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"GREAT IS TRUTH AND IT SHALL PREVAIL"

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SRI AUROBINDO'S LETTERS YOGA AND LIFE

(Won't you tell me something to which I can always turn for help and contact during my stay in Bombay?)

"Remember the Mother and, though physically far from her, try to feel her with you and act according to what your inner being tells you would be her Will. Then you will be best able to feel her presence and mine and carry our atmosphere around you as a protection and a zone of quietude and light accompanying you everywhere." (12-12-36)

(It happens sometimes that when something in me seems to go out towards people to whom I was attached in the past I make a violent inner rejection of their influence but then I feel bad about the violence and let a movement of pity or softness or warmth go out towards them so as to undo whatever inner harm I might have done by that violence. I wonder if this movement has anything psychic in it and is permissible.)

"The movement of which you speak is not psychic but emotive. It is a vital emotive force that you put out and waste. It is also harmful because, while on the one side you try to reject a past vital relation or tie with these people, you by this movement re-establish in another way a vital relation with them. If there was anything wrong in your first movement, this is quite a false way of remedying the defect.

"Certainly, it would be better to reject without any violent feeling against any person, because the violence is a sign of a certain weakness in the vital which must be corrected—not for any other reason. The rejection should be quiet, firm, self-assured, decisive; it will then become radical and effective." (3-5-30)

How is it that one keeps shifting one's quality of self-feeling and self-being? And what is it in one that does so? It cannot be the outer "I", the ego-sense, the *Ahankara*; for you have written of the necessity of getting away from the *Ahankara* into a truer self. Something else then is there which is capable of getting away from the one to the other.)

"It all depends upon where the consciousness places itself and concentrates itself. If the consciousness places or concentrates itself within the ego, you are identified with the ego—if in the mind, it is identified with the mind and its activities and so on. If the consciousness puts its stress outside, it is said to live in the external being and becomes oblivious of its inner mind and vital and inmost psychic; if it goes inside, puts its centralising stress there, then it knows itself as the inner being or, still deeper, as the psychic being; if it ascends out of the body to the planes where self is naturally conscious of its wideness and freedom it knows itself as the Self and not the mind, life or body. It is this stress of consciousness that makes all the difference. That is why one has to concentrate the consciousness in heart or mind in order to go within or go above. It is the disposition of the consciousness that determines everything, makes one predominantly mental, vital, physical or psychic, bound or free, separate in the Purusha or involved in the Prakriti." (16-7-37)

(If the inner or overhead planes get realised by me, isn't the realiser my outer waking personal consciousness? If it is not this consciousness—that is to say, the being of thought, feeling and sensation which I know normally as myself—than can I be said to have realised anything?)

"You take the outer waking consciousness as if it were the real person or being and conclude that if it is not this but something else that has the realisation or abides in the realisation, then no one has it—for there is no one here except the waking consciousness. That is the very error by which the ignorance lasts and cannot be got rid of. The very first step in getting out of the ignorance is to accept the fact that this outer consciousness is not one's soul, not oneself, not the real person, but only a temporary formation on the surface for the purposes of the surface play. The soul, the

person is within, not on the surface—the outer personality is the person only in the first sense of the Latin word *persona* which meant originally a mask." (26-7-37)

(What is the European notion of the true soul, the real person?)

"The non-materialistic European idea makes a distinction between soul and body—the body is perishable, the mental-vital consciousness is the immortal soul and remains always the same (horrible idea!) in heaven as on earth or if there is rebirth it is also the same damned personality that comes back and makes a similar fool of itself." (21-7-37)

(Why is X acting so strangely and what could be his grievance against us?)

"His main grievance with respect to the intellectuals is that he is cut off from all discussion of mental things and mental stimuli and so his mental energies are becoming atrophied. But a man who has a mental life ought surely not to be dependent on others for it, since that life is found within—there ought to be springs within, that flow of their own force." (12-7-37)

(A friend of mine feels disposed towards the spiritual life. May I get his photograph for you to judge him? Do you think I should bring some persuasion to bear on him?)

"You may get his photograph—it may help to see what kind of nature he has. But there is no need to go out of the way to persuade him; from his letter he does not seem altogether ready for the spiritual life. His idea of life seems to be rather moral and philanthropic than spiritual at present, and behind it is the attachment to the family life. If the impulse to seek the Divine of which he speaks is more than a mental turn suggested by a vague emotion, if it has really anything psychic in it, it will come out at its own time; there is no need to stimulate, and a premature stimulation may put him towards something for which he is not yet fit." (12-1-31)

(I feel divided and disturbed. Above me is the ecstatic light; below me is a voluptuous darkness: I strain my arms towards the high splendour but my feet carry me into the frenzied deeps. The Mother is very dear to my soul, but that does not help me to make the obscure impulses turn and follow her. You will tell me that I must do this or do that; but what's the use of "must's" to one who feels too exhausted to move an inch in the right direction. I cannot conceive how possibly I can live without the Mother and yourself, but neither can I imagine how the mass of human folly in me is to be controlled and illumined.)

"The moral of the condition you describe is not that Yoga should not be done but that you have to go steadily healing the rift between the two parts of the being. The division is very usual, almost universal in human nature, and the following of the lower impulse in spite of the contrary will in the higher parts happens to almost everybody. It is the phenomenon noted by Arjuna in his question to Krishna, 'Why does one do evil though one wishes not to do it, as if compelled to it by force?', and expressed sentimentally by Horace: '*video meliora proboque, Deteriora sequor*'.* By constant effort and aspiration one can arrive at a turning point when the psychic asserts itself and what seems a very slight psychological change or reversal alters the whole balance of the nature." (2-3-37)

(What would you say of an experience, during sleep, in which a seminal emission is prevented by a powerful pulling back of the fluid so that it flows inward again and one can feel and even hear it boiling and swirling at the

* "I see the better and approve of it, I follow the worse."

Sri Aurobindo's Letters —Continued from page 1

root of the sex organ. Also, may I have a few words from you on whether constant sex control could induce impotence?)

"If it is like that, then it is the power of self-control, automatic and therefore belonging to the inner being, that is coming—the genuine thing. Of course to be complete the sexual passion and the thoughts that encourage it should disappear also. The idea about impotence is rather irrational—impotence comes from over-indulgence or wrong indulgence (certain perverse habits); it does not come from self-control. Self-control means only a diversion to other powers, because the controlled sex-power becomes a force for the life-energies, the powers of the mind and the more and more potent workings of the spiritual consciousness." (9-12-32)

(This afternoon I dozed off. Presently I found myself trying to read a manuscript—especially where a part of it was somehow in a shadow. As this was difficult I thought of deciphering the brighter part, and concentrated there. Then I began to see designs and I don't recollect what else, until I felt my eyes getting drawn towards the centre between the brows. There was a strong pull towards it, resulting in my seeing a widening white circle, an aperture which grew about as big as perhaps an eight-anna piece. It struck me then that this was the famous "third eye" opening. May I know what you think?)

"It is very evidently the opening of the *Ajnachakra* or centre of inner thought and will and occult vision—there can be no doubt about it, from your description."

(I had an attack of cold in the nose this morning, which grew worse in the evening. I was wondering what to do to check it—when I just happened to look out of my window and saw on a cloud above the sunset a patch of mellow gold verging on light orange. I immediately felt that this glow was going to soothe my cold. So I sat quiet and kept staring at it—dipping imaginatively my nose into it. The effect was almost instant, and within a short time the cold was as good as gone. How would you explain this phenomenon? Did I become well because certain tones of light affect the nerves in a soothing way? The eyes and the nose have a close connection: irritation of the former by glare often produces a fit of sneezing; so perhaps what specially comforts the eyes acts as a "soother" for the nose?)

"It is quite possible. The connection between the eye and the nose is undeniable and that light has healing (also disturbing) powers is an established fact. So your theory is perfectly possible. It is also possible that your mind or something behind your mind (the inner will, say, in the third eye) acted on your nose (or the cold) with the imaginative nose-bath in orange light as a medium of realisation. You can take the thing by either end. Orange or red gold is supposed, by the way, to be the light of the supramental in the physical." (21-12-33)

(For Y's trouble, the advice of the doctors is a series of injections. I suppose he has to follow it?)

"Injections are all the fashion; for everything it is 'inject, inject and again inject'. Medicine has gone through three stages in modern times—first (at the beginning in Moliere's days) it was 'bleed and douche'—then 'drug and diet'—now it is 'serum and injection'. Praise the Lord! not for the illnesses, but for the doctors. However, each of these formulas has a part truth behind it—with its advantages and disadvantages. As all religions and philosophies point to the Supreme but each in a different direction, so all medical fashions are ways to health—though they don't always reach it." (10-4-35)

(If, after the Mother or you start working spiritually on some relative or friend of ours who is reported to be ill, some wrong information happens to be given about his or her identity, does the help sent miss its mark?)

"Wrong information coming across the working creates a confusion so that it is no longer possible to say what is the result. Of course if the wrong information comes at the beginning, it would be still worse. It is very necessary that the information given should be correct." (10-6-35)

(When a man has much to say, even a slight occasional impediment in speech has a somewhat depressing effect. But what is stammering due to? How is it to be cured?)

"I don't think stammering has anything to do with insufficient lung-power nor is it caused by malformation of the vocal organs—it is commonly a nervous (physico-nervous) impediment and is perfectly curable. I can't say that I know of any especial device for it—people have used various kinds of devices to get over it, but behind them all will-power and a patient discipline of the utterance are indispensable." (13-5-32)

(I have several times dreamt of some of my teeth falling. They come off in my mouth and I spit them out. The sensation is horrible. Is there any significance in such dreams?)

"Not if you were thinking about your teeth. Symbolically, if the dream is symbolic, the falling of teeth means the disappearance of old or fixed mental habits belonging to the physical mind." (13-4-35)

(Last night—or rather early this morning—I had a dream in which I was vividly aware of being near you and touching your body. But I doubt very much my feeling, because in the dream you had an acute stomach-ache and were rather upset by it! Nirod, too, was near and I asked him to give you some peppermint and then I was helping you to go upstairs somewhere. At the close of the dream I found myself reading a poem, but I forget now what exactly it was. I am inclined to think that some disorder in my own stomach must have got transferred to my dream-figure of you. But please tell me if my "experience" of being in almost physical touch with you was as mythical as your gripe.)

"Well, it is difficult to say. The vivid awareness seems to indicate an actual contact—but the stomach-ache etc. seem to be a foreign intrusion. What happens often in these dreams of the vital plane is that the subconscious (which is mainly responsible for ordinary dreams) throws its figures across the transcription of the experience and one gets a very mixed record. As I have no stomach-ache and, if I had, would not be in the least upset by it (for I have reached the stage when even the aches come only as a form of Ananda and, besides, if any non-delightful ache came in the stomach I could at once dismiss it; for that much at least of the semi-supramental force I have developed in me), this item must be put down to a subconscious dream-maker—whether transferring the pain from your stomach to mine or creating it *in vacuo* is open to debate." (15-12-35)

(It's come to be a habit now to get out of my body, time and again. Occasionally I just see with my closed eyes. At other times I actually leave the body—and the coming back to it is often due to some disturbing thrust of impulse from it into the new condition. I am fully conscious when I leave the body and soon start testing the concreteness and reality of the things I am amidst by touching them. Usually I move about in my own room but now and then I go outside too. The room I move in is not quite the same as the physical: the furniture is arranged somewhat differently. My conclusion is that I move in a subtle body in a subtle plane; but is that always unavoidable? Does one's subtle body never move in the very physical plane? In my latest experience I went to the pier, but the street through which I ran to reach the pier was of a strange kind because I moved, shortly after, from room to room, as through some deserted building. At last I glimpsed the sea; many boats were standing in dirty green water close to the shore. The word "lagoon" came to my mind. But further on I found myself in full sight of the sea. And it was an extremely beautiful spectacle. The water had a violet colour mixed with indigo and there was an atmosphere of magic as the large waves heaved and broke with spray and sparkle.

