual honesty and ardour for the truth; both have accomplished miracles; but in the end God and Nature have been too strong for the Titanism of the human spirit and for the Titanism of the human intellect.

The salvation of the human race lies in a more sane and integral development of the possibilities of mankind in the individual and in the community. The safety of Europe has to be sought in the recognition of the spiritual aim of human existence, otherwise she will be crushed by the weight of her own unilluminated knowledge and soulless organisation. The safety of Asia lies in the recognition of the material mould and the mental conditions in which that aim has to be worked out, otherwise she will sink deeper into the slough of despond, of a mental and physical incompetence to deal with the facts of life and the shocks of a rapidly changing movement. It is not any exchange of forms that is required, but an interchange of regenerating impulses and a happy fusion and harmonising.

#### The Syncretisation of the Eastern and Western Ideals

The synchronism and mutual interpenetration of the two great currents of human effort at such a crisis in the history of the race is full of hope for the future of humanity, but full also of possible dangers. The hope is the emergence of a new and better human life founded on a greater knowledge, a pursuit of the new faculties and possibilities opening out before us and a just view of the problem which the individual, the society, the race have to solve. Mankind has been drawn together by the developments of material science and for good or evil its external future is henceforth one; its different parts no longer develop separately and in independence of each other. There opens out at the same time the possibility that by the development and practice of the science and the life of the soul it may be made one in reality and by an internal unity.

The idea by which the enlightenment of Europe has been governed is the passion for the discovery of the Truth and Law that constitutes existence and governs the process of the world, the attempt to develop the life and potentialities of man, his ideals, institutions, organizations by the knowledge of that Law and Truth and the confidence that along this line lies the road of human progress and perfection.

The idea is absolutely just and we accept it entirely; but its application has been erroneous. For the Law and Truth that has to be discovered is not that of the material world—though this is required, nor even of the mental and physical—though this is indispensable, but the Law and Truth of the Spirit on which all the rest depends. For it is the power of the Self of things that expresses itself in their forms and processes.

The message of the East to the West is a true message, "Only by finding himself can man be saved," and "what shall it profit a man though he gain the world, if he lose his own soul." The West has heard the message and is seeking out the law and truth of the soul and the evidences of an inner reality greater than the material. The danger is that with her passion for mechanism and her exaggerated intellectuality she may fog herself in an external and false psychism, such as we see arising in England and America, the homes of the mechanical genius, or in intellectual, unspiritual and therefore erroneous theories of the Absolute, such as have run their course in critical and metaphysical Germany.

The idea by which the illumination of Asia has been governed is the firm knowledge, that truth of the Spirit is the sole real truth, the belief that the psychological life of man is an instrument for attaining to the truth of the Spirit and that its laws must be known and practised with that aim paramount, and the attempt to form the external life of man and the institutions of society into a suitable mould for the great endeavour.

This idea, too, is absolutely just and we accept it entirely. But in its application, and in India most, it has deviated into a divorce between the Spirit and its instruments and a disparagement and narrowing of the mental

and external life of the race. For it is only on the widest and richest efflorescence of this instrumental life that the fullest and most absolute attainment of the spiritual can be securely based. This knowledge the ancients of the East possessed and practised; it has been dimmed in knowledge and lost in practice by their descendants.

The message the West brings to the East is a true message. Man also is God and it is through his developing manhood that he approaches the godhead; Life also is the Divine, its progressive expansion is the self-expression of the Brahman, and to deny life is to diminish the Godhead within us. This is the truth that returns to the East from the West translated into the language of the higher truth the East already possesses; and it is an ancient knowledge. The East also is awaking to the message. The danger is that Asia may accept it in the European form, forget for a time her own law and nature and either copy blindly the West or make a disastrous amalgam of that which she has in its most inferior forms and the crudenesses which are invading her.

#### The Problem of Thought Today

The problem of thought therefore is to find out the right idea and the right way of harmony; to restate the ancient and eternal spiritual truth of the Self so that it shall re-embrace, permeate, dominate, transfigure the mental and physical life; to develop the most profound and vital methods of psychological self-discipline and self-development so that the mental and psychical life of man may express the spiritual life through the utmost possible expansion of its own richness, power and complexity; and to seek for the means and motives by which his external life, his society and his institutions may remould themselves progressively in the truth of the spirit and develop towards the utmost possible harmony of individual freedom and social unity.

This is our ideal and our search. Throughout the world there are plenty of movements inspired by the same drift, but there is room for an effort of thought which shall frankly acknowledge the problem in its integral complexity and not be restrained in the flexibility of its search by attachment to any cult, creed or extant system of philosophy.

The effort involves a quest for the Truth that underlies existence and the fundamental Law of its self-expression in the universe—the work of metaphysical philosophy and religious thought; the sounding and harmonising of the psychological methods of discipline by which man purifies and perfects himself,—the work of psychology, not as it is understood in Europe, but the deeper practical psychology called in India Yoga and the application of our ideas to the problems of man's social and collective life.

Philosophy and religious thought based on spiritual experience must be the beginning and the foundation of any such attempt; for they alone go behind appearances and processes to the truth of things. The attempt to get rid of their supremacy must always be vain. Man will always think and generalise and try to penetrate behind the apparent fact, for that is the imperative law of his awakened consciousness; man will always turn his generalisations into a religion, even though it be only a religion of positivism or of material Law. Philosophy is the intellectual search for the fundamental truth of things, religion is the attempt to make the truth dynamic in the soul of man. They are essential to each other; a religion that is not the expression of philosophic truth, degenerates into superstition and obscurantism, and a philosophy which does not dynamise itself with the religious spirit is a barren light, for it cannot get itself practised. But again neither of these get their supreme value unless raised into the spirit and cast into life.

What then shall be our ideal? Unity for the human race by an inner oneness and not only by an external association of interests; the resurgence of man out of the merely animal and economic life or the merely intellectual and aesthetic into the glories of the spiritual existence; the pouring of the power of the spirit into the physical mould and mental instrument so that man may develop his manhood into that true supermanhood which shall exceed our present state as much as this exceeds the animal state from which science tells us that we have issued. These three are one; for man's unity and man's self-transcendence can come only by living in the Spirit."

"Our endeavour shall be to prepare the path and to accomplish the beginning of a great and high change which we believe to be and aim at making the future of the race and the future of India. Our ideal is the new-birth of humanity into the Spirit; our life must be a spiritually inspired effort to create a body of action for that great new-birth and creation.

A spiritual ideal has always been the characteristic idea and aspiration of India. But the progress of time and the need of humanity demand a new orientation and another form of that ideal. The old forms and methods are no longer sufficient for the purpose of the Time-Spirit. India can no longer fulfil herself on lines that are too narrow for the great steps she has to take in the future. Nor is ours the spirituality of a life that is aged and world-weary and burdened with the sense of the illusion and miserable inutility of all God's mighty creation. Our ideal is not the spirituality that withdraws from life but the conquest of life by the power of the Spirit. It is to accept the world as an effort of manifestation of the Divine, but also to transform humanity by a greater effort of manifestation that has yet been accomplished, one in which the veil between man and God shall be removed, the Divine manhood of which we are capable shall come to birth and our life shall be remoulded in the truth and light and power of the Spirit. It is to make of all our action a sacrifice to the Master of our action and an expression of the great Self in man and of all life a yoga.

# SRI AUROBINI

## THE DIVINE

A DIVINE life in a divine body is the formula of the ideal that we envisage. But what will be the divine body? What will be the nature of this body, its structure, the principle of its activity, the perfection that distinguishes it from the limited and imperfect physicality within which we are now bound? What will be the conditions and operations of its life still physical in its base upon the earth by which it can be known as divine?

If it is to be the product of an evolution, and it is so that we must envisage it, an evolution out of our human imperfection and ignorance into a greater truth of spirit and nature, by what process or stages can it grow into manifestation or rapidly arrive? The process of the evolution upon earth has been slow and tardy—what principle must intervene if there is to be a transformation, a progressive or sudden change?

