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"GREAT IS TRUTH AND IT SHALL PREVAIL"

ALTERNATE SATURDAYS

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SRI AUROBINDO'S LETTERS YOGA AND POETIC DEVELOPMENT

(The least fault in my poetic expression of spiritual realities puts me in a hurry to set things right. I have found some alternatives to replace the lines which did not come up to the mark in a recent poem. Is any of them good?)

"Merciful heavens, what a splashing and floundering! When you miss a verse or a poem, it is better to wait in an entire quietude about it (with only a silent expectation) until the true inspiration comes, and not to thrash the inner air vainly for possible variants—like that the true form is much more likely to come, as people go to sleep on a problem and find it solved when they awake. Otherwise, you are likely to have only a series of misses, the halfgods of the semi-poetic mind continually intervening with their false enthusiasms and misleading voices." (11-7-31)

(Please tell me how I am to manifest an absolutely genuine and at the same time new exquisiteness in poetry. I suppose I must myself change; but in the meantime is it worth while writing poems, I mean even of the good sort, which may be genuinely exquisite but the like of which have been written so often in the past?)

"Certainly if you want to achieve a greater poetry, more unique, you will yourself have to change, to alter the poise of your consciousness. At present you write, as you do other things, too much with the brain, the mere human intelligence. To get back from the surface vital into the psychic and psychic vital, to raise the level of your mental from the intellect to the Illumined Mind is your need both in poetry and in Yoga. I have told you already that your best poetry comes from the Illumined Mind, but as a rule it either comes from there with too much of the transcription diminished in its passage through the intellect or else is generated only in the creative poetic intelligence. But so many poets have written from that intelligence. If you could always write direct from the Illumined Mind—finding there not only the substance, as you often do, but the rhythm and language, that indeed would be a poetry exquisite, original and unique. The intellect produces the idea, even the poetic idea, too much for the sake of the idea alone; coming from the Illumined Mind the idea in a form of light and music is itself but the shining body of the Light Divine.

"On the other hand to cease writing altogether might be a doubtful remedy. By your writing here you have at least got rid of most of your former defects, and reached a stage of preparation in which you may reasonably hope for a greater development hereafter. I myself have more than once abstained for some time from writing because I did not wish to produce anything except as an expression from a higher plane of consciousness, but to do that you must be sure of your poetic gift, that it will not rust by too long a disuse!" (4-9-31)

(What distinguishes in manner and quality a pure inspiration of the Illumined Mind from that which has the psychic for its origin?)

"Your question reads like a poser in an examination paper. And suppose I could give a satisfactory definition Euclidianly rigid, I don't know that it would be of much use or would really help you to distinguish between the two kinds; these things have to be felt and perceived by experience. I would prefer to give examples. I suppose it would be impossible to find a more perfect example of psychic inspiration in English literature than Shelley's lines,

*I can give not what men call love:
But wilt thou accept not
The worship the heart lifts above,
And the Heavens reject not:
The desire of the moth for the star,
Of the night for the morrow,
The devotion to something afar
From the sphere of our sorrow?*

—you will find there the true rhythm, expression and substance of poetry full of the psychic influence. I have not any books of poetry with me except my own and Shakespeare's; so I will give you examples first of the Illumined Mind and then of the combination of the psychic and the Illumined Mind powers from a poet whom you will perhaps easily recognise. For the first the lines—

*The longing of ecstatic tears
From infinite to infinite—*

will do very well. For the combination, here is an example that could not be bettered:

*If Thou desirest my weak self to outgrow
Its mortal longings, lean down from above,
Temper the unborn light no thought can trace,
Suffuse my mood with a familiar glow.
For 'tis with mouth of clay I supplicate:
Speak to me heart to heart words intimate,
And all Thy formless glory turn to love
And mould Thy love into a human face.* (1931)

(My poetic stock so far—almost the end of 1931—is rather scanty: only a dozen poems that have been completely approved by you. Two of them you have liked immensely and some of the others you have pronounced "very fine" or "very good". Do you think I could have your assurance that in spite of this small stock I need not feel inferior to the other Indian poets who have written in English?—Manmohan Ghose and Harindranath Chattopadhyaya and Sarojini Naidu?)

"What have you to do with what others have achieved? If you write poetry, it should be from the standpoint that you have something of your own which has not yet found full expression, a power within which you can place at the service of the Divine and which can help you to grow—you have to get rid of all in it that is merely mental or merely vital, to develop what is true and fine in it and leave the rest until you can write from a higher level of consciousness things that come from the deepest self and the highest spiritual levels. Your question is that of a littérateur and not in the right spirit. Besides, even from a mental point of view, such comparisons are quite idle. Sarojini Naidu has at best a strange power of brilliant colour and exquisite melody which you are not likely ever to have; on the other hand she is narrowly limited by her gift. Harindranath has an unflinching sense of beauty and rhythm (or had it before he became a Bolshevik and Gandhist)—while your writing is very unequal; but I do not suppose he will ever do much better than he has done or produce anything that will put him in the first rank of poets, unless he changes greatly in the future.* As for my brother, I do not know enough of his poetry to judge; I know he had a better knowledge of technique than any of these poets, but my impression was that life and enduring quality were not there. How am I to compare you in these things with them? You have another turn and gift and you have in the resources of Yoga a chance of constant progression and growth and of throwing all imperfections behind you. Measure what you do by the standard of your own possible perfection; what is the use of measuring it by the achievement of others?" (1931)

(My inspiration has come to a dead stop. What the devil is the matter with me? The power of poetry seems to have completely forsaken me.)

"I do not think you need be anxious about the poetry; the power is sure to re-express itself as soon as you are ready for a progress. It has probably stopped working temporarily because the pressure is now for

* This remark was made before the work done during the two years spent by Chattopadhyaya in the Ashram. The criticism in it may not apply to that work, part of which differed from anything done by him previously or subsequently.

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the inner self-creation more than for the outer expression—I am speaking, of course, of your case in particular. The expression in poetry and other forms must be, for the yogi, a flowing out from a growing self within and not merely a mental creation or an aesthetic pleasure. Like that the inner self grows and the poetic power will grow with it." (9-12-31)

(I don't know what to do with this mind of mine. As a poetic instrument it is extremely variable. Why can't it always get successfully inspired?)

"Perhaps one reason why your mind is so variable is because it has learned too much and has too many influences stamped upon it; it does not allow the real poet in you who is a little at the back to be himself—it wants to supply him with a form instead of allowing him to breathe into the instrument his own notes. It is, besides, too ingenious. What you have to learn is the art of allowing things to come through and recognising among them the one right thing—which is very much what you have to do in Yoga also. It is really this recognition that is the one important need—once you have that, things become much easier." (3-2-32)

(Is there something definitely in the rhythm or language of a line of poetry which would prove it to be from a certain plane? Take the lines I am sending you. From what you once wrote to me I gather that my first quotation has an Overmind movement as well as substance coming strongly coloured by the vital. But where and in what lies the vital colour which makes it the highest Shakespearian and not, say, the highest Wordsworthian? How does one catch here and elsewhere the essential *differentiae*?)

"It is a question of feeling, not of intellectual understanding. The second quotation from Shakespeare—

*Eternity was in our lips and eyes,
Bliss in our brows' bent; none our parts so poor
But was a race of heaven—*

is plainly vital in its excited thrill. I have given the instance (in *The Future Poetry*) of Shakespeare's

(Life) is a tale

*Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.*

That is a 'thought', a judgment on life, so would naturally be assigned to the intellect, but as a matter of fact it is a throw-up from Macbeth's vital, an emotional or sensational, not an intellectual judgment and its whole turn and rhythm are vital.

"About the first quotation, Shakespeare's

The prophetic soul

Of the wide world dreaming on things to come,

there might be some doubt, but still it is quite different in tone from Wordsworth's line on Newton—

Voyaging through strange seas of thought, alone—

which is an above-head vision—and the difference comes because the vision of the 'dreaming soul' is felt through the vital mind and heart before it finds expression. It is this constant vitality,—vital surge in Shakespeare's language—which makes it a sovereign expression not of mind or knowledge but of life." (1934)

(In a poem recently submitted to you, you marked certain lines as coming from the Illumined Mind and some others as from the Intuition. Could you just hint the characteristics of the two sources?)

"The poetry of the Illumined Mind is usually full of a play of lights and colours, brilliant and striking in phrase, for illumination makes the Truth vivid—it acts usually by a luminous rush. The poetry of the Intuition may have play of colour and bright lights, but it does not depend on them—it may be quite bare, it tells by a sort of close intimacy with the Truth, an inward expression of it. The Illumined Mind sometimes gets rid of its trappings, but even then it always keeps a sort of lustrousness of robe which is its characteristic." (1934)

(Here are some passages from the Mundaka Upanishad and from the Gita's vision of the Cosmic Spirit. Have they the accent of what you have described in *The Future Poetry* as the *mantra*? The target of all mystic and spiritual poetry should be, in my opinion, the mantric utterance. At least the target of my own poetry certainly is. Will you shed some light on the *mantra*'s peculiar quality? And tell me, please, whether we can expect a poetry from even beyond the *mantra*—poetry of the as yet unmanifest Supermind?)