Two remarks I may make about the world I explore. While running I noticed or rather felt that the defect in my left leg was present there also. I wonder up to what plane my physical disability continues. Secondly, it is not always necessary to move step by step: one has just to wish to touch or reach an object and one is simply there without any sense of passing through the intervening space

I have asked whether one is forced to explore only some subtle world. But take the following experience. I was meditating in my easy-chair. A book was lying on my left side where I had put it before closing my eyes: there was a book-marker inserted at the page where I had stopped reading. Now, I went all numb, as I always do when these phenomena take place—but the eyes are exempted from the general paralysis, so to speak. I keep on opening them and thus swing from the consciousness of one plane to that of the other. This time, however, I opened my eyes and saw not only my own body lying inert, with my both arms dropped paralysed, but also a third arm free at the right shoulder. It was, of course, a subtle arm and could move. Immediately my experimental mind thought of a test. So I strained the third arm towards the book by my side, caught hold of the book-marker and tried to pull it out. I actually did pull it out, but imagine my surprise when I saw that though I was holding a book-marker in my subtle hand the original was still in the book!

"It is evidently in a subtle world, not the physical that you move; that is evident from the different arrangement of things, but such details as the third arm and the book-marker removed yet there show that it is a subtle world very near to the physical; it is either a subtle-physical world or a very material vital domain. In all the subtle domains the physical is reproduced with a change, the change growing freer and more elastic as one gets farther away. Such details as the lameness show the same thing—the hold of the physical is still there. It is possible to move about in the physical world, but usually that can only be done by drawing on the atmosphere of other physical beings for a stronger materialisation of the form—when that happens one moves among them and sees them and all the surroundings exactly as they are at that time in the physical world and one can verify the accuracy of the details if immediately after returning to the body (which is usually done with a clear consciousness of the whole process of getting into it) one can traverse the same scene in the physical body. But this is rare; the subtle wandering is on the contrary a frequent phenomenon, only when it is near to the physical world all seems very material and concrete and the association of physical habits and physical mental movements with the subtle events is closer." (23-8-37)

To be continued

THE INTEGRAL YOGA OF SRI AUROBINDO

By RISHABHCHAND

WHAT IS YOGA?

"Greater than the doers of askesis (tapasya), greater even than the men of knowledge and greater than the men of works is the Yogi. Therefore, O Arjuna, become a Yogi." (The Gita, Chap. 6.46).

Such being the view of the Gita, which is itself a massive teaching of a synthetic Yoga and a part of the highest canonical triad of ancient Hinduism, it would not be unjustifiable to conclude that Yoga was regarded in ancient India as the very heart of spirituality. The other spiritual ways and methods are but approaches, preparations, subsidiary aids to purification and progress, but the way of Yoga is the royal way, the most rapidly effective and revolutionary means of spiritual realisation. If we study the lives of the greatest mystics, Eastern and Western, we shall see that the most momentous and decisive of their realisations came to them through Yoga and not through the mere pursuit of any set methods or routine practices. This does not mean that spiritual exercises and practices are useless,—they have their indispensable place and utility in spiritual life, and without them no stable progress can ever be assured,—but in order to be able to produce any substantial change in consciousness and being, they must be incorporated in Yoga and informed with its quickening and sublimating spirit.

What then is Yoga? The etymological sense of the word is union, yoke (Dutch *juk*, German *joch*, Latin *jugum*, Sanskrit *yuj*). It means the linking or union of the human consciousness with something higher, something transcendent, something eternal and divine. In the ignorance of his dividing mind, though not in spiritual fact, man is cut off from his transcendent source and sustenance. He regards himself as a separate being among countless separate beings and things, his life as his own personal concern, his thoughts and ideas as his own mental creation and possession, and his successes and failures as the exclusive outcome of his personal effort. This self-separation of the individual from the unity of the universe and eternity of the transcendent constitutes his essential ignorance, Adam's fall from Eden; and so long as he persists in this egoistic separation, there can be no recovery by him of his own infinite and immortal Self, his spiritual knowledge and freedom, and the truth and unity of universal existence. His mind may go on developing itself, but unless it extends its frontiers and consciously advances towards the Infinite, it will condemn itself to an endless and fruitless spinning round the desires and wants of the life-soul. A philosophy which is born of the mere intellect is either an abstraction or a specious justification of the socialised instincts and tendencies of the ignorant human nature. In the former case it is unrelated to life, in the latter it is an apologist for life, an advocate of what is and has been, rather than a guide to what should be. Its humanism is a squalid worship of the normal and the common, and its pragmatism and realism, wedded to materialistic science, a means of perpetuating the natural, unregenerate humanity of man. Salvation lies in breaking out of this vicious circle by turning the mind upwards, by an ascent of consciousness towards the Infinite and Eternal and a transforming descent of the Infinite into the finite. This is Yoga.

Man has first to be conscious of the manifold ignorance in which he lives. It may be, in some cases, a learned or reflective ignorance, full of a smug self-conceit and self-satisfaction, but it is ignorance none the less, which, according to Sri Aurobindo, is sevenfold in its nature, and keeps the consciousness of man utterly wrapped in itself.

"We are ignorant of the Absolute which is the source of all being and becoming; we take partial facts of being, temporal relations of the becoming for the whole truth of existence,—this is the first, the original ignorance. We are ignorant of the spaceless, timeless, immobile and immutable Self; we take the constant mobility and mutation of the cosmic becoming in Time and Space for the whole truth of existence,—that is the second, the cosmic ignorance. We are ignorant of our universal self, the cosmic existence, the cosmic consciousness, our infinite unity with all being and becoming; we take our limited egoistic mentality, vitality, corporeality for our true self and regard everything other than that as not-self,—that is the third, the egoistic ignorance. We are ignorant of our eternal becoming in Time; we take this little life in a small span of Time, in a petty field of Space, for our beginning, our middle and our end,—that is the fourth, the temporal ignorance. Even within this brief temporal becoming, we are ignorant of our large and complex being, of that in us which is super-conscious, sub-conscious, intra-conscious, circum-conscious to our surface becoming; we take that surface becoming with its small selection of overtly mentalised experiences for our whole existence,—that is the fifth, the psychological ignorance. We are ignorant of the true constitution of our becoming; we take the mind or life or body or any two of these or all three for our true principle or the whole account of what we are, losing sight of

that which constitutes them and determines by its occult presence and is meant to determine sovereignly by its emergence their operations—this is the sixth, the constitutional ignorance. As a result of all these ignorances, we miss the true knowledge, government and enjoyment of our life in the world; we are ignorant in our thought, will, sensations, actions, return wrong or imperfect responses at every point to the questionings of the world, wander in a maze of errors and desires, strivings and failures, pain and pleasure, sin and stumbling, follow a crooked road, grope blindly for a changing goal,—that is the seventh, the practical ignorance."*

This colossal and multiform ignorance is due to the alienation of the human consciousness from the infinite and universal consciousness; it can be abolished only by healing the division. And Yoga is the only means, the only effective spiritual dynamism that can completely heal the division. Here Yoga means not the union, which is the goal, but the process or method by which the union is achieved. This is the second meaning of the word. The ethical rules and austerities, metaphysical speculation and cogitation, even religious cults and creeds have nothing to do with Yoga—they rotate within the confines of the mental consciousness; but Yoga is a movement of the human consciousness to contact the Infinite by self-transcendence; it is a direct leap or a headlong plunge into the Eternal. Even its start is characterised by an aspiration for such a leap or plunge; its motive force is a hunger for the Absolute. So long as there is a complacency in the mind with its thoughts and ideas and principles, and a contented confidence in the will to realise them, there can be no aspiration for Yoga; and all one's spiritual or religious life may consist only in ethical efforts or ceremonial observances to purify and refine some surface strands of one's nature. Yoga—all true Yoga of whatever denomination—is revolutionary spirituality, it is a breaking out of the prison of the mind, or the life-force or the rigidity of the physical formula, and a passionate winging up towards the heights and widenesses of the Spirit. Mysticism is its very soul, and a supra-rational *elan* of the inmost being is its irresistible drive. It is one of the most daring adventures of the human consciousness, fraught with dangers and difficulties, liable to be misled by false glimmers and stranded or shipwrecked on the shoals of egoistic enjoyments. And yet it is an adventure which every human being has to launch upon in one life or another, because that is the only way of the inevitable self-transcendence and divine fulfilment, which is his destiny. What dangers does he not brave, what risks does he not manfully take in the adventures of his material life! How many lives have not been sacrificed in the expeditions and explorations undertaken from age to age! Failures after failures have been accepted on the way to a cherished goal; dire threats and temptations, severe privations and difficulties have been resolutely passed through, and yet the adventurous spirit of man has known no defeat or discouragement! It has embraced martyrdom and suffering in the service of science and the general advancement of its intellectual and material aims. If that is the price willingly paid for the accomplishment of passing terrestrial purposes, is it any wonder that the élite of humanity, those who are spiritually evolved, have, in all ages and climes, staked their all on the discovery of the truth of their existence and the indestructible essence of their being? Is it any wonder that they struggled and suffered, denying themselves all respite and relaxation, for the realisation of the Infinite and Eternal? Is it any wonder that, feeling asphyxiated in the dim cave of the mind and tormented by the ceaseless goad of desires, they panted for a glimpse of the Light and a breath of the inner freedom? "...If the Divine has any value, is it not worth some trouble and time and labour to follow after Him, and must we insist on having Him without any training or sacrifice or suffering or trouble? It is surely irrational to make a demand of such a nature."*

But there are Yogas and Yogas. There are spurious Yogas as there are genuine ones. There are partial and limited, as there are comprehensive and integral ones. But a genuine thing does not become suspect because it is counterfeited. What branch of knowledge is there, what object of man's quest but is shadowed by shams and sought to be foiled by fakes? The seeker of Truth, if he has an inner perception of it and a faith in its existence, can never be daunted or discouraged by fakes and impostures; he proceeds straight to his goal through any distractions and difficulties he may meet on the way. Impostures are there only to deflect the weak in faith; they generate doubt and diffidence in them, cloud and bewilder their intelligence and unnerve their will to achieve; but those who are strong in faith know that every genuine thing has a corresponding counterfeit, whose function is only to prove the worth of its contrary. Besides, all sorts of unusual feats and practices are often lumped together under the omnibus term, Yoga. From necromancy to levitation, from acid-

Continued on next page

* "The Life Divine" by Sri Aurobindo.

* "Letters of Sri Aurobindo."

WHAT IS YOGA?—Continued from previous page

swallowing to fire-walking, any extraordinary display of occult or magical powers is allowed to impress the mind and confuse its perception of spiritual values. Yoga, as I have said above, is a contact or union with the Infinite and Eternal, and not with any merely supraphysical beings and forces. It is a direct movement of the consciousness and being of man through a series of self-purifications and self-enlargements towards the Truth of existence and its unconditioned peace and bliss. It is a surpassing of the ego, a conquest of desires and a release from the hold of blinding passions. It is, at its best, a complete and irrevocable reversal of consciousness, a putting on of the immortality of the Spirit and a shuffling off of the normal, tattered mask of humanity. Yoga is the only means by which man can become divine and his life of stress and cares a pulse and paean of light.

But there are varieties of Yoga, each having its own particular method and particular result. Though each aims at the Infinite and Eternal, the starting point, approach and contact of each are different. Most of them use one part of the being of man as a lever and lead his consciousness through it to the Infinite. Some attempt a greater sweep and a wider approach, working through the complex elements of human nature, loosening many a knot, straightening out many a twist, and releasing into expression something of the splendour of the Infinite upon earth. I propose to deal with this subject of the varieties of Yoga in the next article. Here I shall confine myself to considering the inevitable—and, I could have also said, imperative—necessity of Yoga for a radical change of human consciousness, without which the present human culture and civilisation, weighted down with material pre-occupations and blinded by animal passions, will precipitate itself into disintegration and cease to exist ere long. In his evolution man has arrived at a stage when his nature must either consent to be converted into the Supernature or go slithering down into perdition.