### The Principle and Range of Physical Transformation

It is indeed as a result of our evolution that we arrive at the possibility of this transformation. As Nature has evolved beyond Matter and manifested Life, beyond Life and manifested Mind, so she must evolve beyond Mind and manifest a consciousness and power of our existence free from the imperfection and limitation of our mental existence, a supramental or truth-consciousness and able to develop the power and perfection of the spirit. Here a slow and tardy change need no longer be the law or manner of our evolution; it will be only so to a greater or less extent so long as a mental ignorance clings and hampers our ascent; but once we have grown into the truth-consciousness its power of spiritual truth of being will determine all. Into that truth we shall be freed and it will transform mind and life and body. Light and bliss and beauty and a perfection of the spontaneous right action of all the being are there as native powers of the supramental truth-consciousness and these will in their very nature transform mind and life and body even here upon earth into a manifestation of the truth-conscious spirit. The obscurations of earth will not prevail against the supramental truth-consciousness, for even into the earth it can bring enough of the omniscient light and omnipotent force of the spirit to conquer. All may not open to the fullness of its light and power, but whatever does open must to that extent undergo the change. That will be the principle of transformation.

It might be that a psychological change, a mastery of the nature by the soul, a transformation of the mind into a principle of light, of the life-force into power and purity would be the first approach, the first attempt to solve the problem, to escape beyond the merely human formula and establish something that could be called a divine life upon earth, a first sketch of supermanhood, of a supramental living in the circumstances of the earth-nature. But this could not be the complete and radical change needed; it would not be the total transformation, the fullness of a divine life in a divine body. There would be a body still human and indeed animal in its origin and fundamental character and this would impose its own inevitable limitations on the higher parts of the embodied being. As limitation by ignorance and error is the fundamental defect of an untransformed mind, as limitation by the imperfect impulses and strainings and wants of desire are the defects of an untransformed life-force, so also imperfection of the potentialities of the physical action, an imperfection, a limitation in the response of its half-consciousness to the demands made upon it and the grossness and stains of its original animality would be the defects of an untransformed or an imperfectly transformed body. These could not but hamper and even pull down towards themselves the action of the higher parts of the nature. A transformation of the body must be the condition for a total transformation of the nature.

It might be also that the transformation might take place by stages; there are powers of the nature still belonging to the mental region which are yet potentialities of a growing gnosis lifted beyond our human mentality and partaking of the light and power of the Divine and an ascent through these planes, a descent of them into the mental being might seem to be the natural evolutionary course. But in practice it might be found that these intermediate levels would not be sufficient for the total transformation since, being themselves illumined potentialities of mental being not yet supramental in the full sense of the word, they could bring down to the mind only a partial divinity or raise the mind towards that but not effectuate its elevation into the complete supramentality of the truth-consciousness. Still these levels might become stages of the ascent which some would reach and pause there while others went higher and could reach and live on superior strata of a semi-divine existence. It is not to be supposed that all humanity would rise in a block into the supermind; at first those only might attain to the highest or some intermediate height of the ascent whose inner evolution has fitted them for so great a change or who are raised by the direct touch of the Divine into its perfect light and power and bliss. The large mass of human beings might still remain for long content with a normal or only a partially illumined and uplifted human nature. But this would be itself a sufficiently radical change and initial transformation of earth-life; for the way would be open to all who have the will to rise, the supramental influence of the truth-consciousness would touch the earth-life and influence even its untransformed mass and a hope would be there and a promise eventually available to all which now only the few can share in or realise.

In any case these would be beginnings only and could not constitute the fullness of the divine life upon earth; it would be a new orientation of the earthly life but not the consummation of its change. For that there

The August Number of the quarterly Bulletin of Physical Science contains many valuable features. The large photographic section is a feast to the eye illustrating as it does a dramatic dialogue between Spirit and Matter. It also contains a two-paged enlightening note on "Energy Inexhaustible" and the author is reproducing here. This message is of the utmost importance in explicit detail the revolutionary significance of Sri Aurobindo's discovery of the powers and possibilities of man's physical existence.

must be the sovereign reign of a supramental truth-consciousness to which all other forms of life would be subordinated and depend upon it as the master principle and supreme power to which they could look up as the goal, profit by its influences, be moved and upraised by something of its illumination and penetrating force. Especially, as the human body had to come into existence with its modification of the previous animal form and its erect figure of a new power of life and its expressive movements and activities serviceable and necessary to the principle of mind and the life of a mental being, so too a body must be developed with new powers, activities or degrees of a divine action expressive of a truth-conscious being and proper to a supramental consciousness and manifesting a consciousness of spirit. While the capacity for taking up and sublimating all the activities of the earth-life capable of being spiritualised must be there, a transcendence of the original animality and the actions incurably tainted by it or at least some saving transformation of them, some spiritualising or psychicising of the consciousness and motives animating them and the shedding of whatever could not be so transformed, even a change of what might be called its instrumental structure, its functioning and organisation, a complete and hitherto unprecedented control of these things must be the consequence or incidental to this total change. These things have been already to some extent illustrated in the lives of many who have become possessed of spiritual powers but as something exceptional and occasional, the casual or incomplete manifestation of an acquired capacity rather than the organisation of a new consciousness, a new life and a new nature. How far can such physical transformation be carried, what are the limits within which it must remain to be consistent with life upon earth and without carrying that life beyond the earthly sphere or pushing it towards the supraterrrestrial existence? The supramental consciousness is not a fixed quantity but a power which passes to higher and higher levels of possibility until it reaches supreme consummations of spiritual existence fulfilling supermind as supermind fulfils the ranges of spiritual consciousness that are pushing towards it from the human or mental level. In this progression the body also may reach a more perfect form and a higher range of its expressive powers, become a more and more perfect vessel of divinity.

### The Body's Development and Destiny

This destiny of the body has rarely in the past been envisaged or else not for the body here upon earth; such forms would rather be imagined or visioned as the privilege of celestial beings and not possible as the physical residence of a soul still bound to terrestrial nature. The Vaishnavas have spoken of a spiritualised conscious body, *chinmaya deha*; there has been the conception of a radiant or luminous body, which might be the Vedic *jyotirmaya deha*. A light has been seen by some radiating from the bodies of highly developed spiritual persons, even extending to the emission of an enveloping aura and there has been recorded an initial phenomenon of this kind in the life of so great a spiritual personality as Ramakrishna. But these things have been either conceptual only or rare and occasional and for the most part the body has not been regarded as possessed of spiritual possibility or capable of transformation. It has been spoken of as the means of effectuation of the dharma and dharma here includes all high purposes, achievements and ideals of life not excluding the spiritual change: but it is an instrument that must be dropped when its work is done and though there may be and must be spiritual realisation while yet in the body, it can only come to its full fruition after the abandonment of the physical frame. More ordinarily in the spiritual tradition the body has been regarded as an obstacle, incapable of spiritualisation or transmutation and a heavy weight holding the soul to earthly nature and preventing its ascent either to spiritual fulfilment in the Supreme or to the dissolution of its individual being in the Supreme. But while this conception of the role of the body in our destiny is suitable enough for a sadhana that sees earth only as a field of the ignorance and earth-life as a preparation for a saving withdrawal from life which is the indispensable condition for spiritual liberation, it is insufficient for a sadhana which conceives of a divine life upon earth and liberation of earth-nature itself as part of a total purpose of the embodiment of the spirit here. If a total

# O'S MESSAGE: THE BODY

Education, published by Sri Aurobindo's Ashram, is full of eye and a substantial part of it is also a feast to the mind, ter. Among the written contributions there are the Mother's message by Sri Aurobindo on "The Divine Body" which we to man's search for the perfect life: it focuses for the first time Integral Yoga in relation to that central problem of Science—

transformation of the being is our aim, a transformation of the body must be an indispensable part of it; without that no full divine life on earth is possible.

It is the past evolution of the body and especially its animal nature and animal history which seems to stand in the way of this consummation. The body, as we have seen, is an offspring and creation of the Inconscient, itself inconscient or only half-conscious; it began as a form of unconscious Matter, developed life and from a material object became a living growth, developed mind and from the subconsciousness of the plant and the initial rudimentary mind or incomplete intelligence of the animal developed the intellectual mind and more complete intelligence of man and now serves as the physical base, container and instrumental means of our total spiritual endeavour. Its animal character and its gross limitations stand indeed as an obstacle to our spiritual perfection; but the fact that it has developed a soul and is capable of serving it as a means may indicate that it is capable of further development and may become a shrine and expression of the spirit, reveal a secret spirituality of Matter, become entirely and not only half-conscious, reach a certain oneness with the spirit. This much it must do, so far at least it must transcend its original earth-nature, if it is to be the complete instrument of the divine life and no longer an obstacle.

