

# MOTHER INDIA

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"GREAT IS TRUTH AND IT SHALL PREVAIL"

ALTERNATE SATURDAYS

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# THE WAR BEHIND THE WAR

May 7 marked the fourth anniversary of the end of World War II. Now that Hitler is past history and there is the threat of a new war we are liable to forget the true significance of those six years of sweat and tears and blood which were required to beat Nazism to its knees and how the newly threatened calamity may be really of a piece with the nature of that terrible period.

The truth about the last war will not be grasped simply by looking at the material surface of things nor even by examining the ideological forces at work. The New Order of Hitler, in the aid of which his Panzers and Luftwaffe went out to battle and the Gestapo and the Fifth Column of Quislings spread everywhere their tentacles, was not a mere man's conception. Its origin was occult, lying in the mystery that the world has always felt vaguely as the background against which the mundane drama is enacted. The truth, therefore, about the last war will best be grasped if we consider the support given to the Allied cause from the very outset and in its darkest hours by one who stands today as the greatest explorer of the occult background—Sri Aurobindo.

## Nazism and Sri Aurobindo

The support was given with an extreme decisiveness that cut down to roots deeper than any difference between one human way of life and another, between even a human civilisation and a human barbarism. That extreme decisiveness coming from a master of spirituality like Sri Aurobindo pointed to a vision of Hitlerism as the arch-enemy not just of Britain's or France's or America's outer dominion and of their type of culture but also of all that Sri Aurobindo himself has made it his mission to accomplish. He saw much more at stake than a political, social or cultural issue. He saw an issue beyond the human, the growth of God in man opposed from regions occult to our normal consciousness. And he saw that secret opposition as the most colossal in history and not confined to a brief outbreak.

Many people believed that Nazism would be a temporary phase and its enormities would pass and the true Germany automatically rise to the fore and there would again be lovely music and great literature and towering philosophy. Sri Aurobindo never subscribed to this sunny view. On the contrary, he held that Nazism, in the form in which we then saw it, was, in spite of its terrible ugliness, no more than a small and slight beginning of a darkness of which we had no idea! It was to him the spearhead of an all-out offensive from the Pit. Its success would not be a passing phenomenon which would exhaust itself and let human life return to its old way of understandable though serious frailties relieved by admirable strengths. Its success would herald the beginning of an age in which the diabolic would reign over the human, make the advent of divine forces impossible for untold centuries and render the fight for the Spirit, whenever the fight did manage to come, a far more difficult and doubtful Armageddon than anything we could know during those days. Nazism, in Sri Aurobindo's opinion, had to be struck dead: there could be no complacency about it, no sitting on the fence, no comparing it to the savageries of past times and hoping for a swing-back to normal humanity.

From the occult standpoint, Nazism is the exact opposite pole to the Aurobindonian dynamis. It is no brief outbreak touching the superficies of material life or a few domains of it but an attempt at total supremacy because the Aurobindonian dynamis is also bent on an all-comprehensive integrality of effect on earth. Sri Aurobindo's spirituality is not a grand escape from life's riddle: it is a radical solution of it. If his work were meant to be nothing more than a going inward and upward from the mate-

rial plane to a hidden soul-status unborn and unmanifest, he would not have bothered about the Hitlerite colossus striding over mankind. Sri Aurobindo is for creating *lebensraum* for the Spirit here and now. And what is finally determinative of his being the upper pole to Hitler's nether is that he is for divinising the material consciousness and substance and form no less than the subtle parts of our nature—a transformation never clearly envisaged by the saints, sages and prophets of the past despite their intuition that the material world has come originally from the Divine. The Yoga of those saints, sages and prophets, even when not thoroughly escapist, would not be completely baulked if its function of manifesting the Divine on earth were checked or nullified, for its ultimate goal was still a fulfilment in some Beyond at the end of earth-life. But a unique Yoga insisting on fulfilment by an integral divine manifestation in matter itself and not proceeding to an unearthly hereafter, a Yoga aiming to lay hands on every side of us for the creation of a new race, would have its bottom blown clean away by the triumph of Nazism. Conversely, if the Aurobindonian New Order were allowed to make headway, the powers embodying themselves in movements like Nazism would suffer definite defeat and their hold on earth be fundamentally loosened. So, against this divine march upon the terrestrial plane with the purpose of basing there for good the Truth-Consciousness, there is the counter-march from the occult home of Falsehood to gain a permanent grip. Because Sri Aurobindo knew what he himself was luminously labouring at he perceived in one flash the whole character and menace of Nazism.

## Nature's Evolution and its Occult Background.

To gauge that character and menace we must look through Sri Aurobindo's eyes at Nature and her evolution towards the Spirit. Nature on earth starts with an involution of the Divine, an immense "Inconscience." Out of this, life and mind and soul emerge, by slow purblind groping through the potentialities of life and mind and soul involved in matter and by a strong guiding pressure of these things from the planes above the material, where they have their organised activities. Spirit and Supermind are the highest terms involved, holding in themselves the key to an entire fulfilment of all the others in a perfected physical frame. The difficulties of evolution lie, in the first place, in the pervading unconsciousness which is our base in Nature and the separative half-consciousness which crystallises out of it. These are undivine factors, posited at the beginning of a special form of manifestation of the Divine, the working out of a particular possibility, the possibility of the Divine's emergence from what seems at the outset the very negation of Him. But there is another factor at work which derives from beyond material Nature. This is not merely undivine: it is also anti-divine. The undivine resists by sheer inertia, the anti-divine by a various strategy of attack. And the attack comes from occult dimensions of being.

Behind the evolutionary earth-scene there are typical worlds fixed in a certain order and harmony of their own. These worlds are of darkness as well as light. There is no progress on their own levels, they are content with their own types, possessing their peculiar nature fully expressed and deploying it in diverse fashions. But that contentment with full self-play does not preclude their desire to extend the play of their satisfaction from the occult to the material. They make the earth-scene their battlefield. And as the earth-scene starts with an involution of the Divine, a concealment of Spirit, the occult worlds of darkness find an earlier rôle than those of light. "On the black rock of the Inconscience" they build their edifices with greater immediate success. That is why evolution is not only aeonic

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# THE WAR BEHIND THE WAR

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but chockful of stupendous setbacks, demolitions of half-achieved good, perversions of delicately established beauty. That is why man in spite of his Godward urge makes so little advancement and centuries see him but grandiosely shifting from tweedledum to tweedledee, remaining pitifully the same in his heart under all camouflages of outer form. That is why every truth gets twisted in the long run and becomes actually a species of untruth, religion grows an obscurantist blight and art a decadent saturnalia, philosophy a riot of sophisms and politics a huge machinery for exploiting the many in the interests of the few. O so slow is the journey of the Gods! Always the path is cluttered and broken by jagged masses of influence from mysterious worlds where brutality and blindness are the principles on which existence is founded in a non-evolving immutable mould.

## The Titan, the Giant, the Demon

Three kinds of beings dwell in the hideous harmony of those worlds. The Indian terms are: Asura, Rakshasa, Pisacha. In English they may be translated: Titan, Giant, Demon. Each has a special function. The Asura is a being who comes with great powers of thought, not a beautiful and systematic movement but a formidable vehemence of it. He has also great "moral" powers, he can be self-controlled, ascetic and chaste in his own life, a sort of inverted Yogi, but all his gifts of *tapasya* he uses for selfish and violent ends. His aim is to pluck civilisation from the roots, destroy all humane and progressive impulse, regiment the spontaneous diversity of life into a ruthless movement of robots, drink the exultation of triumph by breaking with an iron heel the dreaming heart of man. The Rakshasa is a devourer without brains, the ravager who builds nothing except a pyramid of skulls. He ploughs up the world into a myriad graves and leaves it a chaos of corpses. He is naked greed run amok. The Pisacha fouls and pollutes all things, he is the wallower in dirt and the necrophage, the inventor of obscene tortures, the mutilating maniac. The Asura is the General, the Fuhrer of the army of darkness; the Rakshasa is the lieutenant, the henchman; the Pisacha is the private, the storm-trooper.

They are no symbols or imaginary figures by which man visualises his own imperfections and evil instincts. Rather the evil instincts are the signs in him of the subtle presence of powers and personalities that have their habitat in non-human and preternatural spheres. It is because these spheres are of a perverse bliss in which the cruel, the wry and the filthy are hideously harmonised for ever to yield enjoyment, that man feels a pleasure in his own basenesses, an attachment to his crookedness and suffering, a reluctance to give up his blindness and lust in spite of all the misery his higher self sees and feels in them—a reluctance as if blindness and lust were things to be cherished, precious components of the life-drama, indispensable art-elements of the cosmic scheme. But man's love of the base and the torturesome becomes not just one part of his nature but almost his whole being when the Asura, with his attendant Rakshasa and Pisacha, so clutches human nature that it becomes one with that occult and rigid reality. Then we have an incarnation of adverse forces, the dark deities, and they shape out a collectivity, a nation, a state with the purpose of goose-stepping on the world and smashing the entire fabric of civilisation. Such a catastrophic invasion has taken place in our own times and with a thoroughness proportionate to the thoroughness with which the spiritual Light has sought embodiment and outflowering.

## The War's Profound Meaning

Hence the last war was not like any other war and Nazism was not a recrudescence of man's ignorance but the beginning of a new era of changeless horror and terror, the most monstrous onslaught made from Preternature to found here the empire of Satanism. The human consciousnesses well-nigh dies in those who embody the preternatural hierarchy—for the simple reason that the human becomes as good as possessed. And because the possession is so extreme, the task of defeating the Asura and his band was both so imperative and arduous. It is no wonder a large number of combatants as well as neutrals kept asking: Can Hitler be defeated? Yet the very enormity of the invasion called forth the hidden powers of Light from behind the veil. And though it is harder for the human instrument to be a channel of the Divine than to be a medium of the Diabolic, we must remember that the Divine is the infinite while the Diabolic is nothing save the immense. If the Diabolic finds an easier rôle, the Divine brings a vaster capacity—and slowly, step by step, the forces of Light were mobilised and trained and hurled against the foe. There could be no parleying, no compromise, no appeasement. The Asura cannot be converted: he has got to be broken.

However dimly, this truth was seized by the Allied nations. Churchill gave it the most dynamic push possible, short of the directly occult and spiritual. When France lay prostrate and Hitler announced that on the fifteenth of August that year he would address the world from Buckingham Palace and the endless Luftwaffe over Britain seemed a goddess of winged victory for him, Churchill knew that there could be neither turning back

nor knuckling under. Whatever his defects in colonial policy, he was magnificent under that day-to-day rain of high-explosive, and his instinct of the superhuman truth at stake marked him out as an instrument *par excellence* of the Divine in the war. In far-away India was raised a voice guided not by instinct but by a shining insight. Strangely enough, the voice was of one whose day of birth was the fifteenth of August, the exact day on which Hitler hoped to celebrate the death of all that mankind valued. It was the sole clear and clarion-like voice amidst a chaos of political quarrels that was confusing India's mind *vis-à-vis* the occult conflict which had made our world its stage. India, who had known God as no other country in the past, was weak, fumbling and hesitant, obsessed by her political animosity against Britain and oblivious of the wider and deeper call to which Churchillian Britain had responded. Sri Aurobindo stood alone in his sun-bright seeing of the war's inner significance. He declared his unrestricted sympathy, his unconditional support—"whatever may happen", as his own words had it in his message to the Governor of Madras in connection with the Viceroy's fund. At the back of those words was the whole mystical puissance of an Integral Yoga, a puissance that worked secretly like a dynamo sending out world-currents, driving a vast invisible inspired strength into the armies and navies and air-forces ranged against Hitler.