"The *mantra* (not necessarily in the Upanishads alone) as I have tried to describe it in *The Future Poetry* is what comes from the Overmind inspiration. Its characteristics are a language that says infinitely more than the mere sense of the words seems to indicate, a rhythm that means even more than the language and is born out of the Infinite and disappears into the Infinite and the power to convey not merely some mental, vital or physical contents or indications or values of the thing it speaks of, but its value and figure in some fundamental and original consciousness which is behind them all. The passages you mention have certainly the Overmind accent. But ordinarily, as I have said, the Overmind inspiration does not come out pure in human poetry. It has to lift it by a seizure and surprise from above into the Overmind largeness; but in doing so there is usually a mixture of the two elements, the uplifting influence and the lower stuff of mind. You

must remember that the Overmind is a superhuman consciousness and to be able to write always or purely from an Overmind inspiration would mean the elevation of at least a part of the nature beyond the human level. But to write of these things would need a greater length of exposition than I can give you at present.

"But how do you expect a Supramental inspiration to come down here when the Overmind itself is so rarely within human reach? That is always the error of the impatient aspirant, to think he can get the Supermind without going through the intervening stages or to imagine that he has got it when in fact he has only got something from the illumined or intuitive or at the highest some kind of mixed Overmind consciousness." (1934)

(To help me distinguish the planes of inspiration, could you just indicate where the following lines have their sources?)

- (1) *What visionary urge
Has stolen from horizons watched alone
Into thy being with ethereal guile?*
- (2) *A huge sky-passion sprouting from the earth
In branched vastnesses of leafy rapture.*
- (3) *The mute unshadowed spaces of her mind.*
- (4) *A sea unheard where spume nor spray is blown.*
- (5) *Irradiant wing-waft through eternal space,
Pride of lone rapture and invincible sun-gaze.*
- (6) *Born nomad of the infinite heart!
Time-tamer! star-struck debauchee of light!
Warrior who hurls his spirit like a dart
Across the terrible night
Of death to conquer immortality!*
- (7) *....And to the earth-self suddenly
Came, through remote entranced marvelling
Of adoration ever-widening,
A spacious sense of immortality.*
- (8) *Here life's lost heart of splendour beats immense.*
- (9) *The haunting rapture of the vast dream-wind
That blows, star-fragrant, from eternity.*
- (10) *An ocean-hearted ecstasy am I
Where time flows inward to eternal shores.)*

"(1) Second line Intuitive with Overmind touch. Third line imaginative Poetic Intelligence.

(2) Imaginative Poetic Intelligence with something of the Higher Mind.

(3) Intuitive with Overmind touch.

(4) Intuitive.

(5) Higher Mind with mental Overmind touch.

(6) Illumined Mind with mental Overmind touch.

(7) Mixture of Higher and Illumined Mind—in the last line the mental Overmind touch.

(8) Illumined Mind with mental Overmind touch.

(9) Ditto.

(10) Intuitive, Illumined, Overmind touch all mixed together.

"I have analysed but very imperfectly—because these influences are so mixed together that the descriptions are not exhaustive.

"Also remember that I speak of a *touch*, of the *mental* Overmind touch and that when there is the touch it is not always complete—it may be more apparent from something either in the language or substance or rhythm than in all three together.

"Even so, perhaps some of my descriptions are overhasty and denote the impression of the moment. Also the poetical value of the poetry exists independent of its source." (13-2-34)

(It was extremely kind of you to analyse a few weeks back the influences of different planes in my poetry. I seem to have some feeling now of the qualities proper to them. I should like to know, however, whether you intend any important distinction when you speak of "Overmind touch" and "mental Overmind touch".)

"Yes—the Overmind proper has some gnostic light in it which is absent in the mental Overmind." (2-3-34)

(Once the consciousness is aware of a certain vibration and poetic quality, it is possible to reach out towards its source of inspiration. As poetry for us here must be a way of Yoga, I suppose this reaching out is a helpful attempt; but it would become easier if there were some constant vibration present in the consciousness, which we know to have descended from the higher ranges. Very often the creative spark comes to me from the poems I read. I shall be obliged if you will indicate the origin of the few examples below—only the first of which is from my own work.

- (1) *Plumbless inaudible waves of shining sleep.*
- (2) *The diamond dimness of the domed air.*
- (3) *Withdrawn in a lost attitude of prayer.*
- (4) *This patter of Time's marring steps across the solitude
Of Truth's abidingness, Self-blissful and alone.*
- (5) *Million d'oiseaux d'or, O future vigueur!*
- (6) *Rapt above earth by power of one fair face.*
- (7) *I saw them walking in an air of glory.*
- (8) *Solitary thinkings such as dodge
Conception to the very bourne of heaven,
Then leave the naked brain.*

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- (9) *But felt through all this fleshly dress
Bright shoots of everlastingness.*
(10) *I saw Eternity the other night
Like a great ring of pure and endless light,
All calm as it was bright.)*

- (1) Illumined Mind.
(2) Illumined Mind.
(3) Intuition.
(4) Illumined Mind with an intuitive element and a strong Overmind touch.
(5) Illumined Mind.
(6) Difficult to say. More of Higher Mind perhaps than anything else—but something of illumination and intuition also.
(7) It is a mixture. Something of the Illumined Mind, something of the Poetic Intelligence diluting the full sovereignty of the higher expression.
(8) Higher Mind combined with Illumined.
(9) Illumined Mind with something from Intuition.
(10) Illumined Mind with something from Overmind.*

(7-3-34)

“Beyond—beyond!” seems always the cry of the poet in me—not only the highest mysticism and spiritual truth but also the expression of them from the highest plane. I am haunted by a miraculous poetic creation existing on a plane far away, of which I cannot yet be master. This breeds disgust with even things I might be proud of at present. What would you advise as a remedy for my strange condition?)

“It is no use being disgusted because there is a best you have not reached yet; every poet should have that feeling of ‘a miraculous poetic creation existing on a plane’ he has not reached, but he should not despair of reaching it; but rather he has to regard present achievement not as something final but as steps towards what he hopes some day to write. That is the true artistic temper.”

(1-5-34)

(I have given a copy of yesterday's poem to the library, but I am visited by a doubt. Was it a perfect success? If not, I should like to withdraw it. I have no ambition to swell the number of my poems if I can't maintain a high level of quality. So please let me know where it stands.

P.S.—By the way, will you tell me if the following two ideas of mine are correct? (1) Your comments on the compositions sent you by anybody here are based on a fundamental aesthetic standard, whatever the consideration you may include from the spiritual standpoint: that is to say, you would not give praise unless the spiritual substance has been finely expressed, nor, to take an extreme case, would you withhold praise if even a non-spiritual substance came to be finely expressed, though you might add that such poetry was not our aim here. Of course you would commend more highly something which is not only perfect in expression but very deep also in spiritual substance, than what is equally perfect but not so deep; still, you would not say “very good” unless the form was flawless, nor pronounce a composition “successful” just to encourage something that might help one's sadhana, no matter if the form was hopeless.

(2) Your judgment is according to a fixed qualitative criterion where the form is concerned: it does not differ with different writers, provided you do not add any qualifying phrase. Thus, a poem, say, by Shailen would be aesthetically on a par with one of Harin's or Arjava's if simply the remark “very good” was won by them all. It is possible that sometimes you would give a restrained comment, but privately you judge by an unvarying aesthetic standard—don't you? By “unvarying” I don't mean a partiality for a particular kind of style: I am referring to level of excellence.)

“You seem to demand a very rigid and academic fixity of meaning from my hastily penned comments on the poetry sent to me. I have no unvarying aesthetic standard or fixed qualitative criterion,—not only so, but I hold any such thing to be impossible with regard to so subtle and unintellectual an essence as poetry. It is only physical things that can be subjected to fixed measures and unvarying criteria. Appreciation of poetry is a question of feeling, of intuitive perception, of a certain aesthetic sense, it is not the result of an intellectual judgment.

“My judgment does differ with different writers and also with different kinds of writings. If I put ‘very good’ on a poem of Shailen's, it does not mean that it is on a par with Harin's or Arjava's or yours. It means that it is very good Shailen, but not that it is very good Harin or very good Arjava. ‘If very good were won by them all,’ you write! But, good heavens, you write that as if I were a master giving marks in a class. I may write ‘good’ or ‘very good’ on the work of a novice if I see that it has succeeded in being poetry and not mere verse however correct or well rhymed—but if Harin or Arjava or you were to produce work like that, I would not say ‘very good’ at all. There are poems of yours which I have slashed and pronounced unsatisfactory, but if certain others were to send me that, I would say, ‘Well, you have been remarkably successful this time.’ I am not giving comparative marks according to a fixed rule. I am using words flexibly according to the occasion and the individual. It would be the same with different kinds of writings. If I write ‘very good’ or ‘excellent’ on some verses of Dara about his chair, I am not giving it a certificate of equality with some poems of yours similarly appreciated—I am only saying that as humorous easy verse in the lightest vein it is very

successful, an outstanding piece of work. Applied to your poem it would mean something different altogether.