## The Problem of Sex and Food

Still the inconveniences of the animal body and its animal nature and impulses and the limitations of the human body at its best are there in the beginning and persist always so long as there is not the full and fundamental liberation and its inconscience or half conscience and its binding of the soul and mind and life-force to Matter, to materiality of all kinds, to the call of the unregenerated earth-nature are there and constantly oppose the call of the spirit and circumscribe the climb to higher things. To the physical being it brings a bondage to the material instruments, to the brain and heart and senses, wed to materiality and materialism of all kinds, to the bodily mechanism and its needs and obligations, to the imperative need of food and the preoccupation with the means of getting it and storing it as one of the besetting interests of life, to fatigue and sleep, to the satisfaction of bodily desire. The life-force in man also is tied down to these small things; it has to limit the scope of its larger ambitions and longings, its drive to rise beyond the pull of earth and follow the heavenlier intuitions of its psychic parts, the heart's ideal and the soul's yearnings. On the mind the body imposes the boundaries of the physical being and the physical life and the sense of the sole complete reality of physical things with the rest as a sort of brilliant fireworks of the imagination, of lights and glories that can only have their full play in heavens beyond, on higher planes of existence, but not here; it afflicts the idea and aspiration with the burden of doubt, the evidence of the subtle senses and the intuition with uncertainty and the vast field of supraphysical consciousness and experience with the imputation of unreality and clamps down to its earth-roots the growth of the spirit from its original limiting humanity into the supramental truth and the divine nature. These obstacles can be overcome, the denials and resistance of the body surmounted, its transformation is possible. Even the inconscient and animal part of us can be illumined and made capable of manifesting the god-nature even as our mental humanity can be made to manifest the super humanity of the supramental truth-consciousness and the divinity of what is now superconscious to us and the total transformation made a reality here. But for this the obligations and compulsions of its animality must cease to be obligatory and a purification of its materiality effected by which that very materiality can be turned into a material solidity of the manifestation of the divine nature. For nothing essential must be left out in the totality of the earth-change; Matter itself can be turned into a means of revelation of the spiritual reality, the Divine.

The difficulty is dual, psychological and corporeal: the first is the effect of the unregenerated animality upon the life especially by the insistence of the body's gross instincts, impulses, desires; the second is the outcome of our corporeal structure and organic instrumentation imposing its restrictions on the dynamism of the higher divine nature. The first of these

two difficulties is easier to deal with and conquer; for here the will can intervene and impose on the body the power of the higher nature. Certain of these impulses and instincts of the body have been found especially harmful by the spiritual aspirant and weighed considerably in favour of an ascetic rejection of the body. Sex and sexuality and all that springs from sex and testifies to its existence had to be banned and discarded from the spiritual life, and this, though difficult, is not at all impossible and can be made a cardinal condition for the spiritual seeker. This is natural and unescapable in all ascetic practice and the satisfaction of this condition, though not easy at first to fulfil, becomes after a time quite feasible; the overcoming of the sex-instinct and impulse is indeed binding on all who would attain to self-mastery and lead the spiritual life. A total mastery over it is essential for all spiritual seekers, the eradication of it for the complete ascetic. This much has to be recognised and not diminished in its obligatory importance and its principle.

But all recognition of the sex principle, as apart from the gross physical indulgence of the sex-impulse, could not be excluded from a divine life upon earth; it is there in life, plays a large part and has to be dealt with, it cannot simply be ignored, merely suppressed or held down or put away out of sight. In the first place, it is in one of its aspects a cosmic and even a divine principle: it takes the spiritual form of the Ishwara and the Shakti and without it there could be no world-creation or manifestation of the world-principle of Purusha and Prakriti which are both necessary for the creation, necessary too in their association and interchange for the play of its psychological working and in their manifestation as soul and Nature fundamental to the whole process of the Lila. In the divine life itself an incarnation or at least in some form a presence of the two powers or their initiating influence through their embodiments or representatives would be indispensable for making the new creation possible. In its human action on the mental and vital level sex is not altogether an undivine principle; it has its nobler aspects and idealities and it has to be seen in what way and to what extent these can be admitted into the new and larger life. All gross animal indulgence of sex desire and impulse would have to be eliminated; it could only continue among those who are not ready for the higher life or not yet ready for a complete spiritual living. In all who aspired to it but could not yet take it up in its fullness sex will have to be refined, submit to the spiritual or psychic impulse and a control by the higher mind and the higher vital and shed all its lighter, frivolous or degraded forms and feel the touch of the purity of the ideal. Love would remain, all forms of the pure truth of love in higher and higher steps till it realised its highest nature, widened into universal love, merged into the love of the Divine. The love of man and woman would also undergo that elevation and consummation; for all that can feel a touch of the ideal and the spiritual must follow the way of ascent till it reaches the divine Reality. The body and its activities must be accepted as part of the divine life and pass under this law; but, as in the other evolutionary transitions, what cannot accept the law of the divine life cannot be accepted and must fall away from the ascending nature.

Another difficulty that the transformation of the body has to face is its dependence for its very existence upon food and here too are involved the gross physical instincts, impulses, desires that are associated with this difficult factor, the essential cravings of the palate, the greed of food and animal gluttony of the belly, the coarsening of the mind when it grovels in the mud of sense, obeys a servitude to its mere animal part and hugs its bondage to Matter. The higher human in us seeks refuge in a temperate moderation, in abstemiousness and abstinence or in carelessness about the body and its wants and in an absorption in higher things. The spiritual seeker often, like the Jain ascetics, seeks refuge in long and frequent fasts which lift him temporarily at least out of the clutch of the body's demands and help him to feel in himself a pure vacancy of the wide rooms of the spirit. But all this is not liberation and the question may be raised whether, not only at first but always, the divine life also must submit to this necessity. But it could only deliver itself from it altogether if it could find out the way so to draw upon the universal energy that the energy would sustain not only the vital parts of our physicality but its constituent matter with no need of aid for sustenance from any outside substance of Matter. It is indeed possible even while fasting for very long periods to maintain the full energies and activities of the soul and mind and life, even those of the body, to remain wakeful but concentrated in Yoga all the time, or to think deeply and write day and night, to dispense with sleep, to walk eight hours a day, maintaining all these activities separately or together and not feel any loss of strength, any fatigue, any kind of failure or decadence. At the end of the fast one can even resume at once taking the normal or even a greater than the normal amount of nourishment without any transition or precaution such as medical science enjoins, as if both the complete fasting and the feasting were natural conditions, alternating by an immediate and easy passage from one to the other, of a body already trained by a sort of initial transformation to be an instrument of the powers and activities of Yoga. But one thing one does not escape and that is the wasting of the material tissues of the body, its flesh and substance. Conceivably, if a practicable way and means could only be found, this last invincible obstacle too might be overcome and the body maintained by an interchange of its forces with the forces of material Nature, giving to her her need from the individual and taking from her directly the sustaining energies of her universal existence.

# THE DIVINE BODY —Continued from page 7

Conceivably, one might rediscover and re-establish at the summit of the evolution of life the phenomenon we see at its base, the power to draw from all around it the means of sustenance and self-renewal. Or else the evolved being might acquire the greater power to draw down those means from above rather than draw them up or pull them in from the environment around, all about it and below it. But until something like this is achieved or made possible we have to go back to food and the established material forces of Nature.