When history-books are written, these armies and navies and air-forces together with the men at the head of the Allied governments figure large in them. The praise they get is amply deserved by their idealism, courage, perseverance and skill. But whoever understands the profound meaning of the war and senses the incorporeal clash of which it was the outer reverberation will surely recognise, as the active antithesis to the occult evil that threatened utterly to engulf mankind through Hitler, the occult good that promises to lift mankind utterly to the heights through Sri Aurobindo.

## Signs for the Future

And whoever understands the war's profound meaning will also realise that Nazism, though defunct in its Hitlerite shape, may yet prepare a new attack and that it would be an error to regard all enemies of Hitler as having been children of Light. In the world of the Titan, the Giant and the Demon there are many principalities and the wrestle among them is part of the hideous harmony in which evil exists independently behind the earth-scene. Hence, against one principality trying to precipitate itself upon earth, another doing the same may be pitted side by side with the resistance-movement by evolving man. As soon as that principality has been crushed, those who were comrades because of a common enemy may break up and once again evolving man may confront man acting under the spell of the Titan, the Giant and the Demon. Some element of the anti-Nazism of the past may itself be dyed with essentially the same darkness. The future must learn to see behind the masks and identify in spite of deceptive colours the face of evil by a combination of four signs—the denial of God and of the divine spark in the human, the totalitarian freedom-stifling grip on the individual's mind and body, the acceptance of violence as basic to self-expression, the conspiracy to spread by all available means discontent and disorder in every country whose government pursues the ideal of political democracy.

## The Called and the Chosen

(AFTER SEEING SRI AUROBINDO ON 24TH APRIL, 1949)

All chains that bind and terrors that loom  
To quell the heart, all tears that move  
The soul to disown the flowers that bloom  
On aspiration's heights we love,

Be now a thing of memory,  
A living lesson that one who is called  
Will win to thy eternity  
Which only coward fears forestalled.

We are thy mountaineers who must  
Forswear our plains of phantom ease  
And pointless living and cramping lust  
To hail thy peak which dream-clouds kiss.

Who beholds thy face of imperial light  
Is filled with a gleaming certitude:  
That those whom thou hast chosen—no night  
Shall ever reclaim nor glammers delude.

DILIP KUMAR ROY

# The LIVING MOMENT

## Glimpses of Men and Events

### INDIA TO STAY IN COMMONWEALTH

We welcome the decision reached at the Commonwealth conference that India should remain a full and equal member of what henceforth may be called "the Commonwealth of Nations" after she becomes a Republic. It may seem that to remain within the Commonwealth in any form is inconsistent with India's sovereignty which is essential for her free growth as a great nation and that India should have come out of the Commonwealth altogether and then formed association with it through the usual international means of treaties. What, it may be asked, is the gain if India retains a last link of the chain which so long bound her to Britain? But however evil and undesirable that chain might have been, British rule in India has created certain close relationships, cultural and economic, which it is to the advantage of India to retain even when she becomes politically independent, and this purpose will be best served if she retains the link, at least for some time more.

And we must remember that this link is not at all a dependence. In the agreement reached by the Commonwealth statesmen, India is to regard the King who is the present head of the Commonwealth as the symbol of free association among the Member-Nations. The other countries are expected to reaffirm their allegiance to the Crown, and at the same time accept Republican India—to whom this allegiance will not apply—as an equal partner in the Commonwealth. By this agreement India will recognise the symbolic status of the King in the larger context of Commonwealth association, thus linking herself with the other Member-Nations. But the King will have no function so far as India is concerned, as in the context of Indian Republican status he will not be the King of India as he now is. India's relations with the other members of the Commonwealth will remain unchanged after she be-

comes a Republic. The future elected President of Republican India will not be the representative of the King. He will express the sovereign will of the people of India and exercise the power to appoint Ambassadors and sign international treaties.

Thus India is not going to be a full member of the Commonwealth in the sense of being subordinate or accepting any dictation in either her internal or her foreign policy. She is to be an independent Republic in every respect and the King of England will not be her King, and the Commonwealth, no longer to be called British Commonwealth by her will have no control over her. The association with the Commonwealth is meant only to prevent her standing in isolation so that if she is attacked there will be a powerful force interested in her not going down unhelped before the attack. It is evident that when Powers which would like to fall upon India see that she has this backing, they will refrain from any such adventure; while if they see her isolated, they might not hesitate. It is very clear that there is no longer a world in which one can stand isolated and be safe.

It does credit to the Prime Minister of India that he did not yield at all on the issue of India being an independent Republic, and at the same time induced the Dominion Prime Ministers to accept her as a full and equal member of the Commonwealth. It also proved the flexibility of that great institution, the British Commonwealth. It is through such free associations that the ultimate harmony of the world will be achieved and the dream of human unity realised.

### NEHRU MEETS SHAW

Immediately after achieving what seemed like "squaring the circle"—the reconciliation of the concept of India the sovereign independent Republic with the concept of the British Commonwealth of nations—Pandit Nehru could not have acted

more appropriately than by meeting as he did, that master of surprise and paradox, Bernard Shaw. Nor could Nehru have done anything more appropriately than by meeting, than giving him not the usual presents one might anticipate, such as a model of the Taj Mahal or a statuette of Nataraja or a pocket edition of the Bhagwad Gita, but that most unexpected symbol of his country—the mango!

The mango is indeed a symbol of Indianism. In the world of fruits it is as essentially Indian as olives are Greek, grapes French, figs Spanish, oranges Maltese and dates Arabian. Even more so—since it is a stauncher nationalist than any of them inasmuch as it has refused to thrive to any marked degree in a non-Indian soil although Burmah, Ceylon, Egypt, Brazil and the U.S.A. have done their best to plant mango groves. It is also as old as Indian history: the specimens Nehru put into Shaw's hands are known by botanists to have had four thousand years of ancestors behind them in the land of Krishna and Buddha, Harsha and Asoka, Rana Pratap and Shivaji, Rammohun Roy and Tilak.

Further, the mango is fraught with the flavour and bouquet of the typical Indian genius which in its unity combines a large diversity of elements so that India is a sort of microcosm of all humanity's numerous cultural and racial types: this fruit, as a recent writer on its many merits pointed out, holds in its own unique taste and smell the presence of the apricot, the melon, the peach and the pineapple and is, to Europeans, suggestive even of turpentine! What is more, we learn from the same writer that in the *Hitopadesha* and *Pancha Tantra* it is regarded as not only the medicine *par excellence* for humans but also the food of the Gods. It is, therefore, the emblem of the spiritual delight which is said to sustain the celestial realms and we are told that according to ancient records certain varieties of this fruit were actually "named after the Gods themselves for whom they were supposed to be the approved and relished *bhog* or offering." India the seeker of the Supreme Spirit can very well consider the mango as suggestively summing up at the same time the high ideal of her inner life and the sacrificial, the dedicative, the detached attitude which is commanded to the idealistic soul by Krishna in the famous phrase: "Thou hast a right to the work but not to the fruit thereof."

A most poetic and profound gesture, then, can be read in Nehru's action, conveying to Shaw the truth and beauty of India in the shape of the mango. But an added touch of the sympathetic imagination may be found if we realise that no other figure among the intellectuals in England could be so fitting a recipient of this delicacy as Shaw. Shaw is the most emphatic voice raised there against the superfluity no less than barbarity of eating flesh. Throughout his life he has stressed that from the nutritive point of view it is not in the least necessary for man to be a carnivorous animal. All that the body needs, says he, is found in vegetables and fruits. But perhaps even Shaw did not know that in the mango we have the complete food: medical dieticians inform us that here are all the ingredients required to keep the body vibrant with every

conceivable vitamin! Hence the mango is the master confirmation of the Shavian thesis.

An even deeper aspect of Shavianism is hidden in this fruit. But before we touch upon it let us refer to a lighter side of the situation of Nehru's giving Shaw the mango. The Irish thinker and wit, with his grand beard, reminds us of the story in which an Iranian traveller who had returned to the court of a great Shah saved his life by a brilliant brain-wave. The traveller praised to the Shah the wonderful Indian fruit of the mango. The potentate told him that the praises had no point unless the mango's taste could be described. "If you cannot tell us," the traveller was informed, "what the mango tastes like, we shall cut off that head of yours which is so full of vain words." The poor fellow was in panic. Then a thought struck him. He called for honey. Dipping both his hands in the jar he smeared his own big beard with the sweet stuff and, holding it towards the astonished Shah, said: "If Your Majesty deigns to taste of the honey on this most humble beard, the taste of the mango will be revealed." The Shah, we are told, "was so impressed by the novelty of the proposal that he made the traveller his vizier." "What the traveller did to convey the mango's deliciousness has indeed a strong taste of the mind and personality of the original and impudent yet patriarchal Shaw.

The most profoundly Shavian association, however, of the mango is by way of a pun. Often has Shaw declared that the mere change of institutions and outer forms of social structure is of no avail if man does not change himself, set astir his imagination and dynamise his will and evolve into a better brain for the purpose of fulfilling the immense potentialities of wisdom and harmony lying within that secret Something which is at the back of all being and striving, that secret Something called the Holy Ghost in the past and named the Life Force by Shaw. No doubt, the Shavian gospel lacks the true mystical sense and urge; too many intellectual hedgings have taken away from the new version of the Holy Ghost the dynamics of divinity; but an intense dissatisfaction and disgust with materialism and mechanism animate Shaw and some touch he does bring of the "prophetic Soul of the wide world, dreaming on things to come." The cry which Nietzsche raised of "surpassing man" and going beyond to a new formula of embodied consciousness is ever on Shaw's lips, though Shaw is not a strict partizan of Nietzsche's apotheosis of strength and aggression and reckless rapture. It is no use, says Shaw, our playing variations on the theme of Man: we must make this theme give place to a new one—the Superman. Our life, in Shaw's view, will be genuinely fruitful if we keep always in mind man's passing and superman's advent. Of this genuine fruitfulness we can very well conceive Shaw himself ingeniously making the mango expressive. Perhaps the extreme pleasure with which he accepted Nehru's offering was due to the fact that the word "mango" sounds the first note of his world-message which, in brief, is:

"Man, go! Superman, come!"

### Light-Sentinel

(AFTER SEEING THE MOTHER ON 24TH APRIL, 1949)

Lone sentinel gazing on the sleep  
Of earth's heaven-remembered heart  
Too buried to feel the darkness-pang,  
And caverns of twilight-distances  
And unborn vistas of eyeless gloom—  
White and eternal the Mother-flame  
Watching forever the naked universe,  
Her sun-child cradled in somnolence.

With unfettered and limitless will  
To nurse the poignant golden seed  
Entombed in death's forgetful sheath,  
And all Her deep ocean-wide love  
Turned from far heavens of trance  
To fill the narrow dungeon of pain,  
She lingers on the gateway of the dawn,  
Waiting to release the titan source  
Of light's unbarred magnificence  
And turn the dust into a crystal flame—  
An offering-rose on the altars of the Supreme.