If we look with a searching and dispassionate eye into the heart of Nature's universal working in the material world, we perceive that all life is Yoga, a slowly, spirally, precariously evolving stupendous Yoga of Nature aiming at a progressive reproduction and revelation of the divine Image in her own terms. From the incipient surge of energy which sprinkles the spaces with suns and stars and the emergent life-sparkle which makes the earth smile with verdure, and the mobile wonder and variety of animal creation, its developing gamut of sensibilities and range of expressive faculties and organs to the phenomenal growth of reason and imagination and intuition in man, his fine, symmetrical body, his rich heart of feelings and emotions, his intrepid, adventurous spirit, his powers of foresight and invention, and, above all, his divination of the Godhead in himself and his persistent, though vaguely felt and very imperfectly realised, aspiration for its infinity and immortality, purity and freedom and blissful harmony, is nothing but a mounting travail, a purposive endeavour, a long and labouring Yoga of Nature for the unveiled manifestation of the One whom she holds secret in herself, and an overt, constant, dynamic union with Him in her terrestrial play. Nature is not inconscient and blind, nor her universal strivings a senseless gamble of caprice and chance and a purposeless expenditure of her force—she is big with God.

"But what Nature aims at for the mass in a slow evolution, Yoga effects for the individual by a rapid revolution. It works by a quickening of all her energies, a sublimation of all her faculties. While she develops the spiritual life with difficulty and has constantly to fall back from it for the sake of her lower realisations, the sublimated force, the concentrated method of Yoga can attain directly and carry with it the perfection of the mind and even, if she will, the perfection of the body. Nature seeks the Divine in her own symbols; Yoga goes beyond Nature to the Lord of Nature, beyond universe to the Transcendent, and can return with the transcendent light and power, with the fiat of the Omnipotent."*

Yoga could also be said to be at once the way and the ultimate goal of evolutionary Nature, but in the ignorance through which Nature passes in order to reach the perfect Yoga or union with the Divine in the infinity of His Knowledge, she forgets in her creatures, though not in the depths of her being, this primal and determining truth of her existence and evolution in the material world: the developing ego acts as a veil between her and her Lord. In man the ego erects a thick wall between the individual and the universal, with the result that the individual is aware of himself as only a finite, mortal being engaged in an unequal struggle with the immense, unpredictable forces that assail him from many invisible sources. But, paradoxical as it may seem, the very ego which accentuates division and discord, chooses, after its development is complete, to break down the wall and seek by its willed self-extinction the expansion and fulfilment of the real spiritual individual. Nature then begins to yearn in the individual for a conscious and constant Yoga with her eternal Lord and Lover. What was a slow and subconscious Yoga, carried on behind the veil, with many recoils and detours, becomes now a swift-moving contingent of concentrated forces marching forward to the conquest of Reality. The conscious co-operation of the awakened and aspiring individual will with the Divine

Will accelerates the pace of evolution and crowds the work of many centuries into a single life or even into a few compact but vibrant years. This is the inestimable advantage of Yoga—it is a quickening and revolutionary force, seconded, fortified and sped up by higher spiritual forces to achieve its end. Yoga breaks away from the tardy process of Nature and, springing up all the energies of the individual being and firing his central will, sweeps him to the inevitable fulfilment of his life—the freedom and immortality of the Eternal and Infinite.

The times are full of the promise of a generalisation of Yoga in humanity. On the one hand, degeneration has progressed far in human nature; the noble ideals, the higher spiritual values of human life have receded into the background, leaving only the animal appetites to rage and clamour on the surface. On the other hand, there is a seeking, an aspiration, hardly definite yet, faint and flickering in the gusty darkness, but persistent and steadily insistent, for a thorough overhauling, a radical change of the end and endeavours of life. There is, therefore, a crucial conflict of possibilities between two contrary eventualities. Religion, ethics, social and political creeds, literature and arts, science and its materialistic ideologies have all failed to arrest the general decay and degradation; man is being fast drained of his humanity. And yet divinity is undeniably awaking deep down in him and the first glints of light are filtering into his darkness. Will not a heavenly spring blossom out of this bleak and blighting winter? What alchemy, what power of God can produce this miracle? There is only one alchemy, one irresistible power—it is Yoga. If the extinction of the human race is to be avoided, an ascent to a higher consciousness and a divine conversion and transfiguration of the whole being of man is the only means. A desperate and pervasive degeneracy calls for a radical and revolutionary redemption—and that can only be Yoga.

"All Yoga is in its nature a new birth; it is a birth out of the ordinary, the mentalised material life of man into a higher spiritual consciousness and a greater and diviner being. No Yoga can be successfully undertaken and followed unless there is a strong awakening to the necessity of that larger spiritual existence. . . . And since Yoga is in its essence a turning away from the ordinary material and animal life led by most men or from the more mental but still limited way of living followed by the few to a greater spiritual life, to the way divine, every part of our energies that is given to the lower existence in the spirit of that existence is a contradiction of our aim and our self-dedication. On the other hand, every energy or activity that we can convert from its allegiance to the lower and dedicate to the service of the higher is so much gained on our road, so much taken from the powers that oppose our progress. It is the difficulty of this wholesale conversion that is the source of all the stumblings in the path of Yoga. For our entire nature and its environment, all our personal and all our universal self are full of habits and of influences that are opposed to our spiritual rebirth and work against the whole-heartedness of our endeavour. In a certain sense we are nothing but a complex mass of mental, nervous and physical habits held together by a few ruling ideas, desires and associations,—an amalgam of many small self-repeating forces with a few major vibrations. What we propose in our Yoga is nothing less than to break up the whole formation of our past and present which makes up the ordinary material and mental man, and to create a new centre of vision and a new universe of activities in ourselves which shall constitute a divine humanity or a superhuman nature."*

This, then, is the nature of Yoga whose generalisation in humanity appears to be the next evolutionary *saltus*; for, evolution is cyclic and not rectilinear, and the emergence of a new dawn out of the darkness of a passing night is not a freak but the ineluctable law of Nature. A materialistic humanity, withered and warped by unbelief and buried in the litter of its transitory gains, will turn at last to the pursuit of Yoga for the recovery of its divine heritage and the refounding of its life on earth upon the dynamic unity and harmony of the all-pervading Spirit.

* "The Synthesis of Yoga" by Sri Aurobindo.

Prayer for Perfection

Out of our darkness lead us into light—
 Out of false love to Thy truth-piercing height—
 Out of the clutch of death to immortal space—
 O Perfect One with the all-forgiving face!

From Thy pure lustre build the mind anew—
 From Thy unshadowed bliss draw the heart's hue—
 From Thy immense bring forth a godlike clay—
 O Timeless One self-sought through night and day!

K. D. SETHNA

* Sri Aurobindo.

SRI AUROBINDO, THE LEADER OF THE EVOLUTION

PART II OF "THE WORLD CRISIS AND INDIA"

By "Synergist"

SECTION III : THE NEW WORLD-VIEW

(i) THE SPIRITUAL METAPHYSIC

(ii) KNOWLEDGE OF THE DIVINE REALITY

SUPRAMENTAL COGNITION

In the last essay the metaphysical significance of the Supermind, at least in so far as it was related to the problem of Higher Knowledge, was pointed out, and a very brief general statement was made about the knowledge attained on this level.

The next step is to examine the nature of the Supramental cognition—the mode of knowledge-apprehension on the plane of the Supermind. Here we are on dangerous ground, for we are attempting to understand not only supra-rational realities in terms of the mind—that in itself is an extremely difficult task—but we are trying to understand a way of apprehending reality which is utterly different from the mental, a mode of apprehension belonging to a consciousness to which unity of existence, integrality of awareness, and totality of perception are intrinsic; this consciousness proceeds in its workings from unity to diversity, from the One to the Many and has inherent self-knowledge and world-knowledge. The mind, on the contrary, not possessing knowledge gropes for it, and being unable to grasp the essential as well as dynamic unity of things, proceeds to acquire it on a basis of division and fragmentation through analysis, and on a basis of "summation" and imperfectly constructed unities and "wholes" through synthesis; imperfectly constructed, because this synthesis has behind it a system of ill-understood causality and ontological relationships. Nevertheless, it must not be forgotten that the mind is a subordinate power of the Supermind in earth-creation; it is not in its true nature a principle of falsehood or a distorter of truths. The knowledge that the mind acquires is partial and limited, but if, as we have seen, it learns to become silent and reflect the light of the higher planes above, it can have images and representations of spiritual truths. This mental process works better if there is a clear and precise intellectual exposition of spiritual realities to help it in understanding them. *The Life Divine*, *The Synthesis of Yoga* and other works of Sri Aurobindo adequately meet this need. Therefore the reader must keep a balanced attitude towards the problem of Knowledge; he must neither think that his mental images and language-symbols accurately and completely express the truth of the realities they represent, nor must he go to the other extreme and take up the Johnsonian attitude: "If Mr. X has experienced the Unutterable, Mr. X will be well advised not to utter it." One who has spiritual realisation, scholarship, and power of expression of a very high order can to a certain extent describe the Ultimate Reality and give the rationale of the Cosmic process, that is, as far as the pure mind can follow it—the mental capacity of the learner must be of course commensurate with the instructing ability of the teacher. If the reader can steer clear of the two exaggerated attitudes we have indicated, he will be able to follow Sri Aurobindo's philosophical exposition of spiritual realities, especially if he is able to think in a mental space and imaginatively and intuitively grasp truths whenever his ratiocinative faculty falters. Of course, if one desires to possess the real Higher Knowledge, it is necessary for him to have first-hand experience, because spiritual realities are essentially truths of Being and Consciousness whose real meaning and significance can only be known through immediate apprehension, not truths of thought to be imaged mentally. There is always a difference between epistemic intellection and gnostic illumination. Once these elementary epistemological facts are clearly grasped—and there is no reason why they should not be by an unprejudiced mind for they do no violence to the philosophic reason—

it is not very difficult to have an inkling of the gnostic mode of knowledge-apprehension.

We shall approach the problem in two ways: through the intellect and through the intuitive mentality. The best way to understand the nature of the Supramental cognition would naturally be by contrasting it with the only cognition we really know—our mental cognition, the intellectual way of acquiring knowledge; therefore, we shall first see the points of difference indicated by Sri Aurobindo between these two types of cognition, the purely intellectual and the gnostic, and then examine those between the intuitive and the gnostic. We have already seen the manner in which the mind that is open to intuition works; here we shall examine how its powers are uplifted, heightened and enhanced in the Supermind.

Only one thing remains to be said before we discuss this problem. *The Life Divine* and *The Synthesis of Yoga* were published at the end of the second decade; when *The Life Divine* was brought out as a book in 1939, it was revised and enlarged, but *The Synthesis of Yoga* was not revised in its entirety—only the first twelve chapters were recast by Sri Aurobindo, when they came out in book-form in 1948. If the whole work had been published Sri Aurobindo would have appreciably revised it and added some more chapters; from the letter quoted below it is apparent that some chapters on the Supermind were required to make the work really complete. When Sri Aurobindo discusses the Supramental cognition in *The Synthesis of Yoga* he does not refer to the Supermind proper, poised in its Truth-consciousness, but to a Supermind acting with a slightly diminished light—a Supermind that leans down to the Overmind level and modifies itself to get attuned to it; what he describes in this work is "the action of the Supermind when it descends into the overmind plane and takes up the overmind workings and transforms them." As *The Life Divine* has been revised, there is in it more of the Supermind proper than in *The Synthesis of Yoga*; however, even there the description is of a very general nature—perhaps he thought that the world mind was not yet ready to receive the profounder truths of the Spirit. It has been found necessary to state all this because the author has based his presentation of Sri Aurobindo's ideas regarding this particular subject mainly on these two works.