In fact we do, however unconsciously, draw constantly upon the universal energy, the force in Matter to replenish our material existence and the mental, vital and other potencies in the body: we do it directly in the invisible processes of interchange constantly kept up by Nature and by special means devised by her; breathing is one of these, sleep also and repose. But as her basic means for maintaining and renewing the gross physical body and its workings and inner potencies Nature has selected the taking in of outside matter in the shape of food, its digestion, assimilation of what is assimilable and elimination of what cannot or ought not to be assimilated, this by itself is sufficient for mere maintenance, but for assuring health and strength in the body so maintained it has added the impulse towards physical exercise and play of many kinds, ways for the expenditure and renewal of energy, the choice or the necessity of manifold action and labour. In the new life, in its beginnings at least, it would not be necessary or advisable to make any call for an extreme or precipitate rejection of the need of food or the established natural method for the maintenance of the still imperfectly transformed body. If or when these things have to be transcended it must come as a result of the awakened will of the spirit, a will also in Matter itself, an imperative evolutionary urge, an act of the creative transmutations of Time or a descent from the transcendence. Meanwhile the drawing in of the universal energy by a conscious action of the higher powers of the being from around or from above, by a call to what is still to us a transcending consciousness or by an invasion or descent from the Transcendence itself may well become an occasional, a frequent or a constant phenomenon and even reduce the part played by food and its need to an incidence no longer preoccupying, a necessity minor and less and less imperative. Meanwhile food and the ordinary process of Nature can be accepted although its use has to be liberated from attachment and desire and the grosser indiscriminating appetites and clutch at the pleasures of the flesh which is the way of the Ignorance; the physical processes have to be subtilised and the grossest may have to be eliminated and new processes found or new instrumentalities emerge. So long as it is accepted a refined pleasure in it may be permitted and even a desireless ananda of taste take the place of the physical relish and the human selection by likings and dislikings which is our present imperfect response to what is offered to us by Nature. It must be remembered that for the divine life on earth earth and Matter have not to be and cannot be rejected but have only to be sublimated and to reveal in themselves the possibilities of the spirit, serve the spirit's highest uses and be transformed into instruments of a greater living.

The divine life must always be actuated by the push towards perfection; a perfection of the joy of life is part and an essential part of it, the body's delight in things and the body's joy of life are not excluded from it; they too have to be made perfect. A large totality is the very nature of this new and growing way of existence, a fullness of the possibilities of the mind transmuted into a thing of light, of the life converted into a force of spiritual power and joy, of the body transformed into an instrument of a divine action, divine knowledge, divine bliss. All can be taken into its scope that is capable of transforming itself, all that can be an instrument, a vessel, an opportunity for the expression of this totality of the self-manifesting Spirit.

### Physical Propagation and Occult Creation

There is one problem raised by sex for those who would reject *in toto* the obligations imposed by the animality of the body and put forward by it as an insistent opposition in the way of the aspirant to a higher life: it is the necessity of the prolongation of the race for which the sex activity is the only means already provided by Nature for living beings and inevitably imposed upon the race. It is not indeed necessary for the individual seeker after a divine life to take up this problem or even for a group who do not seek after it for themselves alone but desire a wide acceptance of it by mankind as at least an ideal. There will always be the multitude who do not concern themselves with it or are not ready for its complete practice and to these can be left the care for the prolongation of the race. The number of those who lead the divine life can be maintained and increased as the ideal extends itself, by the voluntary adhesion of those who are touched by the aspiration and there need be no resort to physical means for this purpose, no deviation from the rule of a strict sexual abstinence. But yet there may be circumstances in which from another standpoint, a voluntary creation of bodies for souls that seek to enter the earth-life to help in the creation and extension of the divine life upon earth might be found to be desirable. Then the necessity of a physical procreation for this purpose could only be avoided if new means of a supraphysical kind were evolved and made available. A development of this kind must necessarily belong to what is now considered as the sphere of the occult and the use of concealed powers of action or creation not known or possessed by the common mind of the race. Occultism means

rightly the use of the higher powers of our nature, soul, mind, life-force and the faculties of the subtle physical consciousness to bring about results on their own or on the material plane by some pressure of their own secret law and its potentialities, for manifestation and result in human or earthly mind and life and body or in objects and events in the world of Matter. A discovery or an extension of these little known or yet undeveloped powers is now envisaged by some well-known thinkers as a next step to be taken by mankind in its immediate evolution; the kind of creation spoken of has not been included among these developments, but it could well be considered as one of the new possibilities. Even physical science is trying to find physical means for passing beyond the ordinary instrumentation or procedure of Nature in this matter of propagation or the renewal of the physical life-force in human or animal beings; but the resort to occult means and the intervention of subtle physical processes, if it could be made possible, would be a greater way which could avoid the limitations, degradations, incompleteness and heavy imperfection of the means and results solely available to the law of material force. In India there has been always from the earliest times a widely spread belief in the possibility and reality of the use of these powers by men with an advanced knowledge of these secret things or with a developed spiritual knowledge and experience and dynamic force and even, in the Tantras, an organised system of their method and practice. The intervention of the Yogi in bringing about a desired birth of offspring is also generally believed in and often appealed to and the bestowal on the child so obtained of a spiritual attainment or destiny by his will or his blessing is sometimes asked for and such a result is recorded not only in the tradition of the past but maintained by the witness of the present. But there is here still the necessity of a resort to the normal means of propagation and the gross method of physical Nature. A purely occult method, a resort to supraphysical processes acting by supraphysical means for a physical result would have to be possible if we are to avoid this necessity: the resort to the sex impulse and its animal process could not be transcended otherwise. If there is some reality in the phenomenon of materialisation and dematerialisation claimed to be possible by occultists and evidenced by occurrences many of us have witnessed, a method of this kind would not be out of the range of possibility. For in the theory of the occultists and in the gradation of the ranges and planes of our being which Yoga-knowledge outlines for us there is not only a subtle physical force but a subtle physical Matter intervening between life and gross Matter and to create in this subtle physical substance and precipitate the forms thus made into our grosser materiality is feasible. It should be possible and it is believed to be possible for an object formed in this subtle physical substance to make a transit from its subtlety into the state of gross Matter directly by the intervention of an occult force and process whether with or even without the assistance or intervention of some gross material procedure. A soul wishing to enter into a body or form for itself a body and take part in a divine life upon earth might be assisted to do so or even provided with such a form by this method of direct transmutation without passing through birth by the sex process or undergoing any degradation or any of the heavy limitations in the growth and development of its mind and material body inevitable to our present way of existence. It might then assume at once the structure and greater powers and functionings of the truly divine material body which must one day emerge in a progressive evolution to a totally transformed existence both of life and form in a divinised earth-nature.

### The Form, Structure and Instrumentation of the Divine Body

But what would be the internal or external form and structure and what the instrumentation of this divine body? The material history of the development of the animal and human body has left it bound to a minutely constructed and elaborated system of organs and a precarious order of their functioning which can easily become a disorder, open to a general or local disorganisation, dependent on an easily disturbed nervous system and commanded by a brain whose vibrations are supposed to be mechanical and automatic and not under our conscious control. According to the materialist all this is a functioning of Matter alone whose fundamental reality is chemical. We have to suppose that the body is constructed by the agency of chemical elements building up atoms and molecules and cells and these again are the agents and only conductors at the basis of a complicated physical structure and instrumentation which is the sole mechanical cause of all our actions, thoughts, feelings, the soul a fiction and mind and life only a material and mechanical manifestation and appearance of this machine which is worked out and automatically driven with a figment of consciousness in it by the forces inherent in inconscient Matter. If that were the truth it is obvious that any divinisation or divine transformation of the body or anything else would be nothing but an illusion, an imagination, a senseless and impossible chimera. But even if we suppose a soul, a conscious will at work in this body it could not arrive at a divine transformation if there were no radical change in the bodily instrument itself and in the organisation of its material workings. The transforming agent will be bound and stopped in its work by the physical organism's unalterable limitations and held up by the unmodified or imperfectly modified original animal in us. The possibility of the disorders, derangements, maladies native to these physical arrangements would still be there and could only be shut out by a constant vigilance or perpetual control obligatory on the corporeal instrument's spiritual inhabitant and master. This could not be called a truly



## THE DIVINE BODY—Continued from page 8.

divine body; for in a divine body an inherent freedom from all these things would be natural and perpetual; this freedom would be a normal and native truth of its being and therefore inevitable and unalterable. A radical transformation of the functioning and, it may well be, of the structure and certainly of the too mechanical and material impulse and driving forces of the bodily system would be imperative. What agency could we find which we could make the means of this all-important liberation and change? Something there is in us or something has to be developed, perhaps a central and still occult part of our being containing forces whose powers in our actual and present make-up are only a fraction of what could be, but if they became complete and dominant would be truly able to bring about with the help of the light and force of the soul and the supramental truth-consciousness the necessary physical transformation and its consequences. This might be found in the system of Chakras revealed by Tantric knowledge and accepted in the systems of Yoga, conscious centres and sources of all the dynamic powers of our being organising their action through the plexuses and arranged in an ascending series from the lowest physical to the highest mind centre and spiritual centre called the thousand-petalled lotus where ascending Nature, the Serpent Power of the Tantrics, meets the Brahman and is liberated into the Divine Being. These centres are closed or half closed within us and have to be opened before their full potentiality can be manifested in our physical nature: but once they are opened and completely active, no limit can easily be set to the development of their potencies and the total transformation to be possible.