ROMEN



# LIGHTS ON LIFE-PROBLEMS

(7)

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

- Q. 1: The extremist type of modern mind has dismissed religion altogether by branding it as a mass of superstitious nonsense but a more moderate type of that mind has taken a less intolerant attitude to it by not banishing it entirely but by creating what it calls a rational religion. Is this rational religion of any value?
- A. This more moderate attitude of the rational mind to religion is as shallow, presumptuous and erroneous as the thoroughgoing extremist attitude. Its attempts to explain religion have resulted in the compilation of an immense mass of amazingly ingenious perversions, such as certain pseudo-scientific attempts to form a comparative Science of Religion, which have built up in the approved style immense façades of theory with stray bricks of misunderstood facts for their material. Its mild condonations of religion have led to superficial phases of thought which have passed quickly away. Its efforts at the creation of a rational religion, perfectly well-intentioned, but helpless and unconvincing, have had no appreciable effect and have failed. A purely rational religion could only be a cold and bare Deism, and such attempts have always failed to achieve vitality and permanence; for they act contrary to the *dharma*, the natural law and spirit of religion.
- Q. 2: Has religion then nothing to do with reason?
- A. The essence of religion, apart from its outward machinery of creed, cult, ceremony and symbol, is the search for and the finding of God, the infinite, absolute, one, divine who is all these things and yet no abstraction but a Being, and the living out of the relations between man and God, relations of unity, relations of difference, relations of an illuminated knowledge, an ecstatic love and delight, an absolute surrender and service, a casting of every part of our existence out of its normal status into an uprush of man towards the Divine which brings a descent of the Divine into man. All this has nothing to do with the realm of reason or its normal activities; its aim, its sphere, its process is supra-rational. The knowledge of God is not to be gained by weighing the feeble arguments of reason for or against his existence: it is to be gained only by a self-transcending and absolute consecration, aspiration and experience.
- Q. 3: Is there no similarity between the mode of religious experience and the method of rational scientific experiment or rational philosophic thinking?
- A. No. Even in those parts of religious discipline which seem most to resemble scientific experiment, the method is a verification of things which exceed the reason and its timid scope; and even in those parts of religious knowledge which seem most to resemble intellectual operations, the illuminating faculties are not imagination, logic and rational judgment, but revelations, inspirations, intuitions, intuitive discernments which come from a plane of supra-rational light. The love of God is an infinite and absolute feeling which does not admit of any rational limitation and does not use a language of rational worship and adoration; the delight in God is that peace and bliss which passes all understanding. The surrender to God is the surrender of the whole being to a supra-rational light, will, power and love and his service takes no account of the compromises with life which the practical reason of man uses as the best part of its method in the ordinary conduct of mundane existence. Wherever religion really finds itself its way is absolute and its fruits are ineffable.
- Q. 4: Has reason then no part to play in the sphere of religion?
- A. Reason has indeed a part to play in relation to this highest field of our religious being and experience, but that part is quite secondary. It cannot lay down the law for the religious life, it cannot determine in its own right the system of divine knowledge; it cannot school and lesson the divine love and delight; it cannot set bounds to spiritual experience or lay its yoke upon the action of the spiritual man.
- Q. 5: What then is the true function of reason in relation to religion?
- A. Its sole part is to explain as best it can in its own language to the intellectual part of man the truths, the experience, the laws of our supra-rational and spiritual existence; that has been the work of religious philosophy in the East and of theology in the West, a work of great importance at moments like the present when the intellect of mankind after a long wandering is again turning towards the search for the Divine. Here there must inevitably enter a part of those operations proper to the intellect, logical reasoning, inferences from the data given by rational experience and knowledge of the apparent facts of existence, appeals even to the physical truths of science and all the apparatus of the intelligent mind in its ordinary workings. But this is the weakest part of religious philosophy. It does not convince the rational mind unless it is predisposed to belief, or even if it convinces, it certainly cannot give it the knowledge. Reason is safest when it is content with taking the truths and experiences of the spiritual being and the spiritual life, just as they are given to it, and throwing them into such form, order and language as will make them the most intelligible to the reasoning mind. Even then it is not quite safe, for it is apt to harden the order into an intellectual system, to present the form as if it were the essence and, at best, it has to use language which is not the tongue of the supra-rational truth itself, but its translation and, not being either the ordinary tongue of the rational intelligence, is open to non-understanding or misunderstanding by the ordinary reason of mankind. It is well-known to the experience of the spiritual seeker that religious philosophy cannot give the knowledge; all it can do, is to address the intellect and, when it has done, to say, "I have tried to give you the truth in a form and system which will make it intelligible and possible to you; if you are intellectually convinced or attracted, you must now seek the real knowledge by other means which are beyond my province."
- Q. 6: But the earlier forms of religion are not always of this pure and sublime type and contain much that is impure, ignorant and crude. Has not reason a better claim for interference in this type of religious life than in the high supra-rational type of religious aspiration?
- A. As there is the supra-rational life in which religious aspiration finds entirely what it seeks, so there is also the infra-rational life of the instincts, impulses, sensations, crude emotions, vital activities from which all human aspiration takes its beginning. These too feel the touch of the religious sense in man, share its needs and experience, desire its satisfactions. Religion includes this satisfaction also in its scope, and in what is usually called religion, it seems even to be the greater part, sometimes even to an external view almost the whole; for the supreme purity of spiritual experience does not appear or is glimpsed only through this mixed and turbid current. Much impurity, ignorance, superstition, many doubtful elements must form as the result of this contact and union of our highest tendencies with our lower ignorant being. Here it would seem that reason has its legitimate part, that of enlightening, purifying, rationalising the play of the instincts and impulses. It would seem that a religious reformation substituting a "pure" and rational religion for one which is largely infra-rational and impure, would be a distinct advance in the religious development of humanity. To a certain extent this is so, but, owing to the peculiar nature of the religious being, its entire urge towards the supra-rational, not without serious qualifications.
- There are religious forms and systems which become effete and corrupt and have to be destroyed, others which lose much of their inner sense and become clouded in knowledge and injurious in practice; in destroying these or in negating their aberrations reason has played an important part in religious history. But in getting rid of the superstition and ignorance which have attached themselves to religious forms and symbols reason tends to deny and, so far as it can, to destroy the truth and the experience which was contained in them. Reformations which give too much to reason and are too negative and protestant, usually create religions which lack in wealth of spirituality and fullness of religious emotion; they are not opulent in their contents; their form and too often their spirit is impoverished, bare and cold. If reason is to play any part, it must be an intuitive rather than an intellectual reason, touched always by spiritual intensity and insight.
- Q. 7: Is there then a fundamental discord between the religious spirit and the reason?
- A. The relations of the spirit and the reason need not be, as they too often are in our practice, hostile or without any point of contact. Religion itself need not adopt for its principle the formula "I believe because it is impossible" or Pascal's "I believe because it is absurd." What is impossible or absurd to the unaided reason, becomes real and right to the reason lifted beyond itself by the power of the spirit and irradiated by its light. For then it is dominated by the intuitive mind which is our means of passage to a yet higher principle of knowledge. The widest spirituality does not exclude or discourage any essential human activity or faculty, but lifts them all up out of their imperfection and groping ignorance and makes them the instruments of the light, power and joy of the divine being.

# THE WORLD CRISIS AND INDIA

BY  
"Synergist"

## VII: CONSCIOUSNESS AND CULTURE

We saw in the last essay that consciousness is the determining factor in the attainment of knowledge. Now we can state that as man's culture is created on the basis of his knowledge, it also is determined by the nature of his consciousness. To be more exact, the culture of a people can be said to be the expression of its life-awareness and world-awareness. This expression formulates itself triply, each formulation expressing a fundamental strain in the human consciousness. The first formulation is that of Religion and Philosophy as in the West, or, as in India, where philosophy and religion go hand in hand, the expression takes the form of a Spiritual Metaphysic, that is, a system of philosophy based upon a spiritual realisation. Philosophy is the expression of the mind's seeking for the absolutes of Truth and Good, and for some universally valid all-embracing generalisation capable of explaining the nature of the universe, man's place in it, and the nature of the Ultimate Reality. Religion is the expression of the soul's seeking for its transcendent Source, the Divine Being, and its aspiration to be constantly united with Him, and to lead a diviner existence upon earth. In India, philosophy and religion have not been given entirely separate formulations as in the West; for, to the Indian, truth is not ideative, an abstract reality belonging to the pure reason, or existing in the realm of ideas; to him truth is of the Spirit, of Being and Consciousness which he can experience directly. So it is only after he has experienced the truths of the Spirit that he creates a system of metaphysics, which consequently is not, as in the West, a cogent logicising from premises arbitrarily chosen according to the intellectual predisposition of the speculating philosopher. In ancient India, the philosopher was always a seer-philosopher, a rishi—Plato's ideal philosopher, "the spectator of all time and all existence" come to life. When a rishi met a rishi, he did not ask, "What do you think?" He asked, "What do you know?" That is why in India philosophy and religion are not given separate formulations, but are fused into a Spiritual Metaphysic, as distinguished from the Western purely mental ontologico-epistemological systems.

The second strain in the human consciousness is the aesthetic one—a seeking for the absolute of Beauty, the urge to capture its inmost spirit and recreate it here in terrestrial things. This strain expresses itself in Art and Literature.

The third important strain is the pragmatic one; it expresses itself in man's attempts to create, on a basis of his philosophy and religion, a perfect system of individual conduct and of collective relationships—a system of ethics, politics and sociology—in which the collectivity can grow through the fullest development of the individual and in which the individual finds his right place and works for the good of the whole; a system in which one collectivity is harmoniously integrated with other such collectivities, forming eventually a world unity.

These are the three formulated expressions of the life-awareness of a people. Now, if the culture of a people—that is, its Philosophy and Religion, Art and Literature, Ethics, Politics and Sociology—reflects the nature of the consciousness that creates it, it follows that the type and level and range of consciousness will be the factors that will mainly determine its character, for the more obscure and narrow the consciousness the more ignorant and rigidly formulated will be the culture, and the more luminous and universalised the consciousness the more enlightened and richly developed it will be. But a higher level of consciousness can only be attained through spiritual growth; so if man evolves further into a spiritualised being who no longer possesses a narrow ego-centric consciousness but who is poised in a wide and luminous spiritual consciousness and who consequently has the light of Truth in him, he will create a greater culture, a culture that will be truly worthy of beings who are the "eternal portions of the Divine", for it will have its very roots in Truth.

### The Answer to the Sphinx Riddle

The basic factors in the creation of a culture are firstly Religion and Philosophy; Poetry and Art also play as important a part in determining its character, if they succeed in revealing truths which are normally unapprehended by men, that is, if the poet or artist becomes, in Shelley's words, "the hierophant of an unapprehended inspiration." The poet whom Shelley has in mind here is not the ordinary poet, but the seer-poet, *kavi*, whose mind is open to inspiration and intuition. But compared to Poetry, Religion and Philosophy have been instrumental to a greater extent in moulding the life of nations, for it is only according to a systematised world-view based upon the ideas he has of God and the Universe, his relation to them, and the purpose of existence, that man will create the whole superstructure of his civilisation. His philosophy and religion are his answers to the Sphinx Riddle; and the answers he will give will be according to the stage of his evolutionary development, that is, according to the level of his consciousness. The eternal questions he has to answer are, "Who am I? Am I an evanescent perishing form who will finally mix with the dust, or am I an immortal soul who is greater than his outer

sheath? From whence do I come, what or who is the ultimate source of my being and of the universe around me, and what is the nature of this universe? Is it a chance universe or has it been created for a purpose with a design and plan in it—has it come into existence suddenly through a Divine Act, or is it the result of a gradual process of evolution which has a definite end in view and towards which it is proceeding? If there is such an evolution, does it end with man who can be called its crowning achievement, or is man only a transitional being who will one day evolve into a higher type? Is there a Divine Being, Eternal and Infinite, who is the source of all that is, a Reality by whom all exist but who exists by none? Then, am I free to lead my life as I wish to, or is my will determined by my past or by some other factor?"