For the information of the reader the letter mentioned above is given here:

"At the time when the last chapters of *The Synthesis of Yoga* were written in the *Arya* the name 'overmind' had not been found, so there is no mention of it. What is described in those chapters is the action of the supermind when it descends into the overmind plane and takes up the overmind workings and transforms them. The highest supermind or Divine gnosis existent in itself, is something that lies beyond still and quite above. It was intended in latter chapters to show how difficult even this was and how many levels there were between the human mind and supermind and how even supermind descending could get mixed with the lower action and turned into something that was less than the true Truth. But these latter chapters were not written."*

(13-4-1932)

*From *Letters of Sri Aurobindo*, 4th Series, published by Sri Aurobindo Circle, Bombay.

O Magic Heart

Draw close to me, O magic Heart,
The thunders gather o'er the deep,
Red flaming winds have torn apart
The veils of dream and screens of sleep.

Draw close to me within the night;
The wild beasts in the water-cave
Are grappled in a deadly fight,
And there is none but Thee can save.

O Heart of Love, enfold the seas,
And sentinel my helplessness;
Open Thy harbours of white peace,
And shield me in Thy coved caress.

O shining Light, illumine, free,
The dream-delusion on the wave,
The ancient sleep upon the sea,
The wild beast in the water-cave.

Stand far no more in star-carved trance,
But in Thy beauteous warmth draw close,
Rapture me in Thy mystic dance,
Enhaven me in Thy deep repose.

TEHMI

CHAPTER X
AVOWEDLY PERSONAL

(Continued)

I must pause here and insert a rather long explanatory parenthesis. For I fear I may have, at the beginning of this chapter, written (while referring to Sri Aurobindo's innate love of humour and laughter) what is liable to convey a wrong impression to those who are interested in the all-too-lovable *human* side of his personality. What I mean is that I did not want to stress that he was over *expansive* by nature in the social sense of the term. For when I cast about for solid data, I must admit that I cannot name anyone in the Ashram with whom he poked fun in this way without any reserve whatsoever. There were, indeed, a couple of others with whom he was equally free: Nirod was one of them. But when he joked with his doctor disciple assuredly quite another side of his nature found expression albeit I find it difficult to label. For he was nothing if not incalculable. All the same I may not be far out if I say that what expressed itself through his letters to Nirod was his love of raillery oscillating between a Shavian playfulness and a Ramakrishnanian badinage. I shall present to the reader now by way of sample a few letters he wrote to him in the mid-thirties which will perhaps serve my purpose better.

Nirod wrote to him (in 1935):

"I wonder sir, if you have seen Professor Adhar Das's inveighings against your *Lights on Yoga*? He does not look like having grasped things very well—or, shall we say, he grasped it like a typical pedagogue? For he seems to be in a veritable quandary when he goes all out for you—even his nearest misses are wider than the Pacific, aren't they?"

"Yes," he replied, "I have read all those sweet things from the sweet Adhar.* He had been favourable without understanding much before Anilbaran butted in and gored him into bitterness. Grasp of things has never been his forte.

He seems to think that D.I.—E.N.R. or C.S.R. (Divinisation of the Individual—Emergence of a New Race or Creation of the Supramental Race). So, he holds, if D.I. is possible then C.S.R. must be superfluous or out of the question,—but why, I have never been able to fathom, because it takes individuals to make a new race and if a certain number of individuals are not divinised, I do not see how you are going to get a new race. As for its being 'out of the question', the great Panjandrum alone knows why once an individual is divinised—one obviously is not enough—it should be out of the question to go on divinising others until you have a 'new race'. But I suppose unless you create unnecessary quibbles, there can be no 'intellectual philosophy!'"

"I thought, Sir," Nirod rejoined "that there is quite a difference between divinisation and supramentalisation, the former leading to the latter. But I suppose it is sheer presumption on my part to criticise one from whom, you say, you have learnt your philosophy. But aren't they simply longing to see the first batch of the Supramental compound to be fabricated in your great Laboratory."

"Yes, of course," Gurudev returned, "only as I have never explained in these letters (in my *Lights on Yoga*) what I meant by Supermind, these critics are necessarily at sea. They think, pardonably enough, that anything above the human mind must be Supramental. . . . No, not *learnt*, say rather that I am slowly *learning* from him. For he is kindly teaching me what I meant. . . . Go forward and show yourself."

Nirod readily complied with his invitation:

"I draw your attention then to Adhar Das's verdict that your vision of the new race to be is an extravagant claim inasmuch as it gives the lie to logic as well as to the lives and experiences of past seers. Well, Sir?"

"Well," Gurudev echoed, "I don't suppose the 'new race' can be created by or according to logic or that any race has been. But why should the idea of the creation of a new race be illogical? It is not only my ideas that baffle reason but Adhar Das's also!—he must really be a superman—self-made of course—outside the laboratory. As for the past seers, they don't trouble me. If going beyond the experience of the past seers and sages is so shocking, each new seer or sage in turn has perpetrated that shocking thing—Buddha, Shankara, Ramakrishna, Vivekananda—all did that wicked act. If not, what was the necessity of their starting new philosophies, religions, schools of Yoga? If they were merely verifying and meekly repeating the lives and experiences of past seers and sages without bringing the world some new thing, why all that stir and pother? You may say: they were simply explaining the old truth but in the right way—but this would mean that nobody had explained or understood it rightly before which is again 'giving the lie to logic as well as to the lives and experiences of past seers'! Or you may say that all the new sages (they were not among Adhar's cherished *past ones* in *their* day) e.g. Shankara, Ramanuja, Madhava and others were merely repeating the same blessed thing as the past seers and sages themselves had repeated with an unwearied monotony before them. Well, well, but then why repeat it in such a way that each 'gives the lie' to the others? Truly, this shocked reverence for the past is a wonderful and fearful thing! After all the Divine is infinite and the un-

* Here the pun is on *adhar*, which, in Sanskrit means the under lip.

SRI AUROBIND

By DILIP

rolling of the Truth may as well be an infinite process or at all events, if not quite so much, yet with some room for new discovery and new statement, even perhaps new achievement, not a thing in a nutshell cracked and its content exhausted once and for all by the first seer or sages; while the others religiously crack the same nut all over again, each trembling in fear lest he gives the lie to the *past* seers and sages!"

"But Guru," pursued Nirod, "I must seek further clarification: What on earth does Adhar Das mean by 'Our Yoga not for our sakes but for the Divine'? And what do *you* mean by it? Is it something like the Vaishnava idea of absolute surrender, without even the desire to see Him—only give, give, give? A sublime conception, no doubt, but can it be possibly feasible and practical?"

"Well" he explained, "I once wrote in my callow days: 'Our Yoga is not for ourselves but for humanity'—that was in the *Bande Mataram* times. To get out of the self-created hole I had to amend that it was no longer for humanity but for the Divine! The 'not for ourselves' remained intact. . . . Quite possible and practical and a very rapturous thing as anyone who has done it can tell you. It is also the easiest and most powerful way of *getting* the Divine. So it is the best policy also. The phrase, however, means that the object of the Yoga is to enter and be possessed by the Divine Presence and Consciousness, to love the Divine and in our will and works and life to be the instrument of the Divine. Its object is not to be a great Yogi or a superman (although that may come) or to grab at the Divine for the sake of the ego's power, pride, or pleasure. It is not for *moksha*, though liberation comes by it and all else may come but these must not be our objects. The Divine alone is our object."

Apropos of Professor Adhar Das's swearing by the past, I must here quote a letter in which he gave me a similar clarification about humility *versus* sense of superiority. I had quoted in my letter from Vivekananda who often decried the so-called faith as the root of much intolerant scorn of others who did not or would not believe. I confessed that I could not take as gospel truth many dogmas which the faithful swear by, thanks to my past education which made me believe in tolerance as against over-assertiveness.

"As for the sense of superiority," he replied, "that is a little difficult to avoid when greater horizons open before the consciousness, unless one is already of a saintly and humble disposition. There are men like Nag Mahashya (among Sri Ramakrishna's disciples) in whom spiritual experience creates more and more humility; there are others like Vivekananda, in whom it creates a great sense of strength and superiority—European critics have taxed him with it rather severely; there are others in whom it fixes a sense of superiority to men and humility to the Divine. Each position has its value. Take Vivekananda's famous answer to the Madras Pundit who objected to one of his assertions, saying: 'But Shankara does not say so'. Vivekananda replied: 'No, but I, Vivekananda, say so,' and the pundit was speechless. That 'I, Vivekananda' stands up to the ordinary eye like a Himalaya of self-confident egoism. But there is nothing false or unsound in Vivekananda's spiritual experience. For this was not egoism, but the sense of what he stood for and the attitude of the fighter who, as the representative of something very great, could not allow himself to be put down or belittled. This is not to deny the necessity of non-egoism and spiritual humility, but to show that the question is not so easy as it appears at first sight. For if I have to express my spiritual experiences I must do that with truth—I must record them with their *bhava*, their thoughts, feelings, extensions of consciousness which accompany them. What am I to do with the experience in which one feels the whole world in oneself or the force of the Divine flowing in one's being and nature or the certitude of one's faith against all doubts or doubters or one's oneness with the Divine or the smallness of human thought and life compared with this greater knowledge and existence? And I have to use the word 'I'—I cannot take refuge in saying 'This body' or 'This appearance', especially as I am not a *Mayavadin*. Shall I not, therefore, fall into an expression which may make some shake their heads at my assertions as full of pride and ego? I imagine it would be difficult to avert it.

"Another thing: it seems to me that you identify faith very much with mental belief, but real faith is something spiritual, a knowledge of the soul. What you quote in your letters are the hard assertions of mental belief leading to a vehement vindication of one's mental creed and goal because they are one's own and must therefore be greater than those of others—an attitude which is universal in human nature. Even the atheist is not tolerant but declares his credo of Nature and Matter as the *only* truth and on all who disbelieve or believe in other things he pours scorn as unenlightened morons and superstitious half-wits. I bear him no grudge for thinking me that, but I note that this attitude is not confined to religious faith but is equally natural to those who are free from religious faith and do not believe in Gods and Gurus. You will not, I hope, mind my putting the other side of the question; I want to point out that there is the other side, that there is much more to be said than at first sight appears."

CAME TO ME

UMAR ROY

Another trait of his character impressed me even though with time I came to take it for granted, as it were. It was his reluctance to impose his views on others. He seemed almost always like pleading for his case, even when it was obvious that my position was untenable if only from the point of view of logic. To give one instance. A princess once came to the Ashram as my guest. She was fond of music and asked me to sing to her. I readily agreed and told her that I would have a regular musical *soirée* for her the next evening. Next morning her secretary came to me and put me a number of searching questions in the course of which he gave me to understand that the princess could not possibly sit in the same room with other *sadhakas* whereupon I bluntly retorted: "Tell her then that she need not come. For I feel very strongly that this is not her State but an Ashram where we all have the same status, and so if she insists on being received with special deference I must decline to sing to such a person."

Next morning she called on me in person, wanting to explain. But I refused to see her. This was reported to Gurudev by a busybody who was aghast that I should have been impolite if not insulting to a rich and beautiful princess! Gurudev, however, smiled and sent word to me that not only was I right in my stand but that I had his full support, because every *sadhaka* had a perfect right to solitude if and when he did not feel like receiving visitors. (The princess came after all and I sang to her as she explained that it was all due to an unfortunate misunderstanding engineered by the same busybody).