“Coming from your huge P.S. to the tiny body of your letter, what do you mean by ‘a perfect success?’ I meant that pitched in a certain key and style your poem had worked itself out very well in that key and style in a very satisfying way from the point of view of thought, expression and rhythm. From that standpoint it is a perfect success. If you ask whether it is at your highest possible pitch of inspiration, I would say no, but it is nowhere weak or inadequate and it says something poetically well worth saying and says it well. One cannot always be writing at the highest pitch of one's possibility, but that is no reason why work of very good quality in itself should be rejected.”

(14-11-34)

(The Muse is again away and I am feeling impatient: Can't you give me some clue about the direction of consciousness by which I may draw her back to me or reach out to her? But, of course, I want the highest and I want a thorough perfection. Perhaps I am too careful and self-critical. But that is my nature as an artist. Has it got something to do with the Muse's flight? In any case, the experience of uncreativity, the loss of the freedom of flying on the wings of inspiration, the sense of the poetic part of me caught in the mere mind and rendered vague and ineffective—all this is most unpleasant. Sometimes I fear the present lack of fluency may become a permanent defect. What method would you advise to counteract it. Quieting the mind? What do you do to get inspiration?)

“Poetry seems to have intervals in its visits to you very often. I rather think the malady is fairly common. Dilip and Nishikanta who can write whenever they feel inclined are rare birds. I don't know about ‘the direction of consciousness’. My own method is not to quiet the mind, for it is eternally quiet, but to turn upward and inward. You, I suppose, would have to quiet it first, which is not always easy. Have you tried it?

“It is precisely the people who are careful, self-critical, anxious for perfection who have interrupted visits from the Muse. Those who don't mind what they write, trusting to their genius, vigour, fluency to carry it off are usually the abundant writers. There are exceptions, of course. ‘The poetic part caught in the mere mind’ is an admirable explanation of the phenomenon of interruption—it was the same with myself in the old days. Fluent poets are those who either do not mind if they do not always write their very best or whose minds are sufficiently poetic to make even their ‘not best’ verse pass muster well. Sometimes you write things that are good enough, but not your best—but both your insistence and mine—for I think it essential for you to write your best always, at least your ‘level best’—may have curbed your fluency a good deal.

“The diminution of your prose was compensated by the much higher and maturer quality to which it attained afterwards. It would be so, I suppose, with the poetry and a new level of consciousness once attained there might well be a new fluency. So there is not much justification for the fear.”

(1935)

(Would the emergence of the psychic being make the writing of “above-head” poetry possible?)

“To get the psychic being to emerge is not easy, though it is a very necessary thing for sadhana and when it does it is not certain that it will switch on to the above-head planes at once. But obviously anyone who could psychicise his poetry would get a unique place among the poets.

“The direct psychic touch is not frequent in poetry. It breaks in sometimes—more often there is only a tinge here and there.”

(19-10-36)

(Would the emergence of the psychic being cut across any above-head inspiration?)

“I don't suppose the emergence of the psychic would interfere at all with the inspiration from above. It would be more likely to help it by making the connection with these planes more direct and conscious.”

(20-10-36)

(Why aren't you satisfied with my line: “An ultimate crown of inexhaustible joy”? Is it bad poetry or not “overhead” enough and therefore not in tune with its context?)

“The line is strong and dignified, but it impresses me as too mental and Miltonic. Milton has very usually (in *Paradise Lost*) some of the largeness and rhythm of the Higher Mind, but his substance is—except at certain heights—mental, mentally grand and noble. The interference of the mental Miltonic is one of the great stumbling blocks when one tries to write from ‘above’.”*

(17-11-36)

(How is it that after all this training under you and getting inspiration from certain of the planes towards which I kept straining my consciousness I relapsed into inferior poetry? Either a relapse or else I grow dumb—and even otherwise it is no easy job to receive the kind of inspiration I want. There are fine flowings at times, but often there are blockings in places and I have to wait and wait for their removal. I feel dejected and wonder when the intense joy that poetry brings me will be free from these most discouraging impediments. My relapse at the moment, as regards those lines, fills me with shame.)

“It is not a relapse, but an oscillation which one finds in almost every

* When the line was changed to “An ultimate crown of joy's infinity”, Sri Aurobindo found it more acceptable as part of the poem concerned.

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poet. Each has a general level, a highest level and a lower range in which some defects of his poetical faculty come out. You have three manners: (1) a sort of decorative romantic manner that survives from your early days—this at lower pitch turns to too much dressiness of an ornamental kind, at a higher to post-Victorian, Edwardian or Georgian rhetoric with a frequent saving touch of Yeats; (2) a level at which all is fused into a fine intuitive authenticity and beauty, there is seldom anything to change; (3) a higher level of grander movement and language in which you pull down or reach the influences of the Higher Mind, Illumined Mind, Overmind Intuition. The last you have not yet fully mastered so as to write with an absolute certainty and faultlessness except by lines and stanzas or else as a whole in rare moments of total inspiration, but you are moving towards mastery in it. Sometimes these inspirations get mixed up together. It is this straining towards greater height that creates the difficulty, yet it is indispensable for the evolution of your genius. It is not surprising, therefore, that inspiration comes with difficulty often, or that there are dormant periods or returns of the decorative inspiration. All that is part of the day's work and dejection is quite out of place." (20-4-37)

(In a recent letter you wrote: "What you are writing now is 'overhead' poetry—I mean poetry inspired from those planes—before you used to write poems very often from the intuitive mind—these had a beauty and perfection of their own." These words of yours set me asking: Isn't the intuitive mind itself an overhead power?)

"The intuitive mind, strictly speaking, stretches from the Intuition proper down to the intuitivised inner mind—it is therefore at once an overhead power and a mental intelligence power. All depends on the amount, intensity, quality of the intuition and how far it is mixed with mind or pure. The inner mind is not necessarily intuitive, though it can easily become so. The mystic mind is turned towards the occult and spiritual, but the inner mind can act without direct reference to the occult and spiritual, it can act in the same field and in the same material as the ordinary mind, only with a larger and deeper power, range and light and in greater unison with the Universal Mind; it can open also more easily to what is within and what is above. Intuitive intelligence, mystic mind, inner mind intelligence are all part of the inner mind operation. In today's poem, for instance—*A Poet's Stammer*—

*My dream is spoken
As if by sound
Were tremulously broken
Some vow profound.
A timeless hush
Draws ever back
The winging music-rush
Upon thought's track.
Though syllables sweep
Like golden birds,
Far lonelihoods of sleep
Dwindle my words.
Beyond life's clamour,
A mystery mars
Speech-light to a myriad stammer
Of flickering stars—*

it is certainly the inner mind that has transformed the idea of stammering into a symbol of inner phenomena and into that operation a certain strain of mystic mind enters, but what is prominent is the intuitive inspiration throughout. It blends with the intuitive poetic intelligence in the first stanza, gets touched by the overhead intuition in the second, gets full of it in the third and again rises rapidly to that in the two last lines of the fourth stanza. This is what I call poetry of the intuitive mind." (13-5-1937)

(How is it that people find my poetry difficult? I almost suspect that only Nolini and Arjava get the whole hang of it properly. Of course many appreciate when I have explained it to them—but otherwise they admire the beauty of individual phrases without grasping the many-sided whole the phrases form. This morning Premanand, Vijayarai and Nirod read my *Agni*. None of them caught the precise relevances, the significant connections of the words and phrases of the opening lines:

*Not from the day but from the night he's born,
Night with her pang of dream—star on pale star
Winging strange rumour through a secret dawn.
For all the black uncanopied spaces mirror
The brooding distance of our plumbless mind.*

In the rest of the poem too they failed to get, now and again, the true point of felicity which constitutes poetic expression. My work is not surrealist: I put meaning into everything, not intellectualism but a coherent vision worked out suggestively in various detail. Why then the difficulty? Everybody feels at home in Harin's poetry, though I dare say that if I catechised them I might find the deepest felicities missed. All the same, there was something in his work which made his sense more accessible. Even Dilip says that my work passes a little over his head—Arjava's, of course, he finds still more difficult. Perhaps I tend to pack too much stuff into my words and to render my links a little less explicit than Harin did or Dilip himself does in Bengali. But would people have the same trouble with vernacular poetry, however like my own it might be?)