Upon the answers that he gives to these questions will depend his answers to the other questions with which outwardly and pragmatically he is more directly concerned—"What is good and evil, right and wrong, just and unjust?"

The primitive man gave one answer, and the early thinkers gave another; today man is called upon to answer the same eternal questions once again and it is imperative that he gives the right answers to them, for he is passing through a serious evolutionary crisis, a right solution of which can alone lead him to his fulfilment. Even on the present human level there are various types of consciousness, some spiritually inclined, some mentally, many vitally-physically. In different men there are different combinations of the spiritual, mental and vital-physical elements with different predominant psychological stresses. It is these combinations which stamp individuals into various types, like God-seekers, idealists and humanists, or into utilitarians, hedonists and atheists. Each type reacts in his own unique way to the world around him and answers the riddle of the universe according to the particular psychological cast and mould of his being and the level of his consciousness. This means that the particular philosophy of life he himself creates or selects from his cultural environment is determined by his own inner and outer nature. His philosophy is an intellectual schema he creates for himself by co-ordinating and harmonising the sum total of his experience—his intuitive, intellectual, emotional and instinctual life; and it is in accordance with his philosophy of life, that is, his beliefs and convictions about the nature of the Ultimate Reality and that of the Universe, and his relation to them, that he forms his ideas of good and evil, right and wrong, justice and injustice. This implies that his ethic will arise out of his metaphysic, for when he acts in the world he will translate his metaphysical values into life values and will regulate his conduct according to them. As Johanne Fichte has so admirably stated in the "Vocation of Man"—". . . our philosophy is the history of our heart and life and only as we ourselves are do we conceive of man and his vocation". It is only according to what man himself is, that is, according to the nature of his consciousness, that he will create his philosophy of life, and it is his philosophical beliefs that will ultimately govern his actions.

Next Issue: PHILOSOPHIES OF LIFE.

### Waste

(Suggested by a poem of Yeats's)

If she had been a statue with lost arms,  
We might have dreamed her soul a mystic fire  
Of ecstasy clasping invisible gods.  
But she has let her love gird like a crown  
Ablaze with planet prodigalities  
The sleepy head of a fool. . . O limbs of light  
Wasting the nectar of your destiny  
Save for the two rapt kisses of my gaze—  
O silver benediction on the air,  
Your call was like a moon glimmering through rain!  
For spirit-poignancies, like nightingales,  
Awoke from some vague silence in my heart;  
But neither by deep song nor the seraphic  
Whiteness of your own beauty could the soul  
In you be roused. Deaf unto deaf desire,  
Mortal unto a mortal groped your clay—  
The shining secret of a love unknown  
Lost in the tenebrous embrace of time.

K. D. SETHNA

From the April issue of the BULLETIN OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION, published quarterly by the Ashram of Sri Aurobindo, we are reproducing the magnificent message by the Master. It follows the one on Physical Education and the National Value of Sports, published in the first issue of the BULLETIN and reproduced in MOTHER INDIA of March 5. The message explains in a style at once profound and concrete the various degrees and forms of the body's perfection, the part played in it by activities like sports and physical exercises, the transforming dynamics of the Integral Yoga which can supremely perfect the body together with the inner being and make it the outermost expression of the divine Truth-consciousness that is the origin and goal of evolution on earth.

# SRI AUROBINDO PERFECTION

The perfection of the body, as great a perfection as we can bring about by the means at our disposal, must be the ultimate aim of physical culture. Perfection is the true aim of all culture, the spiritual and psychic, the mental, the vital and it must be the aim of our physical culture also. If our seeking is for a total perfection of the being, the physical part of it cannot be left aside; for the body is the material basis, the body is the instrument which we have to use. *Shariram khalu dharma-sadhnam*, says the old Sanskrit adage,—the body is the means of fulfilment of dharma, and dharma means every ideal which we can propose to ourselves and the law of its working out and its action. A total perfection is the ultimate aim which we set before us, for our ideal is the Divine Life which we wish to create here, the life of the Spirit fulfilled on earth, life accomplishing its own spiritual transformation even here on earth in the conditions of the material universe. That cannot be unless the body too undergoes a transformation, unless its action and functioning attain to a supreme capacity and the perfection which is possible to it or which can be made possible.

## Divine Life in a Material World

I have already indicated in a previous message a relative perfection of the physical consciousness in the body and of the mind, the life, the character which it houses as, no less than an awakening and development of the body's own native capacities, a desirable outcome of the exercises and practices of the physical culture to which we have commenced to give in this Ashram a special attention and scope. A development of the physical consciousness must always be a considerable part of our aim, but for that the right development of the body itself is an essential element; health, strength, fitness are the first needs, but the physical frame itself must be the best possible. A divine life in a material world implies necessarily a union of the two ends of existence, the spiritual summit and the material base. The soul with the basis of its life established in Matter ascends to the heights of the Spirit but does not cast away its base, it joins the heights and the depths together. The Spirit descends into Matter and the material world with all its lights and glories and powers and with them fills and transforms life in the material world so that it becomes more and more divine. The transformation is not a change into something purely subtle and spiritual to which Matter is in its nature repugnant and by which it is felt as an obstacle or as a shackle binding the Spirit; it takes up Matter as a form of the Spirit, though now a form which conceals, and turns it into a revealing instrument, it does not cast away the energies of Matter, its capacities, its methods; it brings out their hidden possibilities, uplifts, sublimates, discloses their innate divinity.

The divine life will reject nothing that is capable of divinisation; all is to be seized, exalted, made utterly perfect. The mind now still ignorant, though struggling towards knowledge, has to rise towards and into the supramental light and truth and bring it down so that it shall suffuse our thinking and perception and insight and all our means of knowing till they become radiant with the highest truth in their inmost and outermost movements. Our life, still full of obscurity and confusion and occupied with so many dull and lower aims, must feel all its urges and instincts exalted and irradiated and become a glorious counterpart of the supramental super-life above. The physical consciousness and physical being, the body itself must reach a perfection in all that it is and does which now we can hardly conceive. It may even in the end be suffused with a light and beauty and bliss from the Beyond and the life divine assume a body divine.

## Pursuit of Perfection

But first the evolution of the nature must have reached a point at which it can meet the Spirit direct, feel the aspiration towards the spiritual change and open itself to the workings of the Power which shall transform it. A supreme perfection, a total perfection is possible only by a transformation of our lower or human nature, a transformation of the mind into a thing of light, our life into a thing of power, an instrument of right action, right use for all its forces, of a happy elevation of its being lifting it beyond its present comparatively narrow potentiality for a self-fulfilling force of action and joy of life. There must be equally a transforming change of the body by a conversion of its action, its functioning, its capacities as an instrument beyond the limitations by which it is clogged and hampered even in its greatest present human attainment. In

the totality of the change we have to achieve, human means and forces too have to be taken up, not dropped but used and magnified to their utmost possibility as part of the new life. Such a sublimation of our present human powers of mind and life into elements of a divine life on earth can be conceived without much difficulty; but in what figure shall we conceive the perfection of the body?

In the past the body has been regarded by spiritual seekers rather as an obstacle, as something to be overcome and discarded than as an instrument of spiritual perfection and a field of the spiritual change. It has been condemned as a grossness of Matter, as an insuperable impediment and the limitations of the body as something unchangeable making transformation impossible. This is because the human body even at its best seems only to be driven by an energy of life which has its own limits and is debased in its smaller physical activities by much that is petty or coarse or evil, the body in itself is burdened with the inertia and inconscience of Matter, only partly awake and, although quickened and animated by a nervous activity, subconscious in the fundamental action of its constituent cells and tissues and their secret workings. Even in its fullest strength and force and greatest glory of beauty, it is still a flower of the material Inconscience; the inconscient is the soil from which it has grown and at every point opposes a narrow boundary to the extension of its powers and to any effort of radical self-exceeding. But if a divine life is possible on earth, then this self-exceeding must also be possible.

In the pursuit of perfection we can start at either end of our range of being and we have then to use, initially at least, the means and processes proper to our choice. In Yoga the process is spiritual and psychic; even its vital and physical processes are given a spiritual or psychic turn and raised to a higher motion than belongs properly to the ordinary life and Matter, as for instance in the Hathayogic and Rajayogic use of the breathing or the use of Asana. Ordinarily a previous preparation of the mind and life and body is necessary to make them fit for the reception of the spiritual energy and the organisation of psychic forces and methods, but this too is given a special turn proper to the Yoga. On the other hand, if we start in any field at the lower end we have to employ the means and processes which Life and Matter offer to us and respect the conditions and what we may call the technique imposed by the vital and the material energy. We may extend the activity, the achievement, the perfection attained beyond the initial, even beyond the normal possibilities but still we have to stand on the same base with which we started and within the boundaries it gives to us. It is not that the action from the two ends cannot meet and the higher take into itself and uplift the lower perfection; but this can usually be done only by a transition from the lower to a higher

# YO

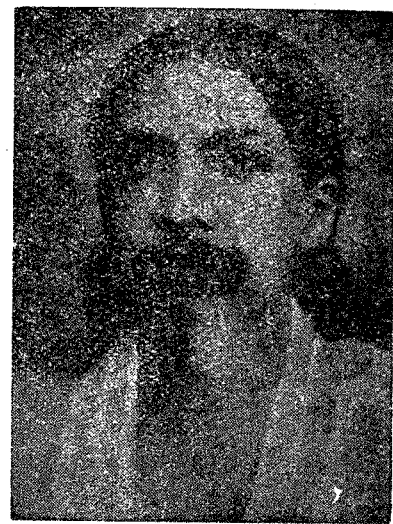
The Mother who is the active life a brief but most enlightening note—in the "Cal Education"—on the true secret of the outer.

YOUTH does not depend on the fewness and to progress. To grow—that is to increase or perfect without halting, the capacities that one number of years, but with the incapacity or the known old people of 20 years of age and young and to rest on the benefits of past efforts, as so and has accomplished what one had to accomplish advance along the road to perfection, one is sur

For the body also, one can learn that to its progress, provided one discovers the true numerous experiments which we wish to attend show to the world that human possibilities sur



# O'S MESSAGE OF THE BODY



outlook, aspiration and motive; this we shall have to do if our aim is to transform the human into the divine life. But here there comes in the necessity of taking up the activities of human life and sublimating them by the power of the spirit. Here the lower perfection will not disappear; it will remain but will be enlarged and transformed by the higher perfection which only the power of the spirit can give. This will be evident if we consider poetry and art, philosophic thought, the perfection of the written word or the perfect organisation of earthly life: these have to be taken up and the possibilities already achieved or whatever perfection has already been attained included in a new and greater perfection but with the larger vision and inspiration of a spiritual consciousness and with new forms and powers. It must be the same with the perfection of the body.