But what would be the result of the emergence of these forces and their liberated and diviner action on the body itself, what their dynamic connection with it and their transforming operation on the still existing animal nature and its animal impulses and gross material procedure? It might be held that the first necessary change would be the liberation of the mind, the life-force, the subtle physical agencies and the physical consciousness into a freer and a diviner activity, a many-dimensional and unlimited operation of their consciousness, a large outbreak of higher powers and the sublimation of the bodily consciousness itself, of its instrumentation, capacity, capability for the manifestation of the soul in the world of Matter. The subtle senses now concealed in us might come forward into a free action and the material senses themselves become means or channels for the vision of what is now invisible to us or the discovery of things surrounding us but at present unseizable and held back from our knowledge. A firm check might be put on the impulses of the animal nature or they might be purified and subtilised so as to become assets and not liabilities and so transformed as to be parts and processes of a diviner life. But even these changes would still leave a residue of material processes keeping the old way and not amenable to the higher control and, if this could not be changed the rest of the transformation might itself be checked and incomplete. A total transformation of the body would demand a sufficient change of the most material part of the organism, its constitution, its processes and its set-up of nature.

Again, it might be thought that a full control would be sufficient, a knowledge and a vision of this organism and its unseen action and an effective control determining its operations according to the conscious will; this possibility has been affirmed as something already achieved and a part of the development of the inner powers in some. The cessation of the breathing while still the life of the body remained stable, the hermetic sealing up at will not only of the breath but of all the vital manifestations for long periods, the stoppage of the heart similarly at will while thought and speech and other mental workings continued unabated, these and other phenomena of the power of the will over the body are known and well-attested examples of this kind of mastery. But these are occasional or sporadic successes and do not amount to transformation; a total control is necessary and an established and customary and, indeed, a natural mastery. Even with that achieved something more fundamental might have to be demanded for the complete liberation and change into a divine body.

Again, it might be urged that the organic structure of the body no less than its basic outer form would have to be retained as a necessary material foundation for the retention of the earth-nature, the connection of the divine life with the life of earth and a continuance of the evolutionary process so as to prevent a breaking upward out of and away from it into a state of being which would properly belong to a higher plane and not to a terrestrial divine fulfilment. The prolonged existence of the animal itself in our nature, if sufficiently transformed to be an instrument of manifestation and not an obstacle would be necessary to preserve the continuity, the evolutionary total; it would be needed as the living vehicle, *vahana*, of the emergent god in the material world where he would have to act and achieve the works and wonders of the new life. It is certain that a form of body making this connection and a bodily action containing the earth-dynamism and its fundamental activities must be there, but the connection should not be a bond or a confining limitation or a contradiction of the totality of the change. The maintenance of the present organism without any transformation of it would not but act as such a bond and confinement within the old nature. There would be a material base but it would be of the earth earthy, an old and not a new earth with a diviner psychological structure; for with that structure the old system would be out of harmony and it would be unable to serve its further evolution or even to uphold it as a base in Matter. It would bind part of the being, a lower part to an untransformed humanity and unchanged animal functioning and prevent its

liberation into the superhumanity of the supramental nature. A change is then necessary here too, a necessary part of the total bodily transformation, which would divinise the whole man, at least in the ultimate result and not leave his evolution incomplete.

This aim, it must be said, would be sufficiently served if the instrumentation of the centres and their forces reigned over all the activities of the nature with an entire domination of the body and made it both in its structural form and its organic workings a free channel and means of communication and a plastic instrument of cognition and dynamic action for all that they had to do in the material life, in the world of Matter. There would have to be a change in the operative processes of the material organs themselves and, it may well be, in their very constitution and their importance; they could not be allowed to impose their limitations imperatively on the new physical life. To begin with, they might become more clearly outer ends of the channels of communication and action, more serviceable for the psychological purposes of the inhabitant, less blindly material in their responses, more conscious of the act and aim of the inner movements and powers which use them and which they are wrongly supposed by the material man in us to generate and to use. The brain would be a channel of communication of the form of the thoughts and a battery of their insistence on the body and the outside world where they could then become effective directly, communicating themselves without physical means from mind to mind producing with a similar directness effects on the thoughts, actions and lives of others or even upon material things. The heart would equally be a direct communicant and medium of interchange for the feelings and emotions thrown outward upon the world by the forces of the psychic centre. Heart could reply directly to heart, the life-force come to the help of other lives and answer their call in spite of strangeness and distance, many beings without any external communication thrill with the message and meet in the secret light from one divine centre. The will might control the organs that deal with food, safeguard automatically the health, eliminate greed and desire, substitute subtle processes or draw in strength and substance from the universal life-force so that the body could maintain for a long time its own strength and substance without loss or waste, remaining thus with no need of sustenance by material aliments; and yet continue a strenuous action with no fatigue or pause for sleep or repose. The soul's will or the mind's could act from higher sources upon the sex-centre and the sex organs so as to check firmly or even banish the grosser sexual impulse or stimulus and instead of serving an animal excitation or crude drive or desire turn their use to the storing, production and direction towards brain and heart and life-force of the essential energy, *ojas*, of which this region is the factory so as to support the works of the mind and soul and spirit and the higher life-powers and limit the expenditure of the energy on lower things. The soul, the psychic being, could more easily fill all with the light and turn the very matter of the body to higher uses for its own greater purpose.

This would be a first potent change, but not by any means all that is possible or desirable. For it may well be that the evolutionary urge would proceed to a change of the organs themselves in their material working and use and diminish greatly the need of their instrumentation and even of their existence. The centres in the subtle body, *sukshma sharira*, of which one would become conscious and aware of all going on in it would pour their energies into material nerve and plexus and tissue and radiate them through the whole material body; all the physical life and its necessary activities in this new existence could be maintained and operated by these higher agencies in a freer and ampler way and by a less burdensome and restricting method. This might go so far that these organs might cease to be indispensable and even be felt as too obstructive: the central force might use them less and less and finally throw aside their use altogether. If that happened they might waste by atrophy, be reduced to an insignificant minimum or even disappear. The central force might substitute for them subtle organs of a very different character or, if anything material was needed, instruments that would be forms of dynamism or plastic transmitters rather than what we know as organs. This might well be part of a supreme total transformation of the body, though this too might not be final. To envisage such changes is to look far ahead and minds attached to the present form of things may be unable to give credence to their possibility. No such limits and no such impossibility of any necessary change can be imposed on the evolutionary urge. All has not to be fundamentally changed: on the contrary, all has to be preserved that is still needed in the totality, but all has to be perfected. Whatever is necessary for the evolutionary purpose for the increasing, enlarging, heightening of the consciousness, which seems to be its central will and aim here, or the progression of its enabling means and preserving environment has to be kept and furthered; but what has to be overpassed, whatever has no longer a use or is degraded, what has become unhelpful or retarding, can be discarded and dropped on the way. That has been evident in the history of the evolution of the body from its beginning in elementary forms to its most developed type, the human, there is no reason why this process should not intervene in the transition from the human into the divine body. For the manifestation or building of a divine body on earth there must be an initial transformation, the appearance of a new, a greater and more developed type, not a continuance with little modifications of the present physical form and its limited possibilities. What has to be preserved must indeed be preserved and that means whatever is necessary or thoroughly serviceable for the uses of the new life on earth; whatever is still needed and will

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# BOOKS in the BALANCE

## THE FLAME OF D'ANNUNZIO

THE FLAME OF LIFE By Gabriele D'Annunzio

(The Modern Library)

Years ago I read a panegyric by Arnold Bennett upon this novel of the famous Italian poet, that is an elaboration of his amour with the celebrated Eleonora Duse. Now that I have gone through the book itself, I am inclined to doubt Bennett's judgment. D'Annunzio the poet has tried to be in full blast in its prose. But I am afraid this heated prose has not the vibrant genuineness I prize. Though there is no denying that D'Annunzio has an extremely expressive mind, his expression here is rarely shot with imagination enough to make it great poetic literature. I find him more a rhetorician than a poet. There is a basic want of piercing felicitous vision and intuition in his language, and to cover that lack he has brought an artificial vehemence, a forced intensity.