"It is precisely because what you put in is not intellectualism or a product of mental imagination that your poetry is difficult to those who are accustomed to a predominantly mental strain in poetry. One can grasp

fully if one has some clue to what you put in, either the clue of personal experience or the clue of a sympathetic insight. One who has had the concrete experience of the consciousness as a night with the stars coming out and the sense of the secret dawn can at once feel the force of those two lines, as one who has had experience of the mind as a wide space or infinity or a thing of distances and expanses can fathom those that follow. Or even if he has had not these experiences but others of the same order, he can feel what you mean and enter into it by a kind of identification. Failing this experience, a sympathetic insight can bring the significance home; certainly, Nolini and Arjava who write poems of the inner vision and feeling must have that, moreover their minds are sufficiently subtle and plastic to enter into all kinds of poetic vision and expression. Premanand and Vijayarai have no such training; it is natural that they should find it difficult. Nirod ought to understand, but he would have to ponder and take some trouble before he got it; night with her labour of dream, the stars, the bird-winging, the bird-voices, the secret dawn are indeed familiar symbols in the poetry he is himself writing or with which he is familiar; but his mind seeks usually at first for precise allegories to fit the symbols and is less quick to see and feel by identification what is behind them—it is still intellectual and not concrete in its approach to these things, although his imagination has learned to make itself their transcribing medium. That is the difficulty, the crux of imaged spiritual poetry; it needs not only the fit writer but the fit audience—and that has yet to be made.

"Dilip wrote to me in recent times expressing great admiration for Arjava's poems and wanting to get something of the same quality into his own poetic style. But in any case Dilip has not the mystic mind and vision—Harin also. In quite different ways they receive and express their vision or experience through the poetic mind and imagination—even so, because it expressed something unusual, Dilip's poetry has had a difficulty in getting recognised except by people who were able to give the right response. Harin's poetry deals very skilfully with spiritual ideas or feelings through the language of the emotion and the poetic imagination and intelligence—no difficulty there. As regards your poetry, it is indeed more compressed and carefully packed with substance and that creates a difficulty except for those who are alive to the language or have become alive to subtle shades, implications, depths in the words. Even those who understand a foreign language well in the ordinary way find it sometimes difficult to catch these in its poetry. Indications and suggestions easy to catch in one's own tongue are often missed there. So probably your last remark is founded." (14-5-37)

(I hope people won't misunderstand what you have remarked about the mystic mind. One's not having the mystic mind and vision does not reflect upon one's poetic excellence, even as a singer of the Spirit. As regards Harin, you had said long ago that he wrote from several planes. And surely his *Dark Well* poems come from a source beyond the poetic intelligence?)

"I used the words 'mystic' in the sense of a certain kind of inner seeing and feeling of things, a way which to the intellect would seem occult and visionary—for this is something different from imagination and its work with which the intellect is familiar. It was in this sense that I said Dilip had not the mystic mind and vision. One can go far in the spiritual way, have plenty of spiritual visions and dreams even without having this mystic mind and way of seeing things. So too one may write poetry from different planes or sources of inspiration and expressing spiritual feelings, knowledge, experience and yet use the poetic intelligence as the thought medium which gives them shape in speech; such poems are not of the mystic type. One may be mystic in this sense without being spiritual—one may also be spiritual without being mystic; or one may be both spiritual and mystic in one. Poems ditto.

"I had not in view the *Dark Well* poems when I wrote about Harin. I was thinking of his ordinary way of writing. If I remember right, the *Dark Well* poems came from the inner mind centre, some from the Higher Mind—other planes may have sent their message to his mind to put in poetic speech, but the main worker was the poetic intelligence which took what was given and turned it into something very vivid, coloured and beautiful,—but surely not mystic in the sense given above." (15-5-37)

(My lines—

Across the keen apocalypse of gold . . .

and

A white word breaks the eternal quietude . . .

—which you consider fine may be authentic poetry and true to spiritual reality but I find nothing strikingly new in them in their present context. Don't you believe that to repeat excellently is as much a fault in its own way as to do so half successfully? I may be in a peculiar mood, but I am sick of these shining monotonies. I think some of my poetic colleagues need as much as myself to get rid of them.)

"Obviously, it is desirable not to repeat oneself or, if one has to, it is desirable to repeat in another language and in a new light. Still, even that cannot be overdone. The difficulty about most writers of spiritual poetry is that they have a limited field of experience or art tacked on to a limited inspiration, though an intense one. How to get out of it? The only recipe I have is to widen oneself (or one's receptivity) always or else perhaps wait in the eternal quietude for a new white word to break it. . ."

(29-8-37)

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

MIND AND SUPERMIND. I

After examining, in the last essay, the difficulties of having an intellectual understanding of the Supramental cognition we concluded that the best way to have an idea of this higher mode of apprehending reality was by contrasting it with the only kind of cognition really known to us—the mental. Here we shall, therefore, see the difference between the two and examine how knowledge-apprehension on the Supramental plane varies from the mental way of acquiring knowledge. The epistemic and psychological basis of mental cognition was described in detail and its limitations pointed out in the previous essays when the four modes of knowing were described—knowledge by identity, knowledge by intimate direct contact, knowledge by separative direct contact, and wholly separative knowledge by indirect contact.

In this essay we shall see how when the epistemic and psychological basis of cognition changes from indirect and separative contacts to direct and immediate contacts and ultimately to identification, there is a reciprocal change in the grasp of reality, resulting in greater knowledge of self, God and the world; this happens because the focus of consciousness widens making the awareness unitarian instead of fragmentary, and perception more and more total and integral instead of partial and analytical.

Sri Aurobindo writes:

"The nature of the gnosis can only be indicated intellectually by contrasting it with the nature of the intellectual mentality, and even then in phrases which do not illuminate unless aided by some amount of actual experience,—for what language forged by the reason can really express the suprarational? The mental reason proceeds from ignorance to truth, the gnosis has in itself the direct and immediate vision of the truth. The reason starts with appearances and labours, never or seldom losing at least a partial dependence on appearance, to arrive at the truth behind them; the gnosis starts from the truth and shows the appearances in the light of the truth. The reason proceeds by inference, it concludes; the gnosis proceeds by vision,—it sees and knows. As the physical eye sees and grasps the appearance of objects, so the gnosis sees and grasps the truth of things; and where the physical sense gets into relation with objects by contact, the gnosis gets into identity with things by oneness. Thus it is able to know all things as a man knows his own existence, directly. To the reason only what the senses give is direct knowledge, *pratyaksha*, the rest of truth is arrived at indirectly; to the gnosis all its truth is direct knowledge, *pratyaksha*. Therefore the truth gained by the intellect is an acquisition over which there hangs always a certain shadow of doubt, an incompleteness, a surrounding penumbra of night and ignorance or half-knowledge, a possibility of alteration or annihilation by farther knowledge. The truth of the gnosis is free from doubt, self-evident, self-existent.

"The reason has as its first instrument observation general, analytical, synthetic; it aids itself by comparison, contrast and analogy; it proceeds from experience to indirect knowledge by logical processes of inference, by deduction, by induction; it rests upon memory, reaches out beyond itself by imagination, secures itself by judgment; all is a process of groping and seeking. The gnosis does not seek, it possesses; or if it has to enlighten, it does not even then seek but reveals." On the Supramental level the time-sense also changes. Sri Aurobindo continues: "while the reason pro-

ceeds from moment to moment of time losing and acquiring and losing again and acquiring again, the gnosis possesses time in one view and links past, present and future in their indivisible connection. The gnosis starts from the totality and sees parts, groups and details only in relation to the totality, while the mental reason cannot really see the totality at all and does not know fully any whole except by starting from analysis and synthesis of its parts, masses and details; otherwise its whole-view is always a vague or imperfect or a confused view. The reason deals with processes and properties and tries in vain to form by them an idea of the thing in itself; the gnosis sees the thing in itself, its original and eternal nature and its processes and properties only as a self-expression of its nature. The reason dwells in the diversity and deals with things separately and treats each as a separate existence, as it deals with sections of Time and divisions of Space; it sees unity only in a sum or by elimination of diversity or as a general conception: the gnosis dwells in the unity and starts from the unity and it sees diversities only of a unity, it does not recognise any real division nor treat things separately as if they were independent of their real and original unity. The reason deals with the finite and is helpless before the infinite which it can conceive of readily only as an indefinite extension in which the finite acts; it can with difficulty conceive and cannot at all grasp the infinite in itself; but the gnosis lives in the infinite, starts always from the infinite and knows finite things only in their relation to the infinite and in the sense of the infinite....