But it so happened that a few months later a *gurubhai* was rude to a visitor. I quickly forgot my own similar misdemeanour and wrote to Gurudev condemning the delinquent out of hand. I asked whether spiritual realisation ought not to make people humble and courteous rather than rude and boorish. This time he reprimanded me politely, but firmly:

"But when on earth were politeness and good society manners considered a part or a test of spiritual experience or true yogic *siddhi*. It is no more a test than the capacity of dancing well or dressing nicely. Just as there are very good and kind men who are boorish and rude in their manners, so there may be very spiritual men (I mean here by spiritual men those who have had deep spiritual experiences) who have no grasp over physical life or action (many intellectuals too, by the way, are like that) and are not at all careful about manners. I suppose, I myself am accused of rude and arrogant behaviour because I refuse to see people, do not answer letters, and a host of misdemeanours. I have heard of a famous recluse who threw stones at anybody coming to his retreat because he did not want disciples and found no other way of warding off the flood of candidates. I at least would hesitate to pronounce that such people had no spiritual life or experience. Certainly, I prefer that *sadhakas* should be reasonably considerate towards one another, but that is for the rule of collective life and harmony, not as a *siddhi* of the yoga or indispensable sign of inner experience.

"And then how can the *écarts* of the *sadhakas* here, none of whom have reached perfection or anywhere near it, be a proof that spiritual experience is null? You write as if the moment one had any kind of spiritual experience or realisation one must at once become a perfect person without defects or weaknesses?

"That is to make a demand which is impossible to satisfy and it is to ignore the fact that spiritual life is a growth and not a sudden and inexplicable miracle. No *sadhaka* can be judged as if he was already a *siddha* yogi, least of all those who have travelled a quarter or less of a very long path as is the case with most who are here. Even great yogis do not claim perfection and you cannot say that because they are not absolutely perfect, therefore their spiritual life is false or of no use to the world. There are, besides, all kinds of spiritual men; some who are content with spiritual experience and do not seek after an outward perfection or progress, some who are saints, others who do not seek after sainthood, others who are content to live in the cosmic consciousness in touch or union with the All but allowing all kinds of forces to fly through them, e.g. in the typical example of the Paramhansa. The ideal I put before our yoga is one thing but it does not bind all spiritual life and endeavour. The spiritual life is not a thing that can be formulated in a rigid definition or bound by a fixed mental rule: it is a vast field of evolution, an immense kingdom potentially larger than the other kingdoms below it, with a hundred provinces, a thousand types, stages, forms, paths, variations, of the spiritual ideal, degree of spiritual advancement. It is from the basis of this truth which I will explain in subsequent letters that things regarding spirituality and its seekers must be judged if they are to be judged *with* knowledge. It is only by so understanding it that one can understand it truly, either in its past or in its future, or put in there the spiritual men of the past and the present or relate the different ideals, stages, etc. thrown up in the spiritual evolution of the human being."

But as he knew to his cost what human nature was and how liable to be heading for disaster in its cussed moods, he always tried to efface promptly the aftermath of *froissement* which even gentle corrections often brought

in its train. So time and again he came out with the salve of his humour and irony after having dealt a blow. I could not help admiring this as a token of his unfailing understanding of the hurdles of the ego we had to negotiate when, willy-nilly, we had to accept an unpalatable dressing down for the purge of our egoism. For example, after one such gentle rebuke he went out of his way to plead for his inability to finish two promised letters in the small hours of the morning—one for myself and one for a friend of mine whom I had sponsored.

"The lights went out, the lights went out!" he hastened to write on the following morning. "So I have to wait till tomorrow. Man proposes but the Pondichery Municipality disposes. But there will be grace tomorrow, Pondichery Municipality *volente*." Then he went on to add the same night: "Joy! Joy! Joy!!! I have done it—both letters written—done they are this time."

* * *

But in spite of all the latitude he gave me I found corrections hard to bear, being hypersensitive by constitution. Consequently he had to spare me and often weigh his words as e.g. he would not dream of doing when dealing with Nirod or Rajani who would not mind, he knew, whatever it was that came to them from him. To each according to his need, as he explained to me once in answer to a question of mine about consistency.

"It is a little difficult," he wrote, "for the wider, spiritual outlook to answer your question in the way you want and every mental being wants, with a trenchant 'Thou-shalt' or 'Thou-shalt-not'—especially when the *thou* is meant to cover *all*. For while there is an identity of essential aim, while there are general broad lines of endeavour, yet there is not in detail one common set of rules in inner things that can apply to *all* seekers. You ask: 'Is not such and such a thing harmful?' But what is harmful to one may be helpful to another; what is helpful at a certain stage may cease to be helpful at another; what is harmful under certain conditions may be helpful under other conditions, what is done in a certain spirit may be disastrous, while the same thing done in a different spirit would be innocuous or even beneficial. I asked the Mother what she would say to your question about pleasures and social experiences (put as a general question) and she answered: 'Impossible to say like that: it depends on the spirit in which it is done.' So there are many things: the spirit, the circumstances, the person, the need and cast of the nature... that is also the reason why we say that the Divine cannot be understood by the mind, because the mind acts according to hard and fast rules and standards, while the spirit sees the truth of all and the truth of each and acts variously according to its own comprehensive and complex vision. That is also why we say that no one can understand by his personal mental judgment the Mother's actions and reasons for action: it can only be understood by entering into the larger consciousness from which she sees things and acts upon them. That is baffling to the mind because it uses its small mental measures, but that is the truth of the matter."

And I may add that that is also why he revealed at every step a new facet of his unfathomable personality to us all, to each according to his temperament. For example, to Nirod he would constantly assume a tone he never once assumed with me. To illustrate what I mean:

"Nirod," he wrote on one occasion, "as there are several lamentations today besieging me, I have very little time to deal with each separate jeremiad. But do I understand rightly that your contention is: 'I can't believe in the Divine doing everything for me because it is by my own mighty and often fruitless efforts that I write poetry and have made myself into a poet?' Well, that itself is *épatant*, magnificent and unheard-of. It has always been supposed since the infancy of the human race that while a verse-maker can be made or self-made, a poet cannot. *Poeta nascitur non fit*—a poet is born not made, is a dictum that has come down through the centuries and millenniums and was thundered into my ears by the first pages of my Latin grammar. The facts of literary history seem to justify this stern saying. But here in Pondichery we have tried, not to manufacture poets, but to give them birth, a spiritual not a physical birth, into the body. In a number of instances we are supposed to have succeeded—one of them is your noble self, or if I am to believe the Man of Sorrows in you—your abject, miserable, hopeless, and ineffectual self. But how was it done? There are two theories, it seems: one that it was done by the Yogic Force, the other that it was done by your splashing, kicking, groaning Herculean efforts. Now, Sir, if it is the latter, if you have done the unprecedented thing, made yourself by your own laborious strength into a poet (for your earlier efforts were only very decent literary exercises), then, sir, why the deuce are you so abject, self-depreciatory and miserable? Don't say that it is only a poet who can produce no more than a few poems in as many months. Even to have done that, to have become a poet at all, a self-made poet, is a miracle over which one can only say 'Bravo! Bravo!' without ever stopping. If your efforts could do that what is there that it can't do? All miracles can be effected by it and a giant, self-confident faith is the only logical conclusion. So either way, there is room only for Halleujah, none for jeremiads.

"The fact that you don't feel a force does not prove that it isn't there. The steam engine does not feel a force moving it, but the force is there for all that. A man is not a steam engine? He is very little better, for he is conscious only of some bubbling on the surface which he calls *himself* and is absolutely unconscious of all the subconscious, subliminal, superconsci-

SRI AUROBINDO CAME TO ME—Continued from previous page

ent forces moving him. (This is a fact which is being more and more established by modern psychology though it has got hold only of the lower forces and not the higher, so you need not turn up your rational nose at it). He twitters intellectually and foolishly about the surface results and attributes them all to his 'noble self', ignoring the fact that the noble self is hidden far away from his own vision behind the cell of his dimly sparkling intellect and the reeling fog of his vital feelings, emotions, impulses, sensations and impressions. So your arguments are utterly absurd and futile. Our aim is to bring the secret forces out and unwalled into the open so that instead of getting some shadows or lightnings of themselves out through the veil or being wholly obstructed, they may pour down, and flow in a river. But to expect all that at once is a presumptuous demand which shows an impatient ignorance and inexperience. If they begin to trickle at first, that is sufficient to justify the faith in the downpour. You admit that you once or twice felt a force coming down and delivering a poem out of you (your opinion about its worth or worthlessness is not worth a cent: that is for others to pronounce); that is sufficient to blow your jeremiad to smithereens; it proves that the force was and is there and at work and it is only your sweating Herculean labour that prevents you feeling it. Also it is the trickle that gives assurance of the possibility of the downpour. One has only to go on and by one's patience deserve the downpour or else, without deserving, slide on until one gets it. In yoga itself the experience that is a promise and foretaste but gets shut off till the nature is ready for the fulfilment is a phenomenon familiar to every yogi when he looks back on his past experience. Such were the brief visitations of *ananda* you have had sometimes before. It does not matter if you have not a 'leechlike tenacity'—leeches are not the only type of Yogis. If you can stick anyhow or get stuck—that is sufficient. The fact that you are not Sri Aurobindo (who said you were?) is an inept irrelevance. One needs to be only oneself in a reasonable way and shake off the hump when it is there or allow it to be shaken off without clinging to it with a leechlike tenacity worthy of a better cause.

"All the rest is mere stuff of the *tamasic* ego. As there is a *rajasic* ego which shouts 'What a magnificent, powerful, sublime individual I am, unique and peerless!' (or course there are gradations in the pitch), so there is a *tamasic* ego which squeaks 'What an abject hopeless, worthless, incapable, unendowed and uniquely impossible creature I am—all, all are great Aurobindos, Dilips, Xs but I, oh I, oh I!' That's your style. It is the *tamasic* ego (of course it expresses itself in various other ways at various times, I am only rendering your present pitch) which is responsible for the Man of Sorrows getting in. It's all bosh—stuff made up to excuse the luxury of laziness, melancholy and despair. You are in that state now because you have descended faithfully and completely into the inert die-in-the-muddiness of your physical consciousness which, I admit, is a specimen! But so after all is everybody's, only there are different kinds of specimens. What are you to do? Dig yourself out if you can; if you can't, call for ropes and wait till they come. If 'God knows what will happen when the Grace descends', that should be enough, shouldn't it? That you don't know is a fact which may be baffling to you—well, your intelligence but is not of great importance,—any more than your supposed unfitness. Whoever was fit, for that matter—fitness and unfitness are only a way of speaking, man is in his nature unfit and a misfit (so far as things spiritual are concerned) in his outward nature. But within there is a soul and above there is Grace. That is all you know or need to know. And, if you don't, well, even then you have at least stumbled into the path and have got to remain here till you get haled along it far enough to wake up to knowledge. Amen.

"By the way, what is this story about my four or five hours concentration for several years before anything came down? Such a thing never happened if by concentration you mean laborious meditation. What I did was four or five hours *pranayam*—which is quite another manner. And what flow do you speak of? The flow of poetry came down while I was doing *pranayam*—not some years afterwards. If it is the flow of experiences, that did come after some years, but after I had stopped the *pranayam* for a long time and was doing nothing and did not know what to do or where to turn once all my efforts had failed. And it came not as a result of years of *pranayam* or concentration, but in a ridiculously easy way, by the grace of a temporary guru—but it was not even that, for he was himself bewildered by it—or by the grace of the eternal Brahman and afterwards by the grace of Mahakali and Krishna. So don't try to turn me into an argument against the Divine; that attempt will be perfectly ineffective."