The true *furor poeticus* does not shout and gesticulate: it has a deep reserve in the midst of even its dithyrambs: one feels that the Word simply has to be itself and its revelation is secured, there is no need to usher it with stage-effect and a flourish of trumpets. D'Annunzio appears mostly to clutch his words by the hair and drag them out, and, even then, they are generally the wrong sort! Wrong not in the sense of entire inappositeness, for whatever is said has a point and a power, but both point and power are without the crystallised keenness which forms poetry. The creative idea and the creative vision are absent and instead we have the oratorical effect, the histrionic gesture. The theme of the book is excellent because it deals with lights and shades of emotion and character which are of considerable value; only, the treatment of them is not equal to their intrinsic worth.

### A Many-Coloured Shriek

D'Annunzio tries almost throughout to keep up a high pitch of imaginative excitement and succeeds in producing little except verbal fever. There comes to one in all supreme passages of literature a perfect balance of vision and word, of thought and tone. No disproportion is there, resulting in mere sound-fury or falsetto. Poetry has been described as a fine excess, but it is never forced or flashy: it goes beyond the ordinary pitch of feeling and range of sight in order to give richness and magic, yet the strange new light falls as if from an atmosphere to which it is completely natural—it carries an authentic spontaneity, while D'Annunzio again and again seems to shake and fume and vociferate as though somehow the dream divine failed to glow and he were attempting to create a glaring heat to make us forget that the revelatory light is not there. It is quite true that in places the inspiration is genuine; still, he has the air of always giving us an apocalypse whereas in reality it is only brilliant

fireworks that we get. The poet in him has seen and felt the wonder and beauty of Venice and the moonlight that is love; hence we cannot escape being filled with a sense of the greatness of the theme and the picture, yet this is in spite of the writer and his work! We receive the touch of stupendous unheavals of experience without actually being stirred to our foundations by the account of them in the book. The tone is generally too loud, the writer thinks we would not catch the deepest secrets unless he bawled them out. D'Annunzio has flogged his heart and mind and the outcome is a many-coloured shriek. A man of immature genius has written the book: the genius is perceived in a certain verve and rush but it is put at the service of a pseudo-aesthetic consciousness which likes to be showy and dramatic: it underlines thickly every little phrase as an utterance of superlative value and it overcrowds every moment of experience with superfluous tensions. The play of the poet in D'Annunzio is obscured by the lavishness of the actor: a thousand pities!—since a really beautiful and profound subject is treated, a subject which should have given rise to a piercing and mighty yet unpretentious splendour.

### Brief Spells of Beauty

Surely, episodes occur where the language and attitude escape being hectic. Whenever Richard Wagner is introduced, we at once catch something genuine. The picture of him alive or in a faint or in the sleep of death is always impressive: somehow he seems to be the undeclared hero of the book—a hero mostly absent from the foreground of the story but present as a kind of ideal throughout. Perhaps D'Annunzio meant him to compare with Stelio Effrena, the central figure, and to confirm the portrayal of poetic frenzy attempted in the latter. I, however, find that he serves as a touchstone which shows up the rhetorical exuberance of Stelio by

his quiet and tremendous authenticity... Other passages of beauty can also be extricated: I liked the whole incident of the dogs in Lady Myrta's garden—there is in it a speed of imagination and a sympathetic insight. Then, the visit to the workshop where delicate dreams are shaped to glassware is memorable. I wish everything were as truly conceived and executed, and the language everywhere charged with the poetic vision such as animates the phrase about the stones of Venice "along the hidden veins of which the human spirit rises towards the ideal as the sap ascends to the flower through the fibres of the plant"—or the simple yet vividly true sentence: "And the still formless work he was nourishing leapt with a great shudder of life"—or, finally, that most magnificent image in the whole book: "An infinite smile diffused itself there, so infinite that the lines of her mouth trembled in it like leaves in the wind, her teeth shone in it like jasmine blossoms in the light of stars—the slenderest of shapes in a vast element". Why could not the man write always like that if he had a *penchant* for the prodigious? Or else why could he not avoid the empty painted hysteria in which he so often luxuriates, and express himself with a controlled beauty that never rings false?

### Too Much Conscious Poetry

Well, D'Annunzio has to be D'Annunzio, I suppose—and there must be many to admire him for being what he is. I cannot bring myself to worship either the writer or much of the man. The figure he cuts in Isadora Duncan's autobiography is very equivocal: one is made to think that he could play divinely the lover but at the same time there is an impression of shallowness and gush. It strikes me that there is too much conscious poetry about him—and whenever a thing like poetry which has to be deeply one with the pulse and the breath of life becomes outwardly conscious, it is liable to degenerate into a pose or at least an ornamental superficiality. The true poet is not over-anxious to flaunt the colours of his soul: his soul is too sensitive to bear a naked public exhibition—it is only to a few he undrapes himself and then too the undraping takes place almost unconsciously as if the secret form of his being caught fire with its own intensity and all the veils and coverings got burnt up. Or his genius and beauty reveal themselves by a mysterious movement which renders the veil concealing them vibrant with a dumb ecstasy, as it were—a warm darkness proclaiming most naturally the living

light behind. No show, no unnecessary *eclat* but a wonderfully revelatory reticence—that is the mark of the poet in life. Or if the reticence is not always there, a spontaneous bubbling as of a crystal-clear spring is felt—a white laughter and luminosity held out by a nature that has the simple calm and unpretentious firmness of rock. In any case, a quiet strength and authenticity surrounds and frames all that shimmer and flow. No matter how keen the rush, how bright the rapture, there is invariably a quality of inspired sleep accompanying them: that is to say, a kind of unconscious naturalness and inevitability with nothing cheap and vulgar and theatrical about it, though this does not preclude the grand pride or godlike confidence that inspiration has in itself through a Dante or a Milton or a Shakespeare sonneteer about

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### THE DIVINE BODY—Continued from page 9.

serve its purpose but imperfect, will have to be retained but developed and perfected; whatever is no longer of use for new aims or is a disability must be thrown aside. The necessary forms and instrumentations of Matter must remain since it is in a world of Matter that the divine life has to manifest, but their materiality must be refined, uplifted, ennobled, illumined, since Matter and the world of Matter have increasingly to manifest the indwelling Spirit.

The new type, the divine body, must continue the already developed evolutionary form; there must be a continuity from the type Nature has all along been developing, a continuity from the human to the divine body, no breaking away to something unrecognisable but a high sequel to what has already been achieved and in part perfected. The human body has in its parts and instruments that have been sufficiently evolved to serve the divine life; these have to survive in their form, though they must be still further perfected, their limitations of range and use removed, their liability to defect and malady and impairment eliminated, their capacities of cognition and dynamic action carried beyond the present limits. New powers have to be acquired by the body which our present humanity could not hope to realise, could not even dream of or could only imagine. Much that can now only be known, worked out or created by the use of invented tools and machinery might be achieved by the new body in its own power or by

the inhabitant spirit through its own direct spiritual force. The body itself might acquire new means and ranges of communication with other bodies, new processes of acquiring knowledge, a new aesthesis, new potencies of manipulation of itself and objects. It might not be impossible for it to possess or disclose means native to its own constitution, substance or natural instrumentation for making the far near and annulling distance, cognising what is now beyond the body's cognisance, acting where action is now out of its reach or its domain, developing subtleties and plasticities which could not be permitted under present conditions to the needed fixity of a material frame. These and other numerous potentialities might appear and the body become an instrument immeasurably superior to what we can now imagine as possible. There could be an evolution from a first apprehending truth-consciousness to the utmost heights of the ascending ranges of supermind and it may pass the borders of the supermind proper itself where it begins to shadow out, develop, delineate expressive forms of life touched by a supreme pure existence, consciousness and bliss which constitute the worlds of a highest truth of existence, dynamism of tapas, glory and sweetness of bliss, the absolute essence and pitch of the all-creating Ananda. The transformation of the physical being might follow this incessant line of progression and the divine body reflect or reproduce here in a divine life on the earth something of this highest greatness and glory of the self-manifesting Spirit.