### Spirituality and the Ordinary Life

The taking up of life and Matter into what is essentially a spiritual seeking, instead of the rejection and ultimate exclusion of them which was the attitude of a spirituality that shunned or turned away from life in the world, involves certain developments which a spiritual institution of the older kind could regard as foreign to its purpose. A divine life in the world or an institution having that for its aim and purpose cannot be or cannot remain something outside or entirely shut away from the life of ordinary men in the world or unconcerned with the mundane existence; it has to do the work of the Divine in the world and not a work outside or separate from it. The life of the ancient Rishis in their Ashrams had such a connection; they were creators, educators, guides of men and the life of the Indian people in ancient time was largely developed and directed by their shaping influence. The life and activities involved in the new endeavour are not identical but they too must be an action upon the world and a new creation in it. It must have contacts and connections with it and activities which take their place in the general life and whose initial or primary objects may not seem to differ from those of the same activities in the outside world.

In our Ashram here we have found it necessary to establish a school for the education of the children of the resident sadhaks, teaching upon familiar lines though with certain modifications and taking as part and an important part of their development an intensive physical training which has given form to the sports and athletics practised by the Jeunesse Sportive of the Ashram and of which this Bulletin is the expression. It has been questioned by some what place sports can have in an Ashram created for spiritual seekers and what connection there can be between spirituality and sports. The first answer lies in what I have already written about the connections of an institution of this kind with the acti-

vities of the general life of men and what I have indicated in the previous number as to the utility such a training can have for the life of a nation and its benefit for the international life. Another answer can occur to us if we look beyond first objects and turn to the aspiration for a total perfection including the perfection of the body.

In the admission of an activity such as sports and physical exercises into the life of the Ashram it is evident that the methods and the first objects to be attained must belong to what we have called the lower end of the being. Originally they have been introduced for the physical education and bodily development of the children of the Ashram School and these are too young for a strictly spiritual aim or practice to enter into their activities and it is not certain that any great number of them will enter the spiritual life when they are of an age to choose what shall be the direction of their future. The object must be the training of the body and the development of certain parts of mind and character so far as this can be done by or in connection with this training and I have already indicated in a previous number how and in what direction this can be done. It is a relative and human perfection that can be attained within these limits; anything greater can be reached only by the intervention of higher powers, psychic powers, the power of the spirit. Yet what can be attained within the human boundaries can be something very considerable and sometimes immense: what we call genius is part of the development of the human range of being and its achievements, especially in things of the mind and will, can carry us halfway to the divine. Even what the mind and will can do with the body in the field proper to the body and its life, in the way of physical achievement, bodily endurance, feats of prowess of all kind, a lasting activity refusing fatigue or collapse and continuing beyond what seems at first to be possible, courage and refusal to succumb under an endless and murderous physical suffering, these and other victories of many kinds sometimes approaching or reaching the miraculous are seen in the human field and must be reckoned as a part of our concept of a total perfection. The unflinching and persistent reply that can be made by the body as well as the mind of man and by his life energy to whatever call can be imposed on it in the most difficult and discouraging circumstances by the necessities of war and travel and adventure is of the same kind and their endurance can reach astounding proportions and even the unconscious in the body seems to be able to return a surprising response.

The body, we have said, is a creation of the Inconscient and itself inconscient or at least subconscious in parts of its self and much of its hidden action; but what we call the Inconscient is an appearance, a dwelling place, an instrument of a secret Consciousness or a Superconscious which has created the miracle we call the universe. Matter is the field and the creation of the Inconscient and the perfection of the operations of inconscient Matter, their perfect adaptation of means to an aim and end, the wonders they perform and the marvels of beauty they create, testify, in spite of all the ignorant denial we can oppose, to the presence and power of consciousness of this Superconscience in every part and movement of the material universe. It is there in the body, has made it and its emergence in our consciousness is the secret aim of evolution and the key to the mystery of our existence.

### Awakening of the Body's Powers

In the use of such activities as sports and physical exercises for the education of the individual in childhood and first youth, which should mean the bringing out of his actual and latent possibilities to their fullest development, the means and methods we must use are limited by the nature of the body and its aim must be such relative human perfection of the body's powers and capacities and those of the powers of mind, will, character, action of which it is at once the residence and the instrument so far as these methods can help to develop them. I have written sufficiently about the mental and moral parts of perfection to which these pursuits can contribute and this I need not repeat here. For the body itself the perfections that can be developed by these means are those of its natural qualities and capacities and, secondly, the training of its general fitness, as an instrument for all the activities which may be demanded from it by the mind and the will, by the life-energy or by the dynamic perceptions, impulses and instincts of our subtle physical being which is an unrecognised but very important element and agent in our nature. Health and strength are the first conditions for the natural perfection of the body,

*Continued on page 8*

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of the Ashram of Sri Aurobindo has a  
sue of the Ashram's "Bulletin of Physi-  
young both in the inner being and in

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so to say, no limit to its growth in capacities and  
l and the proper conditions. This is one of the  
order to break the collective suggestion and to  
expectations.

The Mother

# SRI AUROBINDO'S MESSAGE ON PERFECTION OF THE BODY

*Continued from page 7*

not only muscular strength and the solid strength of the limbs and physical stamina, but the finer, alert and plastic and adaptable force which our nervous and subtle physical parts can put into the activities of the frame. There is also the still more dynamic force which a call upon the life-energies can bring into the body and stir it to greater activities, even feats of the most extraordinary character of which in its normal state it would not be capable. There is also the strength which the mind and will by their demands and stimulus and by their secret powers which we use or by which we are used without knowing clearly the source of their action can impart to the body or impose upon it as masters and inspirers.

Among the natural qualities and powers of the body which can be thus awakened, stimulated and trained to a normal activity we must reckon dexterity and stability in all kinds of physical action such as swiftness in the race, dexterity in combat, skill and endurance of the mountaineer, the constant and often extraordinary response to all that can be demanded from the body of the soldier, sailor, traveller or explorer to which I have already made reference or in adventure of all kinds and all the wide range of physical attainment to which man has accustomed himself or to which he is exceptionally pushed by his own will or by the compulsion of circumstance. It is a general fitness of the body for all that can be asked from it which is the common formula of all this action, a fitness attained by a few or by many, that could be generalised by an extended and many-sided physical education and discipline. Some of these activities can be included under the name of sports; there are others for which sport and physical exercises can be an effective preparation. In some of them a training for common action, combined movement, discipline are needed and for that our physical exercises can make one ready; in others a developed individual will, skill of mind and quick perception, forcefulness of life energy and subtle physical impulsion are more prominently needed and may even be the one sufficient trainer. All must be included in our conception of the natural powers of the body and its capacity and instrumental fitness in the service of the human mind and will and therefore in our concept of the total perfection of the body.

There are two conditions for this perfection, an awakening in as great an entirety as possible of the body consciousness and an education, an evocation of its potentialities, also as entire and fully developed and, it may be, as many-sided as possible. The form or body is, no doubt, in its origin a creation of the Inconscient and limited by it on all sides, but still of the Inconscient developing the secret consciousness concealed within it and growing in light of knowledge, power and Ananda. We have to take it at the point it has reached in its human evolution in these things, make as full a use of them as may be and, as much as we can, further this evolution to as high a degree as is permitted by the force of the individual temperament and nature. In all forms in the world there is a force at work, unconsciously active or oppressed by inertia in its lower formulations, but in the human being conscious from the first, with its potentialities partly awake, partly asleep or latent: what is awake in it we have to make fully conscious; what is asleep we have to arouse and set to its work; what is latent we have to evoke and educate. Here there are two aspects of the body consciousness, one which seems to be a kind of automatism carrying on its work in the physical plane without any intervention of the mind and in parts even beyond any possibility of direct observation by the mind or, if conscious or observable, still proceeding or capable of continuing, when once started, by an apparently mechanical action not needing direction by the mind and continuing so long as the mind does not intervene.

There are other movements taught and trained by the mind which can yet go on operating automatically but faultlessly even when not attended to by the thought or will; there are others which can operate in sleep and produce results of value to the waking intelligence. But more important is what may be described as a trained and developed automatism, a perfected skill and capacity of eye and ear and the hands and all the members prompt to respond to any call made on them, a developed spontaneous operation as an instrument, a complete fitness for any demand that the mind and life-energy can make upon it. This is ordinarily the best we can achieve at the lower end, when we start from that end and limit ourselves to the means and methods which are proper to it. For more we have to turn to the mind and life-energy themselves or to the energy of the spirit and to what they can do for a greater perfection of the body. The most we can do in the physical field by physical means is necessarily insecure as well as bound by limits; even what seems a perfect health and strength of the body is precarious and can be broken down at any moment by fluctuations from within or by a strong attack or shock from outside: only by the breaking of our limitations can a higher and more enduring perfection come.

One direction in which our consciousness must grow is an increasing hold from within or from above on the body and its powers and its more conscious response to the higher parts of our being. The mind pre-eminently is man; he is a mental being and his human perfection grows the more

he fulfils the description of the Upanishad, a mental being, Purusha, leader of the life and the body. If the mind can take up and control the instincts and automatisms of the life-energy and the subtle physical consciousness and the body, if it can enter into them, consciously use and, as we may say, fully mentalise their instinctive or spontaneous action, the perfection of these energies, their action too becomes more conscious and more aware of themselves and more perfect. But it is necessary for the mind too to grow in perfection and this it can do best when it depends less on the fallible intellect of physical mind, when it is not limited even by the more orderly and accurate working of the reason and can grow in intuition and acquire a wider, deeper and closer seeing and the more luminous drive of energy of a higher intuitive will. Even within the limits of its present evolution it is difficult to measure the degree to which the mind is able to extend its control or its use of the body's powers and capacities and when the mind rises to higher powers still and pushes back its human boundaries, it becomes impossible to fix any limits: even, in certain realisations, an intervention by the will in the automatic working of the bodily organs seems to become possible. Wherever limitations recede and in proportion as they recede, the body becomes a more plastic and responsive and in that measure a more fit and perfect instrument of the action of the spirit. In all effective and expressive activities here in the material world the co-operation of the two ends of our being is indispensable. If the body is unable whether by fatigue or by natural incapacity or any other cause to second the thought or will or is in any way irresponsible or insufficiently responsive, to that extent the action fails or falls short or becomes in some degree unsatisfying or incomplete.

In what seems to be an exploit of the spirit so purely mental as the outpouring of poetic inspiration, there must be a responsive vibration of the brain and its openness as a channel for the power of the thought and vision and the light of the word that is making or breaking its way through or seeking for its perfect expression. If the brain is fatigued or dulled by any clog, either the inspiration cannot come and nothing is written or it fails and something inferior is all that can come out; or else a lower inspiration takes the place of the more luminous formulation that was striving to shape itself or the brain finds it more easy to lend itself to a less radiant stimulus or else it labours and constructs or responds to poetic artifice. Even in the most purely mental activities the fitness, readiness or perfect training of the bodily instrument is a condition indispensable. That readiness, that response too is part of the total perfection of the body.

#### Meaning and Motive of Evolution: Growth of Consciousness

The essential purpose and sign of the growing evolution here is the emergence of consciousness in an apparently inconscient universe, the growth of consciousness and with it growth of the light and power of the being; the development of the form and its functioning or its fitness to survive, although indispensable, is not the whole meaning or the central motive. The greater and greater awakening of consciousness and its climb to a higher and higher level and a wider extent of its vision and action is the condition of our progress towards that supreme and total perfection which is the aim of our existence. It is the condition also of the total perfection of the body. There are higher levels of the mind than any we now conceive and to these we must one day reach and rise beyond them to the heights of a greater, spiritual existence. As we rise we have to open to them our lower members and fill these with those superior and supreme dynamisms of light and power; the body we have to make a more and more and even entirely conscious frame and instrument, a conscious sign and seal and power of the spirit. As it grows in this perfection, the force and extent of its dynamic action and its response and service to the spirit must increase, the control of the spirit over it also must grow and the plasticity of its functioning both in its developed and acquired parts of power and in its automatic responses down to those that are now purely organic and seem to be the movements of a mechanic inconscience.