* * *

But though he could go on like this reminiscing and scintillating if and when the spirit so moved him, few people who have known him will disagree with me if I say that he was essentially a man of deep reserve, a denizen of the deeps. It reminds me of a joke I had with him nearly fifteen years ago. On three (and later four) occasions in the year when he used to come out for us as well as the visitors, we used to take a look at him, but not, alas, a long look. His eyes rested on each of us but for a few seconds—because the whole procedure had to be concluded in about a couple of hours. On me he used to shed a kind glance but I longed in vain for a smile. I was, indeed, impressed by his grave face but I missed the smile of a friendly recognition, which made to me all the difference in the world. When he came to know of my disappointment he did try to change but equally—in vain. At all events, that was my impression, I insisted. But a lady who happened to be next to me (and who could beat me in the game

of insistence with a handicap without turning a hair) drove me to the wall asseverating that he *had* smiled at me. So I wrote to him in genuine shame and sorrow. "O Guru!" I appealed, "Here you put me out of countenance once more—possibly to pulverize the last vestiges of my self-confidence. For Lady Emphatic swears—and none can outswear her, as you know—that she saw your lips bent into a curve which can only be described as a smile. But I saw nothing on your lips which even distantly resembled a smile. So it follows, as the rain the drought, that I have forfeited even the right to believe in the testimony of my own senses, or is it that you only gave me a *Supramental* smile? If so, why did you waste such a boon on us, humans, whose mentality cannot possibly recognise it as a smile?"

To that he wrote back: "But Lady Emphatic is right. For I did indeed smile to you though it was not the broad smile of a Tagore or the childlike smile of a Gandhi. But I assure you I will try to be more convincing in future." (He did later—and succeeded, God be praised!)

But when—and here is my point—even his smile had to be warmly mooted before one could be convinced as to its authenticity, how could one call him anything but a reserved man?

And yet he was talking to me as to a 'friend and a son' and to Nirod like an old comrade whom he almost invited to give him as much as he got! This I found a little difficult to account for and yet I feel I can safely assert that when he wrote his letters to us two, it did seem as though a lid had been suddenly lifted: the old trite simile of a stone-slab covering a natural spring often recurred to my mind! Somehow, with us two he was as free as free can be. But today I cannot help feeling somewhat conscience-stricken because I realise that I could not rightfully claim what I clamoured for, namely, utter frankness on his part: I have become conscious as never before, that my way of reacting to his frankness was nowhere near what it ought to have been.

For what was it that did happen as against what could and ought to have happened? It would not, indeed, be untrue to claim that I had come to serve him, having previously responded to his call for self-transformation. But in the uphill path of Yoga, a mere pious intention does not, alas, carry one very far: one has to be resolutely ruthless with one's ego if one really wants to be sincere to a purpose. I have all along taken not a little pride in my honesty and sincerity, little realising that the truly honest aspirant in Yoga is he alone who is sleeplessly self-critical, who is bent on giving no quarter to the promptings of his self-will—that everlasting pander of self-love. Today when the one whose deep compassion was so keen to help me out of the ego's clutches is no more, this thought has become fraught with an added poignancy in that it has enabled me to see clearly how I *could* have reacted to his tireless exhortations to outgrow my egotism if only I would—by choosing to be a little more docile and humble. But perhaps it was my overweening self-confidence harnessed to an ineradicable pride in the sanity of my rational nature and demands that wrought my downfall again and again. (Isn't the *rational* pride even blinder than purblind faith?) To give a rather convincing instance if only to illustrate how I hampered him at every turn by constraining him to waste his precious time for the redemption of the Old Adam in me:

"I got your first letter," he wrote once in the heyday of my self-will, "and as I always look at yours if there is any and leave the rest aside for later reading, I sat down after my daily walk and concentration to answer it. I missed your second 'urgent' letter altogether and came to know of it after I had seen the third—later in the night. If I had had it, I would of course have answered it at once. I am sorry you have had to wait the whole night without an answer.

"I was a little taken aback by the first letter, for my remarks about W had been perfectly casual and I attached little importance to them when I wrote them. I would certainly not have written them if I had thought they were of a kind to cause trouble to you. In scribbling them I had no idea of imposing my views about W on you—I had no idea of writing as a Guru to a disciple or laying down the law, it was rather as a friend to a friend expressing my ideas and discussing them with a perfect ease and confidence. Both the Mother and myself have a natural tendency to speak or write to you in that way, expressing the idea that comes without measuring of terms or any *arrière-pensée* because we feel close to your psychic being always and that is the relation we have quite naturally with you. That was why I wrote like that and I had no other intention in me.

"I do not believe in human judgments because I have always found them fallible—also because I have myself been so blackened by human judgments that I do not care to be guided by them with regard to others. All this, however, I write to explain my own point of view; I am not insisting on it as a law for others. I have not been in the habit of insisting that everybody must think as I do—any more than I insist on everybody following me and my yoga.

"All that to brush aside what is an evident misunderstanding. Now about XYZ you should remember that what I wrote about them was not an after-invention or an idea formed as a result of their going away—all that I wrote about X, for instance, I had written long before he went—and also with the others I had not refrained from letting them know what was wrong with them, except for Y Z with whom it was not necessary. I did not wholeheartedly assure and praise and encourage while they were there nor wholeheartedly damn when they were gone. Nor would I have said anything about them if I had not been questioned from every side. Why then should you think that I would attack you if you went away?—you, to whom I have

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always spoken with encouragement and kindness, and never, I think, with severe disapprobation or warning as I did with X Y Z. I should write, if I had to write, what I have always said to you: 'Dilip had his difficulties, and he was gradually surmounting them, but his one great difficulty of doubt and self-distrust he did not meet sufficiently', and I would add: 'and in a weak moment he has allowed it to carry him away. But he will find that he can discover his soul here alone and then he will return.'

"But all that is really unnecessary since you are not, like X Y Z, consumed with the desire to go or feeling the call for action elsewhere. But why this constant slipping back to the idea of failure? Why this idea that I am offended? Have I ever taken offence or evinced any least idea of giving you up? How is it you still lend credence to a suggestion your whole experience of our relations contradicts. Your attacks of doubt and self-distrust are a weakness I have taken account of and I refuse to consider it as a bar to your arrival at the goal. It is in all sincerity that I affirm your possibilities."

But as the blackest clouds have a silver lining, I console myself today with this thought that even my wrongest moods did serve a twofold purpose: first, objectively, because they brought into relief his great understanding of and compassion for human nature which insists, suicidally, on cursing the hand that comes to save (an understanding that had made him write once to me: "My experience shows that human beings are much less deliberate and responsible for their acts than the moralists, novelists and dramatists make them and I look rather to see what forces drove them than what the man himself may have seemed by inference to have intended or purposed—our inferences are often wrong and even when they are right touch only the surface of the matter"; and then subjectively, because it can hardly be gainsaid that had I been by nature less intractable than I was, I might indeed have been richer today in Yogic experience, but should I not have been ever so much poorer in my intimate knowledge of that human side of him which is so infinitely precious to me: the human in the Divine that made Krishna what He was to the grateful Pandavas—not only the Guru and Pilot but the Friend and Guard as well who all but broke his pledge in the Kurukshetra and sprang out to slay Bhishma when he found his protégé Arjuna's life in danger? A Muslim friend of mine recited once a Persian couplet which I translated in one of my right moods of gratefulness and exaltation which made me feel vividly that even failure in a great endeavour was far preferable to success in little ambitions:

*When I waste my years to win thee, friend,
'Tis then I best achieve my end:
Only that life was rich in gain
Which strove and strove for thee in vain.*

* * *

And it was just such another exalted mood of mine inspired by my gratefulness for the right to his indulgence—which evoked, to my joy, one of his rarest sallies—a mood, alas, which his life-long preoccupation with us, dolorous dwarfs made it all but impossible for him to give vent to more often. I shall quote it not only to end on a happy note but also for the sheer delight of revealing him in a mood of unbridled laughter and fun which will, I hope, be welcome to all who cherish the memory of his lovelit personality. It happened like this.

It was in 1934, a few days before his birthday, the 15th August. I was reading out to Chadwick a letter of his which he had just written to me in answer to my importunities.

"Sonnets?" he wrote. "I have no time for writing sonnets—my energy is too occupied in very urgent and pressing things—quite part from correspondence—to 'dally with the rhythmic line'."

We were both cursing away in our hearts the utter wryness of this providential dispensation and wondering about the nature of his "pressing" work in hand when Sri Nolini Gupta brought me a telegram to Gurudev which read: 'Wire permission for your Darshan on the fifteenth August. Dilip, my friend, will recommend me—Aurobindo.' On the margin was written in Gurudev's handwriting: "Please recommend and enlighten."

It was just that little query which, happily, made the wicked Goddess—*Dushta Sarāswatī*—fall plump and perch on my irreverent tongue. I dashed off then and there a poem in Bengali which I sent up to Gurudev hoping, against hope, to draw him out. Here is an English translation of my wicked burlesque:

*You ask me, Guru, who is this Aurobindo who desires to come
To have your blessing on your birthday? I would rather now be
dumb:*

*Because, I find, I know four personalities distinct and great
Who are your namesakes and so wonder how to place this candidate!
So I'll recount the deeds of each still graven in my memory,
For your Supramental may shed light where I grope rayless
hopelessly!*

*The first was an aristocrat whose toilette few will dare eclipse:
He combed his curls for hours—a dandy out and out, to his
finger-tips.*

*Enamoured of pomatum, powder, silks and scents and fineries,
He blithely hummed to all and sundry India's amorous melodies.
Work he abhorred, yet such is fate—he was given a mill to supervise,
But he resigned and married pelf—not less resourceful than he was
wise.*

*It is not likely—but who knows—perhaps your mystic call he hears!
And, sick at last of the world's brief tinkles, aches for the music
of the spheres!*

*Then number two: he'd fallen in love with one whom he called 'his
dream of love
Come true on earth'—but she, alas, proved subtle whom no romance
could move.*

*She smiled on him as Frau von Stein once smiled on Goethe: did
not she*

*Invite the Poet?—but then "Oh no, not too close," said she
warningly.*

*Only, while Goethe had for his flame to pay in poems, not in gold:
This modern 'Pickwick' gave her with his 'love-sick' heart his cash
untold.*

*Then, bankrupt, hugging me in London blubbered he between his
tears:*

*"O kindred spirit, who but you can ever divine what my heart
sears?"*

*You never can tell—perhaps he has since read your message of the
One*

*Who can tell why love is given gulfs of gloom instead of a place
in the sun!*

*Your namesake number three, a youth who lived in Paris by his
wits,*

*Took me in tow and showed me round the Eternal city's sweet
retreats.*

A specialist in gossip about prophets, poets and actresses,

*"What is unknown to me," he bragged, "is not worth knowing—I
know what pays."*

*And he made me know it too although I would pay what I could
for him.*

For he did clarify what to my mind had seemed intriguing, dim.

*Maybe his "knowledge" has let him down and so he longs for a
greater light*

*Than his continental firefly twinkles—helpless in his soul's dark
night!*

*The last though not the least, O Guru, of your namesakes was so
brave*

*That we all stood aghast when, after lecturing "each his soul must
save",*

*He wooed a Belgian old maid who though not so wise as Solomon
Was even as rich and "game" when he led her to the altar in
Boulogne.*

I had to be his best man though no bridesmaids were available

*But the great philosopher announced: "Without love even Heaven
were hell!"*

*So the saviour angel of his soul led him to the turf in a mystic glee
And then in the heaven of Monte Carlo gambled and lost exultantly.*

I wonder: could his Eden elect have failed him in the last resort?

Else how could his brave ship want now to come to your

Supramental port?

I know not human destiny, nor your celestial mysteries.

I only know your regal soul rich with the starry secrecies.

*So I implore: O make me see the greatness of your namesakes now,
Say, how do they come to bear your name and yet stay where they
are—Oh how?*

*Just one thing more: what shall I answer?—and oh, please tell me
his address.*

I dare not recommend all, Guru, though all you can lean to bless.

And lastly, O Compassionate, forgive my dread frivolity:

*To have laughed at those who bear your name? Oh, damn me not
everlastingly!*

Chadwick chuckled when I read this out to him, but shook his head. "It's unlikely to draw him out, Dilip," he sighed. "He's too busy. But I wish you the best of luck."