"This is the basis and when it is achieved, then only can we progress to the normality of the supramental ideation; for that is the play of the supreme light and, though we may receive or reflect it even before we rise into the gnosis, we cannot command or wholly possess it until we become the being of the supreme light, until our consciousness is transformed into that consciousness; for according to the nature of our consciousness will be the normal strain of our ideation. This ideation of the gnosis has already been described; but it has to be emphasised that it is not confined to a higher thought or the action of a sort of divine reason. It takes up all our present means of knowledge immensely extended, active and effective where they are now debarred, blind, infructuous, and turns them into a high and intense perceptive activity of the Vijnana. Thus it takes up our sense action and illumines it even in its ordinary field so that we get a true sense of things; but it also enables the mind-sense to have a direct perception of the inner as well as the outer phenomenon, to feel and receive or perceive, for instance, the thoughts, feelings, sensations, the nervous reactions of the object on which it is turned. It uses also the subtle senses as well as the physical and saves them from their errors; it gives us the knowledge, the experience of planes of existence other than the material to which our ordinary mentality is ignorantly attached and it enlarges the world for us. It transforms similarly the sensations and gives them the full intensity as well as their full holding-power; for in our normal mentality the full intensity is impossible because the power to hold and sustain vibrations beyond a certain point is denied to it, mind and body would both break under the shock or the prolonged strain. It takes up too the element of knowledge in our feelings and emotions,—for our feelings too contain a power of knowledge and a power of effectuation which we do not recognise and do not properly develop,—and delivers them at the same time from their limitations and from their errors and perversions."

Dawn

A flaming poignancy presses on my heart
And the soul's hidden infinity awakes
And giant shadows of brooding sleep depart;
A triumph-mass of dawn suddenly breaks

And on the multitudinous sky of mind
Paints endless wonders of hued ecstasy
And every shade of thought leaps up outlined
In the glow of a pervading mystery.

All dark forebodings lose their trail in the Void;
Ephemeral wings of beauty, the magic stars
Fade in the incoming rush of gold unalloyed
With tainted filings from Time's passion-bars.

My life turns to the Sun of a timeless height;
It bears in its spirit-space God's plenitude
And grows from infinite to infinite,
Bursting the horizon of its humanhood.

NIRODBARAN

CHAPTER XII
THE MOTHER

SRI AUROBINDO

By DILIP KUMAR

In the preceding chapters I kept the Mother somewhat in the background because to the superficial view hers must appear a personality very distinct from that of Sri Aurobindo. But one who has won to the deeper vision and tried to follow the phenomenal growth of the Ashram cannot but be persuaded that without her dominant presence, superhuman patience and genius for organization (not to mention her ineffable personality of light and grace and courage) Sri Aurobindo's Synthetic Yoga would never have found the convincing shape it has. In other words, his gospel could not have found an adequate medium of expression in the practical field. But even this is by no means the whole story. For none can hope to understand Sri Aurobindo fully without a basic understanding of his estimate of the place of the Mother's divinity in his Yoga. One of his oldest and staunchest disciples, Rajani Palit, wrote to him (in August, 1938): "There are many who hold that the Mother was human once upon a time—to judge from her *Prayers*—but has outgrown her humanity through her *sadhana*. But to my psychic feeling, she is the Mother Divine herself, putting on the cloak of obscurity and suffering in order that we, humans, may be delivered out of our ignorance into knowledge, and out of our suffering into bliss."

To that Sri Aurobindo replied categorically: "The Divine puts on an appearance of humanity, assumes the outward human nature in order to tread the path and show it to human beings, but does not cease to be the 'Divine'. It is a manifestation that takes place, a manifestation of a growing Divine consciousness, *not human turning into divine*. The Mother was inwardly above the human even in childhood. So the view held by 'many' is erroneous."

It will serve no useful purpose to go into the why and wherefore of it all. For after all the recognition of the Mother's divinity or her Yogic Force is not like the positing of a scientific hypothesis to be 'assumed and accepted tentatively' subject to revision and modification as new data come to light. Still, as one of the major aims of my reminiscences is to testify to Yogic truths and experiences as I and others have realised them in the Ashram, a few personal impressions of the Mother may well be recorded here as germane to my purpose. Naturally I hesitate to deal with a personality such as Mother's in such a summary fashion, but she will, I hope, pardon such babbling tributes knowing that even in our inspired moods we can hardly expect to express more than an infinitesimal fraction of what we owe to her.

I shall describe in brief my first experience of her Force since it may help my readers to glimpse in her what we ourselves did intermittently in the course of our day-to-day struggles with our obstinate egos opposing surrender to her will.

When I met her for the first time in August 1928, I was struck by her sweet personality and felt a deep exhilaration which I could not account for. The joy left a cadence of music in my heart but I could not bring myself yet to contemplate surrendering my will to hers. The first question I asked her was whether what Sri Aurobindo called the Yogic Force acting through her personality could achieve anything "tangible".

Mother gave me an amused smile.

"What do you mean by 'tangible'?" she asked.

"You see, Mother," I answered, "I have been praying daily before Sri Ramakrishna's photograph for years—since my adolescence. But though I have often felt an upsurge of *bhakti*, I have never yet felt anything else, far less seen any gardens of gleam, letters of light, figures of flame etc. I have therefore come to the conclusion that I am too opaque to the ray of the spirit. I know really less than nothing about Yogic Force. Let me add that though my interest in life as it is is fast oozing away, I cannot yet make up my mind to take the plunge—breaking away from my moorings. To cut a long story short, I would ask you if you could possibly initiate me in your Yoga—for I understand I have to obtain initiation, first and last, from you. I can accept to wait till I feel more sure about your Yogic Force being a living reality. My position is this: I can stake everything I still cherish—but only for something real and concrete, *not something vague and apocryphal*. In short, I cannot take a leap blindfold into the unknown. So I have come to ask you very simply, but trenchantly—whether you can possibly give me a trial so as to convince me about the reality of your Yogic Force. But mind you, I want the Force to speak to me in a way which cannot possibly be explained away as auto-suggestion, wishful thinking or hallucination."

Mother smiled once more.

"I can try" she said simply. "You are at the Hotel? When do you retire for the night? At nine? Meditate at that hour in your room—try to open yourself to me and I will concentrate on you from here. Maybe you will get something which cannot be explained away even by such long-sounding names 'scientific or otherwise'."

(I have of course given here, as usual, only the gist of our talk. But as we did not talk of anything profound I can claim to have given a fairly faithful description of what passed between us on the 16th August, 1928.)

The experience came in a most curious way. As, after dinner, I went up to my room in the Hotel, I sat down on the floor. It was quite cool with the fan whirling at top-speed. I must here tell the reader that I have never been timid by nature, nor had I, hitherto, ever experienced anything eerie or even strange during my meditations. Sri Nalini Gupta had indeed once advised me, casually, to take the Mother's name should anything 'untoward' happen. But I had only smiled at the word. How could anything untoward

happen to me when I only wanted Krishna? Besides, ghosts and spirits did not exist except, of course, as vapours of a heated brain.

So I sat down to meditation in a flawlessly confident mood. I did indeed expect to see so many things: lights, colours, some figures, with luck maybe even a radiant form—who knows? But then, I told myself, I must be on my guard: strong desires and expectations might very well take shape as forms in one's meditation—and auto-suggestion must, above all, be ruled out—and so on. In short, in my wise folly, I was unwittingly arming myself with vigilance against my Gurus.

Suddenly I found my body stiffening and I started perspiring profusely, then—to complete my discomfiture—my heart beat so fast that I got scared. What is all this? Suddenly I remembered Sri Nalini Gupta's advice and took Mother's name. At once the palpitation ceased. But I was wet all over with perspiration, and the tension in my body increased till my muscles became so stiff that I felt a positive pain.

As soon as the palpitation ceased, my fear left me but not my astonishment. For, palpably, here some extraneous force was acting on my body—a force the like of which I had never experienced so vividly before! Also, obviously, it had nothing to do with auto-suggestion since I had never even imagined that an invisible Force could so convincingly twist the live, material muscles of a strong sceptic—healthy, wide-awake and normal to his finger-tips! So I did not know what to make of it all: what came to pass was too outlandish to be true and yet wasn't it too concrete to be dismissed as fanciful?

* * *

But that was, alas, all. I saw nothing—not even a grasshopper, not to mention a benevolent deity—felt no joy, no peace, no strength, no *bhakti*. Most disappointing and yet in a way so utterly, overwhelmingly impressive! For a person almost inaccessible to fear was here getting scared, a heart which had never palpitated was fluttering causelessly. And last, though not least, profuse perspiration, in a cool room, attended by the sensation of one's muscles being actually manhandled all over one's body! I was convinced that a definite Force was taking liberties with me—albeit in an almost impertinent if not lunatic way!

Next morning, after relating to Mother the whole gamut of my curious experiences, I asked her why she had so oddly wanted to cause me this kind of meaningless pain when she could well have given me peace and joy and so many other things worth while.

"But I didn't want to cause you pain at all," she laughed, vastly tickled. "But you were resisting, so my Force could not give you the peace and joy which you would have felt if you had not opposed it tooth and nail, with all the weapons of your wise scepticism and assured ignorance. One must have trust in the Divine".