This cannot happen without a veritable transformation and a transformation of the mind and life and very body is indeed the change to which our evolution is secretly moving and without this transformation the entire fullness of a divine life on earth cannot emerge. In this transformation the body itself can become an agent and a partner. It might indeed be possible for the spirit to achieve a considerable manifestation with only a passive and imperfectly conscious body as its last or bottommost means of material functioning, but this could not be anything perfect or complete. A fully conscious body might even discover and work out the right material method and process of a material transformation. For this, no doubt, the spirit's supreme light and power and creative joy must have manifested on the summit of the individual consciousness and sent down their fiat into the body, but still the body may take in the working out its spontaneous part of self-discovery and achievement. It would be thus a participator and agent in

*Continued on page 9*



## O Beauteous Singing Presence

O beauteous singing Presence,  
Who wert the heart of me,  
Why hast thou sunk in darkness  
Of the wild, weltering sea?

Churning the deeps of being,  
Thy pillar of light churns hells;  
Black wave and poison foamings  
Engulf the stars and cells.

Blue-throated Love, O lift me  
From the blind night's abyss,  
Upon the spirit's forehead  
Plant thy white nectared kiss;

And move upon the waters  
Calming each storm-tost wave;  
Call forth the moon-white Goddess  
From the hidden jewelled cave.

Once more unfold Thy beauty  
Upon the lotused sea,  
O golden shining Presence  
Who art the heart of me.

TEHMI

## The Call of Krishna

I try to deafen my ears to the music,  
But he stops not playing on his heartless flute;  
Eash note wrings my soul with infinite sadness;  
I cry out but find that my voice is mute.

My window is crossed by a faint blue shadow,  
As he passes by in the quiet lane,  
Revealing an unattainable light,  
And the darkness within me follows in pain.

I dread to hear the depth in his music;  
Touched to his lips is the flute forever;  
In my body the tunes are a fire of sweet seeking,  
Yet, like chill blasts, in my blood a shiver.

A dead lake troubled by sudden storm-winds,  
A maddening whirlpool of unworded joy  
Churns within me, a far pale echo  
Of the secret that laughs in the eyes of the boy.

I watch for him daily through the golden cowdust,  
For the twilight lad with mischief overflowing;  
To all he is a simple flute-gay cowherd,  
To me a promise gigantic and glowing.

MINNIE N. CANTEENWALLA

## SRI AUROBINDO'S MESSAGE

Continued from page 8

its own transformation and the integral transformation of the whole being; this too would be a part and a sign and evidence of the total perfection of the body.

If the emergence and growth of consciousness is the central motive of the evolution and the key to its secret purpose, then by the very nature of that evolution this growth must involve not only a wider and wider extent of its capacities but also an ascent to a higher and higher level till it reaches the highest possible. For it starts from a nethermost level of involution in the Inconscience which we see at work in Matter creating the material universe; it proceeds by an Ignorance which is yet ever developing knowledge and reaching out to an ever greater light and ever greater organisation and efficacy of the will and harmonisation of all its own inherent and emerging powers; it must at last reach a point where it develops or acquires the complete fullness of its capacity and that must be a state or action in which there is no longer an ignorance seeking for knowledge but Knowledge self-possessed, inherent in the being, master of its own truths and working them out with a natural vision and force that is not afflicted by limitation or error. Or if there is a limitation, it must be a self-imposed veil behind which it would keep truth back for a manifestation in Time but draw it out at will and without any need of search or acquisition in the order of a right perception of things or in the just succession of that which has to be manifested in obedience to the call of Time.

### The Truth-Consciousness and the Body's Perfection

This would mean an entry or approach into what might be called a Truth-consciousness self-existent in which the being would be aware of its own realities and would have the inherent power to manifest them in a Time-creation in which all would be Truth following out its own unerring steps and combining its own harmonies; every thought and will and feeling and act would be spontaneously right, inspired or intuitive, moving by the light of Truth and therefore perfect. All would express inherent realities of the spirit; some fullness of the power of the spirit would be there. One would have overpassed the present limitations of mind: mind would become a seeing of the light of Truth, will a force and power of the Truth, Life a progressive fulfilment of the Truth, the body itself a conscious vessel of the Truth and part of the means of its self-effectuation and a form of its self-aware existence. It would be at least some initiation of this Truth-consciousness, some first figure and action of it that must be reached and enter into a first operation if there is to be a divine life or any full manifestation of a spiritualised consciousness in the world of Matter. Or, at the very least such a Truth-consciousness must be in communication with our own mind and life and body, descend into touch with it, control its seeing and action, impel its motives, take hold of its forces and shape their direction and purpose. All touched by it might not be able to embody it fully, but each would give some form to it according to his spiritual temperament, inner capacity, the line of his evolution in Nature: he would reach securely the perfection of which he was immediately capable and he would be on the road to the full possession of the truth of the Spirit and of the truth of Nature.

In the workings of such a Truth-consciousness there would be a certain conscious seeing and willing automatism of the steps of its truth which

would replace the infallible automatism of the inconscient or seemingly inconscient Force that has brought out of an apparent Void the miracle of an ordered universe and this could create a new order of the manifestation of the Being in which a perfect perfection would become possible, even a supreme and total perfection would appear in the vistas of an ultimate possibility. If we could draw down this power into the material world, our age-long dreams of human perfectibility, individual perfection, the perfectibility of the race, of society, inner mastery over self and a complete mastery, governance and utilisation of the forces of Nature could see at long last a prospect of total achievement. This complete human self-fulfilment might well pass beyond limitations and be transformed into the character of a divine life. Matter after taking into itself and manifesting the power of life and the light of mind would draw down into it the superior or supreme power and light of the spirit and in an earthly body shed its parts of inconscience and become a perfectly conscious frame of the spirit. A secure completeness and stability of the health and strength of its physical tenement could be maintained by the will and force of this inhabitant; all the natural capacities of the physical frame, all powers of the physical consciousness would reach their utmost extension and be there at command and sure of their flawless action. As an instrument the body would acquire a fullness of capacity, a totality of fitness for all uses which the inhabitant would demand of it far beyond anything now possible. Even it could become a revealing vessel of a supreme beauty and bliss,—casting the beauty of the light of the spirit, suffusing and radiating from it as a lamp reflects and diffuses the luminosity of its indwelling flame, carrying in itself the beatitude of the spirit, its joy of the seeing mind, its joy of life and spiritual happiness, the joy of Matter released into a spiritual consciousness and thrilled with a constant ecstasy. This would be the total perfection of the spiritualised body.

All this might not come all at once, though such a sudden illumination might be possible if a divine Power and Light and Ananda could take their stand on the summit of our being and send down their force into the mind and life and body illumining and remoulding the cells, awaking consciousness in all the frame. But the way would open and the consummation of all that is possible in the individual could progressively take place. The physical also would have its share in that consummation of the whole.

There would always remain vistas beyond as the infinite Spirit took up towards higher heights and larger breadths the evolving Nature, in the movement of the liberated being towards the possession of the supreme Reality, the supreme existence, consciousness, beatitude. But of this it would be premature to speak: what has been written is perhaps as much as the human mind as it is now constituted can venture to look forward to and the enlightened thought understand in some measure. These consequences of the Truth-consciousness descending and laying its hold upon Matter would be a sufficient justification of the evolutionary labour. In this upward all-uplifting sweep of the Spirit there could be a simultaneous or consecutive downward sweep of the triumph of a spiritualised Nature all-including, all-transmuting and in it there could occur a glorifying change of Matter and the physical consciousness and physical form and functioning of which we could speak as not only the total but the supreme perfection of the body.

# NEW TRENDS IN WESTERN THOUGHT

## PHILOSOPHY AND MODERN ARCHITECTURE

By ANTONIN RAYMOND

Technology Review

**THE true principles of Modern architecture can be comprehended only in so far as we realize that the architect is not, and never has been, free to disregard the technical and engineering sciences and the material requirements of daily life. The modern architect does not just build houses; he must face and solve the problem of living itself. And thus the principles which should guide him are eternal principles. That is why a light from the distant past so often illumines the present. To appraise what an architect should follow, it is useful, therefore, to turn to a Hindu philosopher who lived fifteen hundred years ago and who proposed a list of all the things that an architect should know.**

The order in which these things are listed is not devoid of humor: An architect, the recital holds, should be acquainted with the laws that govern the universe and with the laws that govern nature; he should be a master of dancing; he should have a profound knowledge of the Vedas, of painting, sculpture, ethics, of engineering, botany, astrology; and he should be able to organize rites and ceremonies and to play all the musical instruments.

Another Hindu sage begins a treatise as follows: "I shall now describe the qualifications of architects and the system of measurements in order. From the supreme Siva emanate the Creator Brahma and also Indra. That he is the Great Architect is proclaimed by God himself. It is He who, as the Architect of the Universe, creates the world. From his four faces, four families of architects are born. The son of him bearing the name of Viswakarma, is called Sthapahti, the Master-BUILDER. He is the teacher; he teaches and directs the other three families—two of which are designers and the rest carpenters."

### The High Function of Architects

However humbly architects may think of themselves, these philosophers set them up very high. In their opinion, architects are immediately responsible to God for a great many things. In fact, they are the direct descendants of the gods themselves. They may prefer to serve, humbly trotting along between shafts and blinders like the old farm horse, but wings are thrust upon them and they are shot up among the clouds.

And it is good that they should be. Whether men today look at the stars through gigantic telescopes, study life through microscopes, or split atoms, they are likely to take a short-sighted view of nature. The grandeur of the universe is visible to all, without instruments, if we really look, and we can all see certain of her laws at work. In particular, I mean the laws that govern life. Our ignorance of them and of their importance in our lives is the cause of the world chaos today. It may seem as if I were encouraging the architect to invade the field of the philosopher, but I feel we are all of us too near catastrophe to continue working with our noses on our drawing boards in obliviousness of the drama which concerns us immediately.

By choice, architects have taken a profession that makes of them a link between God and men. Their work is to translate divine truth, beauty, order, into matter for the instruction of mankind. Such high-flung phrases may seem ridiculous when we architects remember the kitchens and the bathrooms for which we must soon answer. But that is exactly where we can build, create, beautify. Cathedrals and market places equally offer us our opportunity. Therefore the task we must

set ourselves is to draw our erring humanity back into a harmonious relation with the universe, for this is the only way to true progress. Otherwise we face retrogression.

This task may seem a stupendous one for the architect, who may here and there fall short of the ideal set up by the philosopher. The physician, however, before receiving his degree is asked to assert his belief in a simple ethical creed. How natural it should be, then, for the one whose profession is bound up with a love for beauty and order, to go forth into the world conscious of large responsibilities, receiving from Heaven and transmitting to men truths of lasting value in forms which can be comprehended.

### Decadence and Decline

There is in each cycle of civilization a period at which a peak is reached—a peak in which we find condensed and materialized and specific ideals for which that cycle stood. Such were the highest periods of Egypt, of Greece, of Rome, and, in our own cycle (beginning with the decadence of Rome, and ending, I propose, now), such was the Middle Age. The fact that to this day visitors swarm from all parts of the world to view the cathedrals of Europe, is a testimony to the mysterious spell these cathedrals cast on men. Why this spell? Because in the 12th, 13th, 14th centuries, the ideals of Christendom which the people had grown to cherish during the preceding centuries were finally fully embodied in stone as a result of their being at last fully grasped by the whole of the people.