# LIGHTS ON LIFE-PROBLEMS

(17)

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. Since the vital-hedonistic interpretation of the law of Karma whether applied to the present life or extended to future births is only a reflection of the lower ethical trend of humanity, there should be a higher working of the law of Karma corresponding to our higher ethical aspirations. What is the essential difference between this lower trend and the higher ethical aspiration?

A. 1. The higher ethical mind no longer follows good for a reward now on earth or in another existence, but for the sake of good, and no longer shuns evil for fear of punishment on earth later on in this life or else in another life or in hell, but because to follow evil is a degradation and affliction of its being and a fall from its innate and imperative endeavour. This is to it a necessity of its moral nature, a truly categorical imperative, a call that in the total more complex nature of man may be dulled or suppressed or excluded by the claim of its other parts and their needs, but to the ethical mind is binding and absolute. The virtue that demands a reward for acting well and needs a penalty to keep it walking in the straight way, is no real portion, no true law of the ethical being, but rather a mixed creation, a rule of his practical reason that seeks always after utility and holds that to be right which is helpful and expedient, a rule that looks first not at the growth of the soul but at the mechanical securing of a regulated outward conduct and to secure it bribes and terrifies the vital being into acquiescence and reluctant subordination of its own instincts and natural ventures. The virtue so created is an expediency, a social decency, a prudent limitation of egoism, a commercial substitute for the true thing; or, at best, it is a habit of the mind and not a truth of the soul and in the mind a fabrication, mixed and of inferior stuff, a conventional virtue, insecure, destructible by the wear and tear of life, easily confused with other expediencies or purchasable or conquerable by them,—it is not a high and clear upbuilding, and enduring and inwardly living self-creation of the soul.

Q. 2. Is conventional morality a part of the higher ethical trend of humanity or a result of its lower and limited expression? Does it not help the progress of humanity by exercising a stabilising influence over the unruly elements in our nature?

A. 2. Whatever its practical utility or service as a step of the transition, the mental habit of confusion and vitalistic compromise it fosters and the more questionable confusions and compromises that habit favours, have made conventional morality one of the chief of the forces that hold back human life from progressing to a true ethical order. If humanity has made any lasting and true advance, it has been not through the virtue created by reward and punishment or any of the conventional sanctions powerful on the little vital ego, but by an insistence from the higher mind on the lower, an insistence on right for its own sake, on imperative moral values, on an absolute law and truth of ethical being and ethical conduct that must be obeyed whatever the recalcitrances of the lower mind, whatever the pains of the vital problem, whatever the external result, the inferior issue.

Q. 3. But is not this higher ideal ethical tendency which discards all other standards and considerations and exclusively follows virtue for its own sake itself an exaggerated and extremist tendency making for rigidity and narrowness and often retarding and even opposing the progressive movement of life and soul?

A. 3. This kind of high absoluteness in the ethical demand is appalling to the flesh and the ego, for it admits of no comfortable indulgence and compromise, no abating reserves or conditions, no profitable compact between the egoistic life and virtue. It is offensive too to the practical reason, for it ignores the complexity of the world and of human nature and seems to savour of an extremism and exclusive exaggeration as dangerous to life as it is exalted in ideal purpose. *Fiat justitia ruat coelum*, let justice and right be done though the heavens fall, is a rule of conduct that only the ideal mind can accept with equanimity or the ideal life tolerate in practice. And even to the larger ideal mind this absoluteness becomes untrustworthy if it is an obedience not to the higher law of the soul, but to an outward moral law, a code of conduct. For then in place of a lifting enthusiasm we have the rigidity of the Pharisee, a puritan fierceness or narrowness or the life-killing tyranny of a single insufficient side of the nature. This is not yet that higher mental movement, but a straining towards it, an attempt to rise above the transitional law and the vitalistic compromise. And it brings with it an artificiality, a tension, a coercion,

often a repellent austerity which, disregarding as it does sanity and large wisdom and the simple naturalness of the true ethical mind and the flexibilities of life, tyrannising over but not transforming it, is not the higher perfection of our nature.

Q. 4. What is then the real value of this absolutist ethical tendency in the progressive perfection of our soul and nature? How can this tendency achieve its true fulfilment?

A. 4. There is here the feeling out after a great return to the output of moral energy, an attempt well worth making, if the aim can indeed so be accomplished, to build up by the insistence on a rigid obedience to a law of moral action that which is yet non-existent or imperfectly existent in us but which alone can make the law of our conduct a thing true and living,—an ethical being with an inalienably ethical nature. No rule imposed on him from outside, whether in the name of a supposed mechanical or impersonal law or of God or prophet, can be, as such, true or right or binding on man: it becomes that only when it answers to some demand or aids some evolution of his inner being. And when that inner being is revealed, evolved, at each moment naturally active, simply and spontaneously imperative, then we get the true, the inner and intuitive Law in its light of self-knowledge, its beauty of self-fulfilment, its intimate life significance. An act of justice, truth, love, compassion, purity, sacrifice becomes then the faultless expression, the natural outflowing of our soul of justice, our soul of truth, our soul of love and compassion, our soul of purity or sacrifice. And before the greatness of its imperative mandate to the outer nature the vital being and the practical reason and surface seeking intelligence must and do bow down as before something greater than themselves, something that belongs directly to the divine and the infinite.

Q. 5. What is the nature and significance of the higher Law of Karma corresponding to this higher ethical trend of human nature?

A. 5. It is here that we get the clue to the higher Law of Karma, of the output and returns of energy, and see it immediately and directly to be what all law of Karma, really and ultimately, if at first covertly, is for man, a law of his spiritual evolution. The true return to the act of virtue, to the ethically right output of his energy—his reward, if you will, and the sole recompense on which he has a right to insist,—is its return upon him in a growth of the moral strength within him, an upbuilding of his ethical being, a flowering of the soul of right, justice, love, compassion, purity, truth, strength, courage, self-giving that he seeks to be. The true return to the act of evil, to the ethically wrong output of energy—his punishment, if you will, and the sole penalty he has any need or right to fear,—is its return upon him in a retardation of the growth, a demolition of the upbuilding, an obscuration, tarnishing, impoverishing of the soul, of the pure, strong and luminous being that he is striving to be. An inner happiness he may gain by his act, the calm, peace, satisfaction of the soul fulfilled in right, or an inner calamity, the suffering, disturbance, unease and malady of its descent or failure, but he can demand from God or moral Law no other. The ethical soul—not the counterfeit but the real,—accepts the pains and sufferings and difficulties and fierce intimidations of life, not as a punishment for its sins, but as an opportunity and trial, an opportunity for its growth, a trial of its built or native strength, and good fortune and all outer success not as a coveted reward of virtue, but as an opportunity also and an even greater more difficult trial. What to this high seeker of Right can mean the vital law of Karma or what can its gods do to him that he can fear or long for? The ethical-vitalistic explanation of the world and its meaning and measures has for such a soul, for man at this height of his evolution no significance. He has travelled beyond the jurisdiction of the Powers of the middle air, the head of his spirit's endeavour is lifted above the dull grey-white belt that is their empire.

K. G.

## BOOKS in the BALANCE—Continued from page 10.

his "powerful rhyme" and its ability to outlast monuments of brass and marble. Sometimes the sterling artist and the gaudy actor co-exist: but we must never mix them up

and even when we cherish the former we must realise how the latter flaws and diminishes him.

"LIBRA"

# DIVALI: ITS SIGNIFICANCE

BY M. PANDIT

Few proofs of the essential oneness and solidarity of this vast country are more convincing than the institution of her Festivals. No doubt Bharatavarsha has been from the very beginnings of her recorded history, criss-crossed with a large number of kingdoms and sub-kingdoms, peopled with so many stocks and clans. Each of them had its own characteristic way of life, social outlook and practice and tended to pride itself on its own ways and belittle those of others. In a well-known episode of the Mahabharata, Karna, the stalwart of the Kurus' cause, pours ridicule and contempt upon the customs of the Madra people in a manner that indicates a very concrete and sharp divergence and a lively sense of rivalry among the different peoples of the land. Yet over-riding and over-shadowing all the local variations stood like a sentinel the one Master-Tradition that has spread all over the country and not only welded it into a living whole but has continued to this day to hold it together. That is the undefinable Dharma,—the spiritual, the religious and, in a larger sense, the cultural tradition of India. From Kamrup to Dwarka, from Kanya Kumari to Kashmir it is the same conception of Man's Quest, the same high-roads along which course the strivings and expressions of the life-force and thought, individual and communal, that grip our attention.