"But you need not worry," she added, mollifyingly, "for I have found you quite receptive. I will say no more now. Go on with your meditations: my help will always be with you. The tension and pain will disappear after a week or two—or perhaps sooner if you can manage to trust the Divine Grace which brought you to Sri Aurobindo."

* * *

What she had foretold came to pass afterwards in due course. I was impressed, naturally. So there were, *really and literally*, "more things in heaven and earth" than could be dreamt of by the "philosophy" of reason and science! It is all very well to talk contemptuously of supernatural phenomena, but when these fall within our ken and can be traced to the agency of one whom we already esteem, an indelible mark is left, inevitably, on our minds. So henceforth I began to look upon the Mother as superior to all of us put together, even though my highbrow reason wanted to dismiss such powers rather summarily. Besides, was she not primarily responsible for my heightened respect for the occult powers of Yoga which in its turn helped me weather the storm of opposition I had to pass through before I could come to port at her feet for good?

I say 'for good' because I mean it. Not that I have not often wanted also to leave 'for good', thanks to my strong self-will, but even in my worst moods I knew full well that I would never be able to cut away from my moorings—in the last resort. I often recited in self-felicitation (calling myself a sincere fellow on top of being a "good man") the Lord's challenge to Mephistopheles:

*Ein guter Mensch in seinem dunklen Drange
Ist sich des rechten Weges wohl bemusst**

But though in my heart of hearts I knew that it could not possibly be otherwise, in the thick of my crises I have often felt like giving up when nothing but her active help and sustaining Grace could have kept me from swerving from the right movement, "the homeward way". For although I have, in my wrong moods, sometimes wanted to go over her head to Sri Aurobindo for redress, I have been fully conscious every time that had she not been as lenient as she was, I would never have won his support when I thus appealed to his adjudication as against hers. I make mention of this to stress not only her incredible tolerance but also her deep understanding of the perversity, inherent in human nature, which remains one of

* Goethe's Faust: A good man, however driven by his blind impulse,
Shall stay ever conscious of the homeward way.

CAME TO ME

MAR ROY

the greatest hurdles our aspiration has to cross—a task we could never have achieved had she not forgiven our lapses and misdemeanours again and again.

I have hinted already at her greatness which could forgive so readily and will have a good deal more to say about it in the concluding chapter. I can tell, besides, of a number of instances in which her soul of compassion tolerated and forgave even dire treachery on the part of some of her irredeemable disciples. But I cannot recall a more convincing instance than the one I am going to relate: convincing because it moved and overawed even the sturdy heart of rebellion in me which has been responsible, by and large, for my darkest sufferings on the path of Yoga.

It happened in the thirties. I have forgotten the genesis of my trouble—the exact pinprick to my susceptibility which was the cause of the resultant septicemia—but shall I ever forget the revelation which followed? But I must first give a picture of the context.

In those days I, like many another, used to see the Mother once a week to have an intimate talk. Something happened which made me conclude hastily that she had done me a grave injustice in believing a false allegation against me. So I sent her word that I would meet her no more as I owed her no allegiance whatsoever. At the same time I wrote a long letter to Sri Aurobindo telling him that I had come to the Ashram for him alone, so that if he decided the case in her favour as against mine I would sooner leave the Ashram than submit to injustice. Then I went off at a mad tangent and added that she seemed displeased with me presumably for loving him more but I could not help it and did not think that love could be made to flow like water in any direction one liked. I went on in this utterly “dare-divine” strain till I wrote to Mother herself:

“If you choose to frown on me because I love Sri Aurobindo more than I love you, I cannot help it. For I came here primarily for him and accepted you because he wanted me to turn to you. I never made a secret of this, as I saw no reason why I should stifle the voice of truth. I know full well that he will never approve of my placing him above yourself but as that is my present feeling I cannot behave as if it were otherwise. Now you can do your worst: I am ready to leave this evening; only he will have to order me personally to go, remember! For I can take no orders from you.”

I was desperate, obviously, and although in my extremity I still repeated Goethe's couplet about the good man being saved at the eleventh hour and shown “the right way” I did not see how I was to be saved from the consequences of my own gratuitous insolence. So I brooded in my abysmal gloom when Sri Nalini Gupta came to me with a message from her: she wished to see me. “I am not going to submit to being frowned upon,” I snapped, “I am only waiting for a letter of dismissal from Gurudev and as soon as it comes I will pack off.”

“Mother has no intention of frowning on you,” he said. “For she told me it was a case of pure misunderstanding. At all events,” he pleaded, “you should not be so discourteous as to refuse to see her when she wants to explain it all.”

I went—sullenly.

Mother smiled at me as only she could, in the circumstances. I could hardly believe my eyes! But her unexpected smile of Grace sent a thought flashing through me which I can only describe by the epithet “heart-warming.” So all is not lost—not yet! And simultaneously, I felt how much I depended on just one smile of hers even when I defiantly raved that she was nothing to me. How could one stay in such a God-forsaken seclusion without the companionship of her smile and loving support? Besides, hadn't she revealed to us on so many occasions that her ways were radically different from those of a moralist reforming with sermons or of a school-mistress correcting with a cane? Had I not borne witness myself to so many instances of her forbearance and charity? All such thoughts pullulated in me, induced by her one fecund smile. Then as I sat down on the floor (she was sitting on a divan with her beautiful hair let loose), she placed a hand on my shoulder and looked steadfastly at me. I fought bravely with my unruly tears.

“But can I possibly be angry with anyone who loves Sri Aurobindo as you do?” she said, very simply. Her eyes radiated a strange light, a marvellous blend of strength, tenderness and humility. “My own feelings apart, do I not know how Sri Aurobindo cherishes you? So how could you think it possible for me to frown upon one whom he greets with a smile? Am I not here to serve him with all I have and am—even as you, his disciples, are?”

She would have said more had I not burst into tears.

* * *

That day I had a new glimpse, or shall I say vision? of humility derived from true spiritual self-negating. I accepted her *on her own* as my spiritual Mother on that morning—of my full and final initiation.

I have often enough, in my wrong moods, criticized her—sometimes with no excuse at all, at others goaded by a misunderstanding, and every time has she come down to me to explain her point of view, never once minding the hurt of insults but, withal, never letting truth down. But

there, alas, lay the crux of the difficulty for such as we. For it was her cleaving to truth which we so often misinterpreted as hardness, not realising that she could scarcely have grown to her stature had she faltered the least in her stand on the plinth of truth. Notwithstanding, we wanted so often to ingratiate ourselves with her through dissimulation, hoping she would never find it out. But though she could forgive again and again to give delinquents “yet another chance”, she could not be *cheated* because she had won, through her *sadhana*, the touchstone of insight and spiritual wisdom. But knowing little of such wisdom we fail to realise how it could help her assay the truth about our struggling selves. I shall end this chapter with a talk I had with her nearly twenty years ago—on July 7th, 1932 to be more precise—with no other object than to delineate how her wisdom impressed me. But I warn my reader that it is going to be just a random sample of her talk abridged to my understanding. For though I got Sri Aurobindo to revise my report then, I cannot possibly claim that it does anything like justice to her marvellous powers of expressing simply what is perforce passing complex. Besides, in twenty years she too has grown (Sri Aurobindo wrote to me once that in the way of the spirit one can and must always rise higher and higher and dive deeper and deeper). So I do not know if she will approve of what was once approved two decades ago. But as I shall be submitting this to her once again for her final revision and seal I need not be too apologetic about the inadequacy of my report. For obviously, I can only imbibe her in the measure of my receptivity. So I may offer what little I can, hoping that it may reveal at least a fraction of what she wanted to convey.

The occasion was a Bengali song which I had composed in Sanskrit *mandakranta* metre. In a musical soirée I sang it to her and others within the Ashram precincts. Sri Aurobindo (who had heard it from his room) wrote to me: “Your song *Nada*, ‘Sound,’ is truly wonderful and it is a beautiful poem too”. I give below my English translation:

*Who is she, the formless, gleaming and hurtling
Through the skies in the lightning's flares!
Who is she, the fearless, loud in the clanging
Of the storm and its frenzied blares!
Who is she there dancing deep in the roar
And the raging orgies of the ocean,
Resonant in the ululation on high
And the cloudland's booms of explosion.
Who is she, the bounteous one, comes dissolving
As rain in a mystic murmur
To her children appealing in the heart's awed hush
As the Mother of sleep, the soul-charmer!
All the world breaks out in love's diapason:
“To the stricken on the brink of disaster
After the trump of darkling doom
Thou com'st as redeeming lustre.”*

* * *

Mother greeted me with her usual beaming smile as I entered her *sanctum sanctorum* where she used to meditate with us individually, when many people had many kinds of experiences. Also she used to tell us of things she had seen within us. Only those who have had such confidential interviews with her know how much she could and did give in those days through her exquisite touch, smile, glance and talk. I could only meditate perfunctorily with her because I was always looking forward eagerly to the talk that would follow. She knew it and so she never meditated long with me. To each she gave according to his need.