Following this there were decadence and decline; neither the Renaissance nor, later on, the architecture of the 18th century, though each is magnificent in its way, has the Gothic power or purity. The common spiritual quest is replaced by an individual one, and the goal becomes confused. Finally, in the 19th century, all common vision is completely lost and is replaced by personal fancy, perfectly expressed by the monstrosities of that period. Notice that whereas, as I have already mentioned, great periods are always the expression of a cosmic idea—Greece had Truth and Beauty, Buddhism had Liberation—civilization at its lowest ebb is possessed by the importance of the personality. There have been times when the only thing that mattered about a thing was that it be true, not what anyone might think about it. Plato argued that opinion is the opposite of wisdom. Personal fancy may be regarded as the source of error, as well today as in former ages.

And what has become of the architect through these six centuries? He who in Gothic times was versed in the profound esoteric meaning of symbolism, who was versed in engineering, painting, music, rites, and ethics (as described by the sage), has, in the 19th century, become

a decorator. Unable to design new forms, since forms are the expression of ideas and of ideas he has none in particular, he recapitulates as well as he can the forms of past ages. His former powers are lost. His engineering, since he can no longer calculate, he has passed on to a servant appointed by himself. And having lost direct contact with materials because, since he employs a contractor, he has forgotten what wood and stone and steel are, he has lost the power to build. He is now a harmonizer of exteriors as distantly related to the master builder as the crooner is to Beethoven. Meanwhile, the engineers and mechanics and contractors have run away with the job of building, and one can still see going on that novel phenomenon, which to our Hindu philosopher would have appeared so strange—engineering and architecture divorced. That is to say, functionalists oblivious of esthetics, esthetes oblivious of function.

### Why Modern Architecture Was Born

It was to remedy this state of things that Modern architecture was born. There was nothing great in its beginnings. It represented a process of cleaning up, an attempt to cure the architectural indigestion of the 19th century. It resembled a dose of castor oil. Its initiators had no desire to formulate a new order, i.e. to determine and fix new forms. They wished to rediscover lost principles.

The new architects were unconcerned with form. Their desire was to discard the old stuff and begin anew. The first impulse resulted in the scraping off of ornament, revealing structure, allowing the building to stand in its crude nakedness. Then it became evident how much ill-conceived construction had been concealed under decoration. The next step was to bring into the functioning and structural qualities of the building real order, as it is to be found in modern machinery and in living bodies; for, it was realized, there is beauty in the machine and the body when they function perfectly. In addition, the functioning was to be clearly expressed in and out. The new buildings were to express the life and movement taking place within. They had so long been static and monumental (visualize any typical college or state building, or station or bank building) because the static and the monumental were the 19th century method of affirming the grandeur and power for which that century strove. Modern architecture accomplished this expression of movement by unbalanced equilibriums, by varying heights and spaces, a method well known in Japanese architecture where houses wander gracefully through the garden.

For a time, unbalance as a principle was enjoyed for itself. It is natural for excesses in one direction to be followed by excesses in the other. Thus we find Gothic asceticism (see Gothic sculpture) followed by a period of delight in sensual pursuits (see the pagan scenes of the quattrocento painting). Further it was realized that air and light could be had for the asking because of modern engineering which permitted the spanning of wide spaces, the adoption of light construction, the use of steel and concrete, the inclusion of large panes of glass.

Then the architect again took to town planning—an art he had set aside—for he recognized at last that his responsibilities exceeded the scope afforded by the consideration of the needs of the individual, and that he had a duty toward society. As the Gothic architect not figuratively but actually (study the history of the Chartres Cathedral and the manner in which it was built) by means of the cathedral brought the people into contact with the living Christ, so the architect today feels a desire to bring the people into contact with living beauty, air, space, growing things (study some of the plans of cities drawn up by modern architects).

Those who did understand what the new movement stood for are still working from the developing original scheme towards purging architecture of non-essentials, making room for the free expression of the life of the day, seeking by every possible means to live better and to find better ways of living; in fact, trying to determine what makes life worth living, delving for clues into the experiences of other peoples of other times; reaching out behind and around a materialistic universe for truths which science ignores; getting closer to nature which we had exploited shamelessly (see our destruction of forests, our pollution of rivers and wasting of fertile lands) and using with tact and understanding all that nature offers. All that, and much else, would be expressive of architecture which is truly Modern, that is to say, creative.

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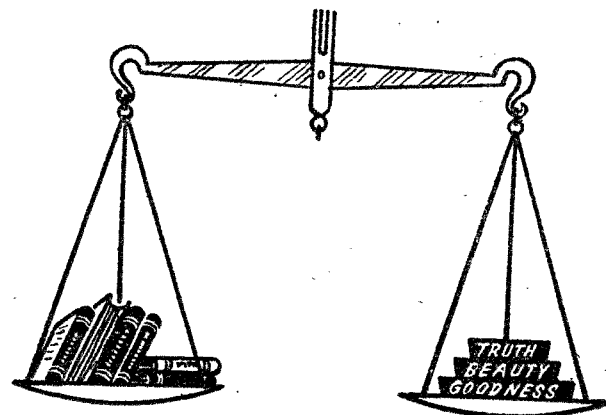
# BOOKS in the BALANCE

## SOROKIN PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

### THE RECONSTRUCTION OF HUMANITY

By PITRIM A. SOROKIN

(The Beacon Press, Boston, 1948.)



Mr. Sorokin is well-known in the West, especially in America, for his wide learning and acute sense of reality, his knowledge of history and firm grasp over facts, his sincere approach to things that have value in life, and his remarkably lucid style. In fact he and Toynbee are said to be "the Twin Augustines of our era". Therefore our interest in his book is all the more keen.

Mr. Sorokin begins his enquiry in this way: Medieval art was an articulation of the Christian Credo as the major premise of the medieval culture. Its greatest architecture was the cathedrals dedicated to God; its sculpture and painting were the Bible in stone and color; its music and literature were religious reiterations of the same Credo; ritual and mystery plays were its dramas. It was an art devoted to God and to the union of man with the Creator. It was a "visible or audible sign of the invisible kingdom of God", uplifting the soul of man to this exalted sphere. Its heroes were God, the angels, and the saints; its "plots" were the mysteries of the incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection and redemption. Its artists wrought for the greater glory of God and for the salvation of the human soul. . . . But, with the decline of medieval values, art began rapidly to develop morbid traits, growing progressively less creative and more and more pathological, degrading, negativistic, and incoherent.

#### Decline of Art and Life

From the lofty height of the medieval age and from the idealistic summits of the thirteenth to the fifteenth century it descended into the muck of the social sewers. Instead of God, its heroes and principal personages were hypocrites, gangsters and criminals, prostitutes, the insane and mentally defective human derelicts, and the like. Its favourite settings were a criminal hide-out, a police morgue, an insane asylum, the bedroom of a mistress, adulteress, prostitute, or seducer; a night club, bar, or saloon; an office of plotters and hypocrites; or a city street featuring a sensational murder or other crime. Its principal topics were two Freudian instincts: those of homicide or suicide and—especially—of sex, in all its possible forms; in the caveman and "romantic" styles; in heterosexual and homosexual relations; in normal and perverted forms; and so forth. Art degraded itself to the role of a stimulant of homicidal and carnal appetites; to an instrument of relaxation and amusement, to excitation of jaded nerves, or to a mere handmaiden of advertised market commodities: laxatives, rubber beer, soap, razor blades, etc. It sank to the level of "striptease dances and of clandestine photographs exhibiting the act of copulation."

This is no erratic statement of an half-boiled critic. Mr. Sorokin is famed not only for his sobriety and mature thinking but also for his impartial observation. In truth, his conclusions are drawn from the inescapable logic of statistics. It is made clear to our eyes where and how far man has gone down the *selva oscura*, of which Dante gave a vivid picture. Man has lost his dignity, his high and noble consciousness. He can no more say: "We

are the sons of the Immortal"—*amritasya putrah*. Verily he has become the Dwarf spoken of by the ancient Purana.

#### "Altruisation of Humanity"

Thus lost in ignorance, nurtured by a "sensate culture", disregardful of all established high moral values, selfish and commercial man lives in continual clash with his fellow beings. And today, as misfortune would have it, this field of conflict assuming dangerous proportions envelops the entire world. In the face of such a hateful peril we must, the author says, either perish wholesale in the way of self-annihilation or make the last and supreme bid to find a way out and be saved.

And there is a way out, assures Mr. Sorokin, if only his plan of combat be accepted in entirety. Well, then, what is his plan and what are the solutions he would like us to work out? First, we must stop looking to any particular religious or moral institution, form of government, rule of economics or pattern of social order as the one and only means of achieving world peace and, consequently, a new order in life. Instead, our sole and primary concern should be the individual. The individual must rebuild himself. He must become altruised. **Altruisation of humanity**—yes, that is the watch-word of our great reformer. In this connection he goes on to say: "Genuine altruism is pure also in its motivation: altruistic actions are performed for their own sake, quite apart from any considerations of pleasure or utility." And the family cited as a fine example showing how this ideal is actually practised. Here, we are told, each egotistic "I" is merged in or subordinated to the larger feeling of We. Moving yet farther up the spiral, at the summit we meet the great masters of altruism—Buddha, Christ and Saint Francis of Assisi.

#### The Sorokinian Strategy of Salvation

The next question would naturally be: how to achieve this goal? Here then is the Sorokinian strategy (as he puts it). It is a three-fold strategy or a three-pronged drive, as the most up-to-date militarist would say: (1) to remove the modern sensate culture, (2) to eliminate from the socio-cultural field those elements which oppose and contradict one another, and (3) to reevaluate man as the individual being. In the new culture of Sorokin "the excessively relativised values and norms must be replaced by a set of fundamental values and norms universally valid and unconditionally binding upon everyone; many negative and empty values and norms must be discarded; sound relative values and norms should be preserved as relative, but with a definite indication of the time and space limits in which they are valid." Again, in our socio-cultural life we

owe simultaneous allegiance to an order of religious faith, a particular economy, a national interest, etc., whose demands upon us are extremely divergent and at times mutually abrogating. Therefore we must find out the common factor from amidst the mutually conflicting obligations and base our code of conduct upon it. Lastly, man must be elevated to the heights of the Infinite Manifold (call it God, Brahman, Tao, the Holy or the Sacred). For indeed man is not only a bundle of blind animal instincts (in spite of Freud); he has in him the knowledge of the superconscience. And he who attains this peak of realisation emerges as the "divine man", as a "manifestation of the Godhead", etc., representing the supreme type of creative functioning.

#### Is the Sorokinian Strategy Sufficient?

These, in brief, are the broad principles of Mr. Sorokin's thesis. We shall now say a few words, where we differ from him. First of all, Mr. Sorokin's judgment that all past forms and institutions—social, political or economic—are utterly shackles, on the ground that they have not been able to prevent war in the succeeding age, is without substance. It is rather naive to think that war can be prevented by any external means. One atom bomb leads only to another deadlier. We look at the question from a different point of view. Put against a larger background of cosmic evolution every formation, whatever it may be, every institution of the past, will be seen in a varying degree to have made its proper contribution for an ultimate common purpose. A cosmic harmony and an all-embracing Unity may well be the destiny of human evolution, but in the midway there are stages of trial and experimentation where lesser harmonies and feebler unities find their useful place. They and their *raison d'être* are to be judged by this supreme fact and by no other human motive or theory.