Next day, however, I ran to him, for the miracle did happen—Gurudev did reply.

"Dilip," we read together, "Your epic of the four Aurobindos is luminous, informing and hair-raising! But there can be no doubt about who this Aurobindo is—it is, I presume, Aurobindo the fourth, 'a doer of dreadful deeds'. I am referring to the phrase 'bhimkarna Brikodara,'*—However a truce to unseemly jests; let us come to grave practical matters.

"His address? How in the name of the wonderful am I to know? His address in the telegram is 'Aurobindo, Bombay' just as mine might be 'Aurobindo, Pondicherry'. In his previous letter he wrote that he was going to Bombay and would waltz from there straight to Pondichery. He may have given his Bombay address but I don't think so. Nolini who has his letter can perhaps enlighten you. I do not know whether he expects us to put him up—I suppose not, since although he is Aurobindo, Aurobindo does not know him from Adam. However, what I am doing is to send you his reply-paid telegram form and shove my responsibility on your shoulders.

* From Sanskrit—meaning literally: "wolf-belly of dreadful deeds."

SRI AUROBINDO'S HUMOUR

By R. BANGARUSWAMI

The present instalment and the one before it of Dilip Kumar Roy's "Sri Aurobindo Came to Me" have brilliantly exhibited Sri Aurobindo's ample capacity of humour and wit and badinage. This capacity has also been shown in other features in past issues of "Mother India". As a further testimony we publish below a brief pick from some of Sri Aurobindo's writings.

While reading some appraisments of Sri Aurobindo's works, I alighted on a passage by the *Times* reviewer in which he has stated: 'the only elements Aurobindo misses are the Indian sense of humour and the Indian gift for irony.'

The remarks amused me because I have all along been crediting Sri Aurobindo with a remarkable fund of humour. About the great value of humour in life Sri Aurobindo himself says:

Sense of humour? It is the salt of existence. Without it the world would have got utterly out of balance—it is unbalanced enough already—and rushed to blazes long ago.

And again:

I am not aware that highly evolved personalities have no sense of humour or how the person can be said to be integrated when this sense is lacking. 'Looseness' applies only to a frivolous levity without any substance behind it. There is no law that wisdom should be something rigidly solemn and without a smile.

Those who have known Sri Aurobindo during the period of his youth and middle age pay testify abundantly to his keen sense of humour, quick wit and ready repartee.

The *Indian Patriot* once wrote:

A man of very fine culture, his is a lovable nature: merry, sparkling with wit and humour, ready in refined repartee, he is one of those men to be in whose company is a joy and behind whose exterior is a steady growing fire of unseen devotion to a cause.

Va. Ra. a brilliant writer of Tamil prose who had the good fortune of knowing Sri Aurobindo during his early days at Pondicherry says that Sri Aurobindo would burst into spells of laughter like Subrahmanya Bharathi, the Bard of Tamil Nad.

The internal testimony of Sri Aurobindo's writings gives ample proof of the presence of the element of *Hasya* in his thought.

Speaking about the allegation that the mass was seized with lunacy he asks:

Seized with lunacy? But this implies that the nation is ordinarily led by reason. Is it so? Or even by commonsense?

Here is Sri Aurobindo's description of the League of Nations: 'an otiose appendage!' Brevity is the soul of wit.

Answering a correspondent's question as to what is a perfect technique of yoga or world-changing or nature-changing yoga Sri Aurobindo says with a smile:

Not one that takes a man by a little bit of him, somewhere attaches a hook and pulls him up by a pulley into Nirvana or Paradise.

Here is playful irony in the issue of a curfew order:

It appeared that we were peaceful citizens until sunset but after sunset we turned into desperate characters—well, I was told, even half an hour before sunset; apparently even the sun could not be entirely trusted to keep us straight.

Commenting on a joke of Anatole France about God, Sri Aurobindo

imitates that ironical Frenchman's own manner and visualises a picture of God meeting Anatole France and telling him:

Reason came along and told me: 'Look here, why do you pretend to exist? You know you don't exist and never existed or, if you do, you have made such a mess of your creation that we can't tolerate you any longer. Once we have got you out of the way all will be right upon earth, tip-top, A-1; my daughter Science and I have arranged between us... peace, peace, peace, reason, order, unity everywhere.' There was a lot more like that, Anatole, and I was so much impressed by the beauty of the picture and its convenience, for I would have nothing to do or to supervise, that I at once retired from business—for you know that I was always of a retiring disposition and inclined to keep myself behind the veil or in the background at the best of times. But what is this I hear? It does not seem to me from reports that Reason even with the help of science has kept her promise. And if not, why not? Is it because she would not or because she could not? Or is it because she both would not and could not? Or because she both would and could, but somehow did not?

In his drama *Perseus, the Deliverer*, Sri Aurobindo gives some delightful bursts of humour through Cireas. Cireas's open discontent about the scanty reward that has met his long and meritorious service of the image of Poseidon the Sea-God finds vent in a vitriolic volley of words:

Hang the robustious storm-shaken curmudgeon! I have rubbed him and scrubbed him and bathed him and swathed him for these eighteen years, yet he never sent me one profitable piece of wreckage out of his sea yet.

And again:

I pray thee tot up the price of those swabbings and be not dishonest with me nor miserly. Eighteen by three hundred and sixtyfive by two, that is the sum of them; and forget not the leap year either, O great Poseidon.

And still further:

Am I a sponge to suck up these insults? No! I am only moderately porous.

Cireas decides 'to do any bad turn to that scanty-hearted rampageous old ship-swallower' and later exclaims: 'O Poseidon, had I known there was more to be pocketed in thy disservice than in thy service, would I have misspent these eighteen barren years?'

Towards the close of the play when the popular leader Therops pays allegiance to the Queen against whom he had conspired only a little while ago Cireas says:

This it is to be an orator! We shall hear him haranguing the people next market day on fidelity to princes and the divine right of queens to have favourites.

Other instances could be added. But what has been given is sufficient to show that Sri Aurobindo, far from being deficient in humour or irony or satire, was fully endowed with those gifts and that he wielded them with considerable beauty and force whenever there was occasion to do so.

SRI AUROBINDO CAME TO ME —Continued from previous page

You will decide these things according to the ripe wisdom of your many-Aurobindoed experience. Whether you wire 'come and be blessed' or 'stay where you are in your Eden' is your shout—I back out. To sum the matter up in two far-flowing Alexandrine couplets:

Tell him, by wire: 'Come on' with a benignant nod,
Or leave him journeying to the devil or to God,
Decide for the other Aurobindo what you please,
This namesake-flooded Aurobindo leave at ease.

In fact my Supermind is almost staggering helpless to make any decision under the weight of all these Aurobindos and others. I am told there will be 400 of them in families and singles apart from the 200 who are here, and unless the divine mercy descends with a greater force than the 'gentle dew' from Heaven, we may be still there receiving people till past three o'clock in the afternoon. So one Aurobindo more or less can make no difference to me. It is you who will rejoice or suffer—according as he falls on you like a ton of bricks or envelopes you like a soothing zephyr in the spring.

"But look at the irony of human decisions and human hopes. My father who wanted all his sons to be great men—and succeeded in a small way with three of them—in a sudden inspiration gave me the name Aurobindo, till then not borne by any one in India or the wide world, that I might stand out unique among the great by the unique glory of my name. And now

look at the swarm of Aurobindos with their mighty deeds in Germany and elsewhere! Don't tell me it is my fault because of my indiscretion in becoming famous. When I went to the National College in the Swadeshi days which was my first public step towards the ignominies of fame, there was already an Aurobindo Prakash waiting for me there with the sardonic comment of the gods printed on his learned forehead. Aurobindo Prakash, indeed!

"As for the explanation, your epic of the four Aurobindos has suddenly revealed to me why the name Aurobindo has spread and why its bearers are heading for Pondichery. I have it—Eureka! And I am released from all *kohobha** at the violated uniqueness of my name. Your description shows that each Aurobindo represents a world-type and it is of the conglomeration and sublimation of great world-types that the supramental-terrestrial will be made. You may not have appreciated their greatness, but that is not their fault. Also the formula for the Supramental may sound to you too chemical like the formula for a patent medicine, but there it is. Incidentally, I am more convinced than ever that you lived and wrote and sighed ('I am between tears and sighs', said Maecenas as he sat between the weak and watery-eyed Virgil and the aesthetic Horace) under Augustus Caesar. You have kept the spirit and turn and most even of the manner.

"Your 'epistolary frivolity' was all right. There is laughter in the Kingdom of Heaven, though there may be no marriage there."

* Chagrin.

VIVEKANANDA AND OUR SPIRITUAL FUTURE

By "LIBRA"

We who live in this day of India's reawakening to the Yogic secrets of her own past cannot but pay homage to the mighty figure of Vivekananda. Together with his guru, Ramakrishna, he was the most potent early shaper of the resurgence of our national genius. His also was a tremendous impact on the mind of the West. And yet, if we are to work for a complete spiritual fulfilment, we must see that Vivekananda's philosophy, though a golden torch of truth when compared to the conjectural ingenuities of metaphysicians who are not Yogis, falls short of what we may term the integral God-view and world-view. No more inspiring mouth-piece can be found for a particular type of spiritual realisation; but this realisation, necessary and grand as it is, could be overstressed, and Vivekananda did overstress it because of a certain division between his deeply dedicated heart and his powerful yet not untroubled intellect.

The most momentous event in his life was the great act of Ramakrishna, a little before Ramakrishna's own death, which endowed Vivekananda with the divine energy to carry out his mission on earth. "I have become a fakir," cried the Master after imparting to the young disciple by means of a long intimate meditation his own abiding sense and thrill of the divine World-Mother's presence within and without. The subsequent march of the homeless sanyasi, possessed of the Mother, is part of Indian history. Throughout his life, Vivekananda worshipped the Mother as only a few souls have done; still, his final philosophical word is against the worship of a personal divinity. Surely here is a paradox.

The only explanation is that the paradox is due to his never having succeeded in solving the time-old riddle as he propounded it to himself: "Why under the reign of an almighty and all-loving God of the universe should diabolical things be allowed to remain? Why so much more misery than happiness and so much more wickedness than good? . . . The question remains to be answered and it cannot be answered." In other words, if God is omnipotent, He is not benevolent, since He has deliberately and not unavoidably caused the cosmic wheel to revolve, and if He is either not omnipotent or benevolent He is not God at all! This dilemma in one form or another always pursued Vivekananda; it is a purely intellectual difficulty dissolved the moment we are humble enough to acknowledge that our puny human standards of benevolence cannot be applied to the Ultimate Being. Indeed our intuitive aspiration after absolute Good, after the final law of righteousness, is indicative, as all feeling-out towards absolutes is, of something in the constitution of the Ultimate Being, but we have to realise that God is not good in our sentimental human way: His is a benevolence which surpasses our notions of it just as much as our notions would exceed those of, say, the most altruistic ape!

Vivekananda, however, never definitely struck upon this truth nor has, for that matter, any intellect which has been too acutely alive to the "still sad music of humanity" and forgotten or at least underrated the beatific harmonies of the superhuman wisdom of God. Has not H. G. Wells, an idealist of our own day, uttered the crashing blasphemy that he would spit in the face of a God who did not utilise His almightiness to lend a fiat to "the Open Conspiracy" by which a "Capitalist-ridden" world is to be saved? The same humanitarian conscience anxious to spare an almighty Maker the responsibility of an imperfect world has compelled Bernard Shaw to conceive his Life-Force as a blind stumbling experimenting urge towards perfection. Vivekananda, being a true Indian, could not be Wellsian or Shavian and forgo the Supreme and the Perfect: he had a gigantic hunger for the immaculate Infinite. But the only way which seemed open to him, in order to reconcile the Perfect with the suffering world and its baffling problems of sin and ignorance, was to turn Shankarite.