So after the short meditation I looked up and met her eyes.

“Your song on sound last evening,” she said, “was power, power, power all through. You expressed the conflicts of Nature so powerfully and truly that I was very pleased. I saw descending upon you from above an intense white light and a great power. Under its pressure there was proceeding from you a very generous outflow of vital force—in the best sense of the term—all round you. And the resolution of the conflicts into the chords of Victory was remarkable. Then, above some of the notes you sang, I contacted a vast Peace and Ananda, which will be expressed more amply in the measure of your progressive identification with what inspired it. But even at this stage of your *sadhana* the peace that was waiting lasted fairly long and in some portions of your music I saw you were not you but Music itself.”

“That is what constitutes genius,” she added with one of her rarest smiles. “You know I do not believe in paying compliments. I tell you this simply because I saw it.”

“I am overjoyed, Mother,” I said. “Only I wish the peace and bliss you contacted might endure a little longer.”

“I wish it no less,” she returned. “In fact it has been part of my endeavour to make it stay permanently. But as you haven't yet experienced it, it didn't endure. Nevertheless the notes you sang on Peace rang, at times, with an intensely concentrated fervour. Your theme was ‘Sound’, wasn't it? It was effectively expressed. The conclusion towards which it was leading was the grandeur of the descent into this world of a harmony which is now beyond its reach, and that reminded me of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. You have heard it, haven't you?”

“I have, Mother,” I said, “it is wonderful.”

“Your music yesterday seemed to me to be making an opening towards that grand power, of course, not in the European way, but in the Indian way—and not yet in its native amplitude and glory but in the full process

SRI AUROBINDO CAME TO ME —Continued from previous page

of formation and crystallisation.

"Great geniuses, when they truly achieve great things," she continued, "lose the sense of their separate ego and identity—*namarupa*—and become the thing itself, the thing they manifest; so it was with you when you sang certain of those notes, which were truly marvellous. What you invoked could not come down to stay, I repeat, at this stage of your *sadhana*, but when you will have had the full experience of the Divine—it will come down fully and permanently—when you will have touched the acme of your personality. It is not yet come, but it is fast coming. And the white Light descending on you, which was flowing and reaching others was dazzling, like, what shall I say?—you have seen snowy mountain-tops reflecting a dazzling white light, haven't you?"

"Yes, Mother," I said, thrilled. I hung on her every word now.

"The light I saw round you was like that," she said. "It was a descent of Power—Power . . . concentrated."

"It is so pleasing to me," she went on "to see true and rapid growth in people, to see them evolving, that is, rising higher and higher progressively."

"But how about being ambitious, Mother?" I asked. "For sometimes I feel I am not getting on famously because I am a little too athirst for fame."

"I always blame people for not being ambitious enough," countered Mother. "I always tell people: be more ambitious—ambitious to grow, ambitious to be divine warriors, ambitious to achieve things really worth while. The only thing is: the human limitations have to be consciously transcended. Otherwise unimpeded and true growth is not possible. Let it be your ambition to be content with nothing but the highest."

"I have latterly had some inexplicable and, if I may say so, curiously vivid feedings, Mother," I said, "I have felt again and again that I must grow and grow as never before: only I must purge myself of all cravings—like personal ambition. A voice cries out to me insistently that I must strive all the time to dedicate my gifts—such as they are—to the Divine as a loyal servant does to his master. And I am glad to say that now-a-days I do not feel tempted, as I used to formerly, to exploit my capacities for purely personal ends. My greatest defect in this connection seems to be that I am still extremely sensitive to praise—even of charlatans. Only," I added smiling, as she smiled back at me, "fortunately for me, such praise comes my way but rarely, since they are saying all sorts of things against me outside, as you know."

"What have you to do with appreciation, here or outside, whether of connoisseurs or charlatans, since you know that you came for the Divine sincerely and that the Divine has attested it by accepting you? Let the whole world misunderstand you, how can it make the least difference now—so far as you are concerned?"

"But you need not look so frightfully abashed," she added twinkling at me and patting me on the hand, "few are the artists who are not avid of praise, who don't doubt but that the world has been created to revolve around them, and if far more serious defects of your character have had their backs broken already, fame-hunger, the clinging leech, too, will have to capitulate some day—don't you worry. Your difficulties will then disappear at one sweep, I tell you. Incidentally, I saw this once again yesterday, while you were producing certain specific notes, when—as I told you just now—I saw you no longer as Dilip, but as Music pure: then it was that flashed before me your true being—which, by the way, is an old acquaintance of mine—a splendid being. But about this I would rather not speak now—as I want you to realise it yourself—why, you will know later on."

"You take my breath away, Mother," I said. "Only, my mind is so incorrigible, you know, and keeps on saying that I am too unreceptive and normal by constitution to deserve the miracle—the impossible. So I have to sigh and say to myself: never mind, be yourself, since that is the utmost you can do—when all is said and done."

"But what is the meaning of being oneself, may I ask?" Mother returned quickly. "Most people accept their limitations and, identifying themselves with their limited selves, say gloomily: 'This is what we are!' But that is all nonsense. You cannot equate yourself with your surface personality any more than you can equate the man to be with the embryo, or the tree to come with the sapling. It is only when you have realised the Divine that you can say that you have met your real self. We get a glimpse of this truth when we see a genius making the impossible possible—which he does because it is his *metier*. But how does he achieve such miracles? Simply by refusing to identify himself with what he is on his lower levels: in other words, by transcending the mould of his unevolved personality and identifying himself with his inspiration, more or less. Do you understand?"

"Do you mean one has to equate oneself first with what one expresses?"

"You may put it that way," she said, "for that too is a way, as you yourself achieved partly yesterday while you were singing—that is what I meant by saying that while you were singing you became one with what you expressed or rather what got expressed through you. But you must not infer from this that it is the only way. In fact the way varies with the temperament."

"Is that the reason why Sri Aurobindo has written in his *Synthesis of Yoga* that everyone must find out his own Yoga?"

Mother nodded.

"And that is why we say that what we prescribe to one is for himself alone and must not be taken as a general prescription or rule for all. But

to come back to your music."

She gave me a very kind look. I was thrilled. For she had never before spoken to me about my own music so intimately and appreciatively. Unfortunately I missed much of what she said. What little I could grasp I will give below but more as a gist than as a report:

"It is very remarkable and interesting", she went on, "to trace the changes and evolution in your music and creative power. The fund of vital force in you one day suddenly turned and from that day forth your music was fundamentally altered in its character and outlook; you have continued ever since to succeed, progressively, in expressing what you sang. For instance, when you sang your song on Kali the other day, she actually appeared in the subtle and danced before my eyes, as I told you, and also her characteristic red colour appeared. When you sang of Shiva, he actually came and stood before me and you. When you sang of Krishna, the blue colour which is *His* colour appeared, and just when your aspiration mounted and He was about to respond you stopped."

"I regret so much, Mother, I said smiling. "I wish I had known, for I would then have emitted 'a cry that shivers the tingling stars'."

"No matter," said Mother, giving me an answering smile. "The stars will tingle all right—all in good time. Besides, Krishna is difficult to invoke in this way, much more difficult than Kali. But what I was emphasising was that you have been succeeding more and more in expressing your theme: the white light* which developed yesterday is an instance in point."

"I see a most beautiful lambent golden shimmer on your face, Mother," I exclaimed, in great joy, "and do you know, this morning I saw a most lovely green on the wall—like a tongue of flame! But though such things I have seen, I have never before seen this sort of flashing gold on your face at such close quarters. Whatever can it mean?"

"It means that your inner vision is developing," she said with a beaming smile, "and when this power will further increase, new and vivid worlds will open before you eyes. This is only the beginning, the outer fringe, as Sri Aurobindo wrote to you the other day when you started seeing these colours everywhere round you, which he advised you to develop."

"If you had acquired more of these powers of vision" she went on, "you would have been delighted to see—what I saw the other day while meditating with you—how beautifully certain lovely colours were organising themselves within you—symbolical of the flowering of your inner creative powers—I feel interested also in its results, for example, to observe how the musical atmosphere is gradually concentrating round all the participants—to notice how the first amateurish feeling among the *sadhakas*, too, is vanishing, gradually."

"And I wanted it to be precisely like that, as you know," she continued. "I want you to create music in our Ashram the like of which one will not find anywhere else. I don't care to have music here to please a few people who have nothing to do or who are easily satisfied."