Another important observation of the Professor is that to make life worth living we should cultivate the feeling of familiaristic "We". This, we fear, is a dangerous preaching. So many of the ancient tribes had so much of that sentiment, and yet they never hesitated to commit the most heinous crimes: blood-curdling stories of revenge and counter-revenge fill the pages of the story of these peoples. In reality, it is the same unenlightened ego, only under a different name and in a different form. It does not touch the core of the truth to say that Buddha, a Christ, or a Saint Francis of Assisi was an apostle of Altruism. Buddha embodied the Bliss of Nirvana, the supernal calm repose in the Infinite. In the same way Christ or Saint Francis of Assisi had his own triumphant supra-human realization. But that is a fact on which we need not dilate at present.

Mr. Sorokin's plan to revolutionise the society by a new set of rules does not hold out a very hopeful promise. For his rules or codes of

human conduct are after all made largely from the debris of past conventions, however broad they may now appear to be. It is well to remember that in the meanwhile man has grown within considerably and if he is to take the next great step towards an ideal order of life, he must leave these mental formulae behind, he must found himself on some luminous higher spiritual principles that wait for him in the womb of the future (that is to say, in his own deeper and higher levels of consciousness). Here we have to dive into our being, discover its divine swadharma and swabhava and, through that, establish our relation with Nature and her universal laws, with all things that surround us and come into contact with us.

#### Ranges of Human Nature

Mr. Sorokin pleads also for an intensive study of human nature. His own discovery in the field is startling—perhaps to many. Apart from the trilogy of the unconscious, the bioconscious and the conscious energies in the being he speaks also of a superconscious full of the marvels of a great potentiality. It is in this superconscious that lies the ultimate salvation of man. Yet to an Indian student conversant with the spiritual practices carried on here through centuries or millenniums in the past all this is no new addition to his knowledge. Indian systems of Yoga studied and knew the secrets of human nature to such an extent, both in detail and depth, that they far surpass the obscure half-lights of even a Sorokin. The vast subliminal reaches are unknown to our author. The value of the psychic being, the true soul behind the mental vital and physical personality, has also been completely ignored by him. The meagre description of the unconscious and the bioconscious, and the equating of the consciousness with rationalism are hardly satisfactory, if not to some extent misleading. But let that pass. As a pioneer, a bold adventurer on a new path through the wasteland of a modern world, he speaks of old-world truths and in a voice different from the sceptics'.

In conclusion we would repeat a simple lesson that the wise men of ancient India pronounced long ago but which escapes many a modern. Krishna said, "O Bharata, whensoever there is a fading of the Dharma and the uprising of adharma, then I loose myself forth into birth. For the deliverance of the good, for the destruction of the evil-doers, for the enthroning of the Right I am born from age to age." This opens a new horizon before us, and strengthens our hope in the future. It reveals the knowledge that there is a Supreme Power behind the universe and His support is the surest guide for humanity to achieve its complete reconstruction—the spiritualisation or divinisation of human consciousness. Only, the individual must open his soul, look up and recognise his Master and Helper.

Samir Kanta Gupta.



# TAGORE—POET AND SEER

BY NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

May 8 was the day of Rabindranath Tagore's birth. To the many-sided and profound genius of this great son of India's, we offer as tribute an appraisal which brings an extraordinarily fine insight into essentials.

A great literature seems to have almost invariably a great name attached to it, one name by which it is known and recognised as great. It is the name of the man who releases the inmost potency of that literature, and who marks at the same time the height to which its creative genius has attained or perhaps can ever attain. Homer and Virgil, Dante and Shakespeare, Goethe and Camoens, Firdausi in Persian and Kalidas in classical Sanskrit, are such names—"numina", each being the presiding deity, the godhead born full-armed out of the poetic consciousness of the race to which he belongs.

Even in the case of France whose language and literature are more a democratic and collective and less an individualistic creation, even there one single name can be pointed out as the life and soul, the very cream of the characteristic poetic genius of the nation. I am, of course, referring to Racine—Racine who, in spite of Moliere and Corneille and Hugo, stands as the most representative French poet, the embodiment of French aesthesis par excellence.

Such a great name is Rabindranath Tagore in Bengali literature. We need not forget Bankim Chandra, nor even Madhusudan: still one can safely declare that if Bengali language and literature belonged to any single person as its supreme liberator and fosterer—savita and pusa—it is Rabindranath. It was he who lifted that language and literature from what had been after all a provincial and parochial status into the domain of the international and universal. Through him a thing of local value was metamorphosed definitively into a thing of world value.

## Utterance of the Soul

The miracle that Tagore has done is this: he has brought out the very soul of the race—its soul of lyric fervour and grace, of intuitive luminosity and poignant sensibility, of beauty and harmony and delicacy. It is this that he has made living and vibrant, raised almost to the highest pitch and amplitude in various modes in the utterance of his nation. What he always expresses, in all his creations, is one aspect or another, a rhythm or a note of the soul movement. It is always a cry of the soul, a profound experience in the inner heart that wells out in the multifarious cadences of his poems. It is the same motif that finds a local habitation and a name in his short stories, perfect gems, masterpieces among world's masterpieces of art. In his dramas and novels it is the same element that has found a wider canvas for a more detailed and graphic notation of its play and movement. I would even include his essays (and certainly his memoirs) within the sweep of the same master-note. An essay by Rabindranath is as characteristic of the poet as any lyric poem of his.

This is not to say that the essays are devoid of a solid intellectual content, a close-knit logical argument, an acute and penetrating thought movement, nor is it that his novels or dramas are mere lyrics drawn out and thinned, lacking in the essential elements of a plot and action and character. What I mean is that over and above these factors which Tagore's art possesses to a considerable degree, there is an imponderable element, a flavour, a breath from elsewhere that suffuses the entire creation, something that can be characterised only as the soul element. It is this presence that makes whatever the poet touches not only living and graceful but instinct

with something that belongs to the world of gods, something celestial and divine, something that meets and satisfies man's deepest longing and aspiration.

I have been laying special stress upon this aspect of Tagore's genius, because humanity is in great need of it today, because all has gone wrong with the modern world since it lost touch with its soul and was beguiled into a path lighted by false glimmers and will-o'-the-wisps, lures of a superficial and infra-human consciousness, or into the by-ways and backwaters and aberrations of a sophisticated intellectualism.

## Modern but Not Modernist

Tagore is modern, as modern as reasonably and sensibly one can be; he is a modern, but not a modernist. One is modern when one is inspired and moved by the spirit of the Time, one is modernist when one is bound to the letter, to the external formulas of the law of the Zeit-Geist. You remain modern if the new consciousness enters and dwells in your nature and character, you become modernist as soon as it degenerates into a tic and a mannerism.

The passage of medievalism to modernism can be defined as the passage from the local and parochial to the general and universal. The medieval consciousness is a segmented or linear consciousness; it is the view, at a time, from one particular angle of vision. The modern consciousness, on the other hand, is or tends to be a global view-point, a circular consciousness. The unilateral mentality proper to medievalism may be deep and penetrating and far-reaching, extending to the hidden and high realities, even to the highest and the most secret—to God and Soul and Immortality; it would still be a one-sided vision and achievement. It is the characteristic function of the modern consciousness, to survey things from all points of view, even the most disparate and incommensurable. The relativity of all experiences—not necessarily their illusoriness—is the great modern discovery; it is the parent of modern (scientific) scepticism and agnosticism; it is also the basis of a large, a global synthesis, which was never possible till now and which is the promise of tomorrow.

Modernism implies a natural broadening of the mind and life, a greater capacity to understand and endorse and appreciate divergent and even contrary and contradictory experiences and standpoints. Thus, brotherhood to the medieval man meant bringing together mankind under the dominion of one cult or creed—it is the extension of a tribal feeling. Brotherhood in a modern consciousness would mean an inner union and commensurability that can subsist even in the midst of a great diversity of taste and feeling and experience.

Tagore is modern in respect of all these higher aptitudes that man has gained today. He has the brilliance and curiosity of an alert and strong intelligence, the refined sensibility of a pagan and scientific intellect, he has an infinite sense of irony and humour and, above all, he has that in him,—a genial plasticity and sympathy and a warm sense of "wide commonalty",—which makes him easily a citizen of the world, feeling absolutely at home all over the earth.

The breath of modernism that Tagore has brought into the life and letters of the Bengali race is, I repeat, suffused with a soul-feeling—a sense of refinement and dignity, wideness and catholicity and urbanity in the inner make-up of life-attitude and consciousness, a feeling that one no longer lives in his village, confined to its insular limits, but that one lives a life at large and at its best; one is cosmopolitan in the noblest sense of the word and one has to move and act and speak in a manner becoming such a position. A high sense of all the aristocratic virtues, plus a certain sunshine of wit and playful intelligence that prevents the serious and the lofty from becoming grim and Dantesque are part of the gifts that Tagore has brought us and made a living element of our literary and even social character.

## Modern and Yet Ancient

Tagore is modern, because his modernism is based upon a truth not local and temporal, but eternal and universal, something that is the very bed-rock of human culture and civilisation. Indeed, Tagore is also ancient, as ancient as the Upanishads. The great truths, the basic realities experienced and formulated by the ancients ring clear and distinct in the core of all his artistic creation. Tagore's intellectual make-up may be as rationalistic and scientific as that of any typical modern man. Nor does he discard the good things (preya) that earth and life offer to man for his banquet; and he does not say like the bare ascetic; *anya vaco vimucatha*, "abandon everything else". But even like one of the Upanishadic Rishis, the great Yajnavalkya, he would possess and enjoy his share of terrestrial as well as of spiritual wealth—*ubhayameva*. In a world of modernism, although he acknowledges and appreciates

mental and vital and physical values, he does not give them the place demanded for them. He has never forgotten the one thing needful. He has not lost the moorings of the soul. He has continued to nestle close to the eternal verities that sustain earth and creation and give a high value and purpose to man's life and creative activity.

In these iconoclastic times, we are liable, both in art and in life, to despise and even to deny certain basic factors which were held to be almost indispensable in the old world. The great triads—the True, the Beautiful and the Good, or God, Soul and Immortality—are of no consequence to a modernist mind: these mighty words evoke no echo in the heart of a contemporary human being. Art and Life meant in the old world something decent, if not great. They were perhaps, as I have already said, framed within narrow limits, certain rigid principles that cribbed and cabined the human spirit in many ways; but they were not anarchic, they obeyed a law, a dharma, which they considered as an ideal, a standard to look up to and even live up to. The modernist is an anarchic being in all ways. He does not care for old-world verities which seem to him mere convention or superstition. Truth and Beauty and Harmony are non-existent for him: if at all they exist they bear a totally different connotation, the very opposite of that which is normally accepted.

The modernist does not ask: Is it good? Is it beautiful? He asks: Is it effective? Is it expressive? And by effectivity and expressiveness he means something nervous and physical. Expressiveness to him would mean the capacity to tear off the veil over what once was considered not worth the while or decent to uncover. A strange recklessness and shamelessness, an unhealthy and perverse curiosity, characteristic of the Asura and the Pisacha, of the beings of the underworld, mark the movement of the modernist.

In such a world Tagore is a voice and a beacon from over the heights of the old world declaring and revealing the verities that are eternal and never die. They who seek to kill them do so at their peril. Tagore is a great poet: as such he is close to the heart of Bengal. He is a great Seer: as such humanity will claim him as its own.

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