This he did without flinching: he called himself an Advaitin and held Advaita to be the ultimate both in philosophy and Yoga. Still, he could not shake off the synthetising influence of his guru who followed Bhakti and Jnana with equal fervour. So he accepted the worship of the personal Godhead who creates, preserves and destroys the cosmos, as a preparatory training for the higher ecstasy of the absolute union in which the whole cosmos is blotted out from the Yogi's consciousness. What he did not see was that the sealed trance of non-duality is only a sort of sublime sleep, and could logically as well as pragmatically mean not the annihilation but merely the oblivion of phenomena.

He, no doubt, endorsed the common-sense of Ramanuja's contention that so long as the soul is aware of Nature and its own individuality it needs must believe in a Lord and Originator of them both. But he unmistakably said that the presence of Nature and the individuality of the soul were a bar to the highest realisation, since the One alone truly existed and could not suffer any multiplicity in Its all-consuming Ananda. Confronted with the question how, if the One alone existed, the many had ever come to be, he sought refuge in Shankara's indescribable Maya. Not that he entirely rejected the aspect of the world as Lila—it was indeed the play of Ishwara, the personal divinity, but then Ishwara himself was no more than the most marvellous play of the original Phantasy or Ignorance, the Shankarite Illusion which at once is and is not. The love of Ishwara was, in Vivekananda's eyes, a splendidly cathartic emotion, cleansing the being of much egoism, yet not sufficiently, since the "I" of the lover remained over against the "Thou" of the beloved. But, seizing upon the profound mystery of love

by which the lover and the beloved are somehow one though apparently divided, he said that the highest intensity of Bhakti was not different from the non-dual union of Jnana. Unfortunately, he overlooked the other side of the matter—namely, that if this is true the union of Jnana could never be exclusively non-dual, since Bhakti even in its intensest fusion of "I" and "Thou" implies, as all love must, a difference-in-unity. Thus his very tribute to Bhakti was the result of the pro-Jnana temper of his intellect and based on a philosophical misunderstanding of the ultimate essence of love.

This misunderstanding helped to soothe somewhat the dominant conflict of his spiritual life—the unresting sense of the incompatibility of the One Perfect with the imperfect many. And it is characteristic of him to have made the significant remark that the bhakta must never argue. Love is an emotion which embraces its object blindly and without question. In order, therefore, that the bhakta should reach the climax of his Yoga he should set aside his intellect and yield completely to the psychic urge which does not ask whether God is almighty and also benevolent but adores Him just because He is the Vision Splendid and the Beauty of Ancient Days that is yet ever new. Love, according to Vivekananda, is a maddening intoxication with Beauty: Bhakti must be rapt with the Supreme as Beauty, must take Beauty as an end in itself and ask no questions as to whether it is good or bad, omnipotent or weak.

The truth, however, is that in genuine Bhakti Yoga the attributes of omnipotence and goodness are just as prominent as that of beauty. God is the most lovely of all objects because His is the superhuman power of an unimaginable love and benevolence. All quibbles about His perfection are vain for the born devotee because they amount to measuring with little wit the supreme wisdom. But, according to Vivekananda, when his intellect put the personal God on the horns of a dilemma, the horns were fatal to such a god's existence: hence his misconception of the soul of true Bhakti. The same idea is again responsible for the sorry reducing of Devotion to a superb kind of art for art's sake with reference to the Highest, ignoring the final necessity that the Highest should also be an infinite or inconceivable yet real goodness and righteous power. But for Vivekananda the philosopher, a personal Creator could never be that, and if love is to be valuable as a step in spiritual life it must at least forget if not disbelieve that its object is a creative Person. Otherwise, it must go by the board; and in any case Jnana was deemed surer ground inasmuch as it tried to do away with creation and divine personality by means of the theory of Maya—without exactly emptying the baby with the bath-water. The divine Child still remained but in a bit abstract form: it became the divine Childhood, the unaging Bliss, just as the divine Existent because the sole Existence and the divine Knower the pure Consciousness. What is more, the unaging Bliss was conceived as so lost in childlike super-sleep that for it the world ceases, as it were, to exist, and with its cessation the old conflict is permanently dissolved, though yet never satisfactorily accounted for.

This, in general, was Vivekananda's philosophy in which Dualism was regarded as a superficial truth and qualified Monism as a phenomenal edition of the authentic truth which was stark and utter Monism. In all his lectures, this threefold division is either explicit or implicit, and though he admits the provisional efficacy of the first two methods of the soul's progress, he is set like flint against their claim to finality. "Brahma satyam, jagan mithya" remains his philosophical motto.

Mark now the inconsistency between this philosophy and his own spiritual career. He was an undeviating worshipper of the Shakti—that is to say, of the same creative Force which his intellect riddled with argument. He was a most zealous devotee of Ramakrishna as an Incarnation—that is to say, of a real manifestation of the Supreme Essence without that Essence's ceasing to be supreme for a moment. For him to look upon the Divine Mother and upon Ramakrishna as illusions to be renounced would have been to make a mockery of his own holiest feelings. And the fact stands that he did not deem them illusions: his every thought was an act of adoration at their feet, every moment of his sadhana was filled and glorified by his acceptance of them as realities. The personal God, sovereign of his being, was the secret of his entire spiritual adventure, whether at Dakshineswar, at Amarnath or at the Parliament of Religions. His whole dynamic Yoga was shaped and guided by this one living motif, this pure psychic realisation. Why, then, did he not preach the name of Kali, the beloved Shyama of his Bengali poems, instead of letting Her be sicklied over with the appellation of Maya? Why did he not raise a temple of philosophy to Her instead of pointing with so splendid a gesture of finality towards Brahman and Atman? Why did he depreciate the personality of the Divine as a phantom, though the most glorious one, of the illogical mind instead of inspiring men to surrender themselves to the mighty love of Her who gave them birth? Why did he refuse to see in the universe a divine design rather than a futile and blind mechanism which had somehow taken form out of a nothingness of delusion? If he had not thus intellectually refused, he would not have inconsistently preached as he did the gospel of aggressive Hinduism and dynamic spirituality in the same breath in which he declared that the supreme Spirit was eternally passive, eternally aloof from this phantasmagoric universe. If he had spent even half his energy of prophet to humanity as the soldier of the Divine Mother just as he spent so much of his energy

VIVEKANANDA AND OUR SPIRITUAL FUTURE

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of sadhana as Her son and devotee, his philosophy would not have been such a Pyrrhic victory of the trenchant intellect over the illumined soul.

He was right in holding that each finite is necessarily a front and face of the whole infinite which is hidden behind it and is its Self of self; but the obvious conclusion from it would be that the Infinite possesses, owing to its omnipotence, the power of appearing divided and imperfect in spite of remaining essentially one and unsullied. To say that it cannot and does not have such a power and yet to believe that somehow the illusion of division and imperfection comes to be, even phenomenally, is to deny the Divine Its omnipotence. Besides, if spiritual realisation is to be at all real, it must be the soul of the individual that achieves and attains it, so that even when it unites with the Supreme it must still possess a sort of distinct reality. If there is no unity, no basic identity between the two, there can be no union; but if there is no difference there can be no progressive attainment of union either. And if the experience of the attainment is to be real, then the bondage from which the individual soul escapes must also be real—else there is no actual self-liberation, no realisation by the individual of his basic identity with the Highest. But if bondage has a reality, however phenomenal, the sealed trance of so-called exclusive non-duality must be only an oblivious spiritual slumber and no negation of the cosmos, and therefore Nature and the individual soul must always be conceived as necessarily co-existing with the Divine, and the Divine as not a vast void but as an inexplicable yet genuine unity-in-multiplicity; for otherwise there would be no ground of truth in the Ultimate to support and correspond to Its phenomenal manifestation.

It is this ground of truth or perfection that It brings out of Its stability not only to support but also to govern this lower manifestation, which is our world, by a higher manifestation or perfect harmony of what Sri Aurobindo calls Real-Ideas. The Real-Ideas constitute an organised play of supernal archetypes or truths of what is here expressed and worked out by a course of difficult evolution. They are a faultless cosmos in which no division of ignorance is made between the One and the many contained in It and which guides covertly or overtly this evolutionary mould of itself where the Divine has set up by Its all-might the figure of a great initial nescience as if in a wager with Itself in order to manifest the Truth in the terms of all that begins as its utmost contradiction. In that faultless cosmos there is no absence of the individual soul and its instruments of mind, life and matter. A supreme individual selfhood is there the counterpart of the evolving spark of the Divine that is here our soul; it is measured out and distinguished from its likes by a movement of ideative definition which is the supreme counterpart of what we know here as mind, while the dynamis which sustains the differentiation and interplay of ideative soul-nature is the supreme counterpart of the life-force of our experience, and finally the form taken by the soul's idea-force, that which substantialises distinctions and energy-patterns, is the supreme counterpart of matter. It is the sense of these ideal realities behind everything and of the great wager, that Vivekananda lacked and that sums up the advance made by Sri Aurobindo on the traditional Yogas. But the sense is possible only if the human intellect stops sitting in judgment on the character of God and understands that the evolutionary working out of the full supramental Truth which can make man perfect and solve at length all the jarring riddles of his mortality is the grand aim set up by the Divine.

The Truth is being manifested here by a process and play of possibilities through repeated births, in which each of us has to behave as if he

were free to choose and act; for such indeed seems to be the law of evolution, that the provision of our supreme selves is to be worked out by the exertion, effort and experiment of our earthly souls, aspiring after the Divine and, without questioning or criticising Its design, calling It down to possess them and all their members, so that body, life and mind may be converted into luminous figures of their own archetypes of Truth. This direct calling down of the Truth, constantly and persistently, with full self-surrender to Its demands is what Sri Aurobindo terms the Integral Yoga by which the very body will also be transformed into an incorruptible vehicle of the immortal Bliss, Consciousness and Power of the Divine—the Divine that is conscious of Its manifestation and capable of holding relations with what It manifests and hence personal in the highest sense of that word—the Divine which is the one yet multiple ground of truth of all that constitutes our humanity and which possesses on the plane of ideal realities the one yet multiple symbol of the perfected human form. Thus even the anthropomorphic conceptions of Shiva and Kali are justified as types of the living divine reality which is to be incarnated in us and to whose infinity of essence, conscious force and beatitude we have to ascend. If, therefore, we are to profit by the example of Vivekananda, we must turn from the rigid mental heights of his Shankarite metaphysics to the psychic depths of his sublimely childlike discipleship. Else we shall fail to avoid the intellectual pitfall which made his philosophy a voice from the Mayavadin past and we shall miss that in him which bears most luminously on the issues of our spiritual future.

Perhaps the psychic depths of his mighty nature—a nature keenly conscious of the anomalies of existence and aware of the especially hard lot of a spiritual hero destined to revive a fallen nation's soul—perhaps those depths never found tongue with such perfection as in a little-known poignant lyric of his which expresses the brave confidence of the luminous warrior-child of the Supreme Mother and at the same time the tragic puzzlement of one whose intellect discovered not the master-key to life's riddle. A quintessence of the Vivekananda who inherited the world-enlightening mission of Ramakrishna in a mind avid of immurement in the illimitable Formless where no questions arise, this lyric which we may well regard as one of the treasures of English poetry makes the Divine Being utter to him the Wisdom beyond thought:

THE CUP

*This is your cup—the cup assigned to you
From the beginning. Nay, My child, I know
How much of that dark drink is your own brew
Of fault and passion, ages long ago.
In the deep years of yesterday, I knew.*

*This is your road—a painful road and drear.
I made the stones that never give you rest.
I set your friend in pleasant ways and clear,
And he shall come, like you, unto My breast—
But you, My child, must learn to travel here.*

*This is your task—it has no joy nor grace,
But 'tis not meant for any other hand,
And in My universe hath measured place.
Take it. I do not bid you understand.
I bid you close your eyes to see My face.*

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