India is a land of vast dimensions. Intersected with gigantic rivers and mountains, impenetrable forests and endless plains, this country was never served, till recently, with proper means of communication. And yet we find that the Dwija of Khatamandu recites the famous prayer to the Lord Sun, Gayatri, in precisely the same intonation, the same accents, to the very syllable, in which another does on the banks of the Kauveri. And Gayatri is just one mantra of the thousands that have been handed down from mouth to mouth and preserved throughout in their pristine form. We do not know if there are many parallels to this unique phenomenon dating from a dateless past. We cite this as just illustrative of the sameness of Tradition which is more spectacularly brought to the eye by our cycle of Festivals.

## A Web of Many Strands

An Indian festival, like the Divali, is a picturesque web into the making of which so many strands have gone—religious, social and cultural—a raiment that adorns the entire fabric of society, cherished and preserved by all alike, men and women, old and young, in all the quarters of the land, north and south, east and west. There may be variations in details, differences in the social values attached thereto observable in the celebrations in the different parts of the country. Thus for instance, in Maharashtra the Divali is not merely a religious festival, but an occasion for family reunions, the meeting of brothers and sisters and also the commencement of the fresh crop-year. But in the south of Maharashtra in the Western Ghats, the occasion is more looked upon as the parting of the seasons and the coming of the sunny weather. In Bengal it is still different. But these details are really inconsequential. The Event which this occasion is, all over, understood to celebrate is one and one alone. Divali, or more correctly Dipavali, the Row of Lights, is the joyous celebration of the death of the Titan of Hell, Narakāsura at the hands of Lord Krishna: the Lord has eliminated, at long last, the Beelzebub, the champion of darkness, the contamination that afflicted Earth is washed away and the myriad lights are put on to signalise His Victory which is indeed won for us His dear children.

The origin of this celebration is of course, to be traced to our mythology. But a myth, be it noted, is no yarn. It was Ruskin who described the myth as a story with a meaning attached to it other than what is apparent and a characteristic feature of it, he went on to add, is something extraordinary about its circumstances. And if we proceed to narrate here the story of Narakāsura it is with a view to draw the attention of the reader to the deeper

significance of the festival, usually lost sight of in the socialities that have crowded round it.

## Fight Between Titan and God

The earliest mention of this story is to be found in the Mahabharata (*Sabhaparva*), its southern rescension. But it is also to be found, with slight variations, in the Bhagavata. Briefly told this is the episode:

Bhauma, son of the Earth, also known as Narakāsura was the king of Prāgyjotisha-pura. By virtue of his prowess and the boons secured by merit of Tapas from God, he became all-powerful and an intolerable menace to the gods, sages and to all men of piety. He conquered and plundered—not only the earth but the heavens as well. He carried away the daughter of Twashtr, the divine architect, and also the fair daughters of the gods, gandharvas and others, numbering about a little more than sixteen thousand—all imprisoned in his mountain retreat. As a crowning piece of effrontery he robbed Aditi, the Mother of the Gods, of her ornamental ear-rings. That was too much for the Gods to bear and headed by Indra they supplicated Sri Krishna at Dwarka to kill Naraka, as none else was equal to the task. Sri Krishna readily consented and proceeded to the capital of Narakāsura. Alone, unaided he fought the hosts, eliminated his five commanders. The course of his advance, as described in the narrative, is interesting. First he had to rip open the six thousand sharp pointed fencings (*pāsha*), then surmount a rocky and mountainous region and then wade through the red waters of the River (*lohita-gangā*); after crossing another river he reached Prāgyjotisha-pura. He met and killed the demons in their thousands and then plunged into the very bowels of the Earth, the *pātāla loka*, the nether regions, and confronted the Titan. There ensued a fierce encounter. Sri Krishna dallied with him as it were and Naraka aimed his powerful Shakti towards Sri Krishna. But he was unhurt, he stood as if he had been "hit by a garland." And before Naraka could use the next weapon his head was cut asunder in the twinkling of the eye by the famous disc, *chakra*, of the Lord. Bhumi, Earth, arose and handed over the ear-rings of Aditi to the Lord and said:

*He (Naraka) was created by you;*

*He is ended by you as well;*

*May you sport in your glory!*

Sri Krishna thereafter rescued the imprisoned damsels who were pining for him, the Liberator long heralded by Narada, and at their earnest prayers took them for wives. The ear-rings were returned to Aditi and all was once more well.

**Celebration of Earth's Deliverance**  
This in brief is the legend. And it is this deliverance of Earth and her peoples from the clutches of the Dark Asura of Hell that is celebrat-

ed with such joy and enthusiasm by a grateful people. Early in the morning, before sunrise, they get up from their beds, anoint themselves with oil for a holy bath to wash out the contamination caused by the very existence of Naraka. Bathed, they celebrate the day with sweets, presents and mutual visits. In Maharashtra there is a system of the sister in the house worshipping with *ārati* her brother or brothers. The brother stands for Sri Krishna who did the meritorious deed. Before stepping into the special square, lined with various designs in corn-powder, to receive the worship, the brother tastes a particular bitter fruit (*Karith*, in Marathi) which Sri Krishna is said to have tasted before setting out for the kill. As the evening approaches, all the houses are lit up, rows after rows of lamps and lights are lit, the *dipa-āvali*; there is no darkness anywhere; it is slain. All is light and light.

## Striking Features of the Myth

Such a beautiful myth as this cannot be dissected and analysed without doing violence to its rounded perfection. We would rather leave the reader to feel the poetic imagery of the conception underlying this Saga of Lights, by himself in the privacy of his soul. We would only draw attention to a few striking features of this narration.

Prāg-ijyotisha-pura—the city of Light in the East (the East is where the light first breaks in)—is the scene of the Battle. The contestants are Sri Krishna, the Avatar of the Supreme God Vishnu, and Bhauma—born of Bhumi—i.e. son of Earth, also known as Narakā-asura, the Titan of Hell. This has made life impossible on earth. He even strays into the region of the celestials, robs ornaments of Aditi, the Great Creatrix of the Gods and carries away by force the daughters of the Gods and conceals them in his mountain retreat. Who else can this Titan be but the Dark Force of Ignorance—that is born of Earth—that afflicts the life of Earth and her peoples, the Ignorance that imprisons Light and Knowledge? The correspondence between Bhauma's imprisonment of these *Kanyās* and the concealment of the Vedic Cows by Vala or the Panis is too patent to be miss-

ed. Also glaring is the similarity in the means of their deliverance. The Mighty God himself has to come, smash away every obstacle, thick and hard, and kill the arch-enemy with a blow. There it is Indra that does it; here it is Sri Krishna. Once this is done the daughters are liberated and are wedded to the Lord towards whom they rightly aspire. The theme is the same. A decisive conquest of the challenging Darkness and Ignorance by the liberating Power which results in the release and the flooding of the concealed Light.

There are other legends current in different parts of the country in connection with Dipavali. But the most ancient and sanctified by hoary tradition is the Krishna-Narakāsura episode with which we associate this festival, in common with great men that have gone before us. So, the Lights are on. The Path is cleared and man's journey towards his Destiny has been rendered safe by the Leading Power. This is the message flashed out by the little leaping flames which all of us Indians delight in lighting up once a year, to remind ourselves, as it were, that the period of sloth, *tamas*, is past, the days of progress and endeavour have come.

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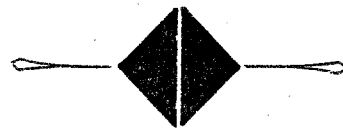
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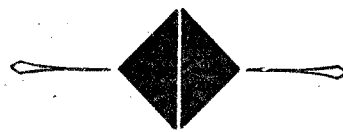
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