"With your blessings, Mother, it will be like that, I am sure," I said, in joy, "and I am so persuaded because now-a-days I often feel the bubbling of such a new power in me when I sing and compose—such new turns of melodies seem to drop from above like manna as it were—that I feel convinced it is all due to your grace. Only," I added, "I feel a deep diffidence overtaking me almost simultaneously. . . . I do not know how to express it. . . . but you know it all. . . ."

"Go on," she said, without helping me out.

I did not know how to express it. I groped for it for a few seconds, then said: "You know all, Mother, so what's the use of my telling you that my chief obstacle is in the mental and not in the vital."

"I know," she nodded, but said no more.

So I had nothing for it but to go on.

"What I mean," I said, "or rather, what I feel is that the vital, whatever its faults, is entirely willing to submit, but not the mental, which wants to understand, to question, to weigh pros and cons—as though without such deep precautions conviction were neither attainable nor worth having. But to do it justice, it does not know yet *how* to win to simple faith. The evidence of the hostile powers leave it only an aftermath of doubts—the testimony of the senses against the Divine ruling the world proves too strong for it. No wonder it finds it so hard to see things clearly in all this self-created blur. Or perhaps, as I sometimes infer from my recalcitrance to the higher light, I have no native capacity for spiritual experience, no congenital power of vision which can glimpse Grace even in this world of awful wars and petty preoccupations."

She shook her head.

"But you *have* the vision," she said. "And you have had evidences galore of the reality of the Divine Grace. Only you do not yet know how to appraise the one and recognise the other."

"I see what you mean, Mother," I answered, after a pause. "You wrote to me the other day that what I call 'human at its best' is synonymous really with the Divine, so that, boiled down, it comes only to quibbling about terminology or vocabulary—isn't that what you meant? This much I see. But tell me: am I wrong in thinking that the Divine must be a reality of such an alchemic power that, once seen, His power can transmute all our doubts into faith? Tell me, is this preconception of

*"Develop this power of the inner sense and all that it brings you," wrote Sri Aurobindo to me in February, 1932. "These first seeings are only an outer fringe. . . . behind lie whole worlds of experience which fill what seems to the natural man the gap (your Russell's 'inner void') between the earth-consciousness and the Eternal Infinite."

SRI AUROBINDO CAME TO ME —Continued from opposite page

mine true or untrue?"

"Quite true," said Mother.

"Well then, that is what I want to see, which I don't yet. But Sri Aurobindo writes that if I want to see the Divine in the human being I can see Him! if not, I can see only the human. I cannot understand this fully; for take my own case. Not only do I want to see the Divine in the human Guru, but I want it first and last. There are my friends who raise hell when they are asked or even expected to believe in a Personal God. There are others who cannot admit a God, or admit grudgingly a formless Presence. There are yet others who will have nothing to do with Guruvada or Avatarvada. But these difficulties I can simply ignore. Ever since I was thirteen I have wept—actually shed tears—praying to see the Divine in the human being, the human form. My friends used to call Sri Ramakrishna only a great man, nothing more; but I could never think of him as anything less than an Avatar. What always moved me so powerfully was a saying of the Gopis who, when offered *Brahmajnana* by Sri Krishna, declined with thanks, saying: 'What have we to do with the All-pervasive Formless and Knowledge of It, when we have you in our midst?' Of all the religions I feel the most powerful kinship with the Vaishnava outlook because of its emphasis on *Naralila*—a human incarnation. To see the Divine in the human being is, I agree, the summit vision—for me, anyway; so that not only do I want to see the Divine in you and Sri Aurobindo but I want nothing more ardently. Yet the fact remains I have not seen. I see your kindness, grace, greatness, your inexhaustible patience, unquestioned wisdom, power of work, skill of organisation etc. But I do not find that enough: I want to see in you the Divine—the throbbing, the indubitable, the dazzling Divine. Here too, surely, it cannot be just a matter of terminology, since I want to see in you, I repeat, such an attribute of Divinity which, once seen, would cut all the knots of my heart and resolve all my doubts—*vidyante hridaya granthih chhidryante sarva samsayah*. But unhappily, I have not seen that—as yet. Evidently. For my doubts persist, you see. Now, tell me once for all: is this too due to a mere confusion of terms or quibbling about words?"

Mother held my eyes for a few seconds in silence, then smiled. "Listen", she said at last, in her half-musing dreamy way which I always found so beautiful. "Anything that makes life exalting, anything that lifts you up above the lowest type of living in a mere animal harmony, anything that is great, noble, self-sacrificing, self-giving, inspiring, beautiful, is a missionary of the Divine. What I mean is: had it not been for the coming down of the Divine and touching our souls with His higher attributes there could have been no evolution from the lesser to the higher. In other words, life would have been utterly drab and dismal if the Divine had not come and touched some part at least of our leaden hearts into gold. So I say that whenever you see anything truly great, anything truly elevating, anything truly heart-warming, you are seeing the Divine without knowing it. Only you call it 'human in the noblest sense'—that is the root of confusion. Once you wrote to Sri Aurobindo that you simply love artists like Tagore and atheists like Russell or Sarat Chatterjee, because they depict beautiful things and stand up for noble values. But if and when they do that, they are standing up for the Divine values without knowing it. Do you see my point?"

"I do, Mother," I answered. "Only, I am afraid, it leaves the central problem no nearer solution. For if, say, our Tagores and Russells and Sarat Chatterjees had really seen the Divine in the course of their noble quests—through humanitarianism and art and science—would they have just stayed where they do today? I mean to ask: would they have remained—unlike Sri Krishna, Chaitanya, Buddha, Ramakrishna, Sri Aurobindo,—as unhappy and as unenlightened as they are? Why are they thoroughly shaken by the shocks of life, why does the spectacle of life afflict them with sheer despair? In a word, why are they so limited? Evidently because there is a deeper, more intimate, more pervading experience of the Divine possible which has not yet fallen to their lot in the course of their seekings and proddings. Is it not so?"

"Quite", she answered. "But that is just where Yoga comes in. For Yoga is, in effect, a high-pitched endeavour to catch and retain what the Tagores and Russells and Sarat Chatterjees may at best glimpse fugitively but cannot hold, far less possess. I have often said that the Divine visits us in the midst of our self-regarding petty pursuits and clamourings inspired by greed and the darkness of our wrong movements like a breath of wind—an exhilarating mountain-whiff which touches you, enraptures you but then passes on. You run after it, but the breeze is no more. It

is that which leaves people brooding and mourning. You say you haven't glimpsed the Divine. You have, in your brightest and purest moments. But only a glimpse—a touch of the breeze. You have run after it, but could not overtake it."

"My heart agrees partly, Mother," I said. "But you will pardon me if I demur that my having had a glimpse does not lessen my gloom that follows when I forfeit it the next moment, it only deepens my despair. For those who have never had such a glimpse have this advantage over such as we that, never having seen even fugitively what we have, they stay more or less contentedly tethered to their inferior pleasures. But not we whose nostalgia has been aroused by the vision to which we have thrilled in eager wonder—because we are left with no clue to the problem of how to make it abide. That is why we, humans, can ill afford to do without an assurance that what comes to us like an elusive thing on nameless wings and seems too lovely to be true, is none the less attainable by us, feckless creatures, in spite of appearances, as said for instance in the beautiful exhortation of A.E.:

*The unattainable beauty
The thought of which was pain
That flickered in eyes and lips
And vanished again:
That fugitive beauty
Thou shalt attain.*

"Quite," Mother added. "And that is why Yoga has to be done, I repeat. For Yoga is, in essence, nothing but the method and the process by which you grow to the unattainable and realise permanently the Eternal by and through what seems to be fugitive. In other words, there is a way of inducing the incredible, elusive Unattainable—the Divine Light and Love and Truth—to accept our hospitality, to come to stay as our guests. Yoga shows you the way. You love a woman, you love a friend, you love an idol—but though the first taste of love sends you into raptures you find these petering out leaving you only an aftermath of drabness, of disillusionment. Why does this happen again and again? Because the person you love is not divinised. You grasp at the fire but hug the smoke and the ashes. Your friend betrays selfishness, your beloved possessiveness, your idol feet of clay. Why? Because in them the Divine is assorted with the human. It is to reach to and realise permanently the essence of divinity in love and affection and life that we are here. You must claim the fire but reject the ashes, win the light but stave off the heat, welcome affection but cast away selfishness, invite joy but shut out pain and boredom. To sum up, to extract the pure gold purged of the dross that clings to it obstinately must be your one aspiration, your one sadhana."

"For that," she continued, "the first thing is to recognise the Divine in the best values, to see Him in everything that exalts, to be conscious—progressively and on every plane of your being—of the movements which lead to confusion or the mixture by acquiring the power to discriminate unerringly between what is to be cherished and what is to be abolished. That is why I wrote to you that the first thing to do is to get rid of this confusion between the human and the Divine and to remember that the Divine cannot fail you if you are utterly sincere and want Him above everything else." She gave me an abstracted smile and then went on: "And so far as you are concerned, the very fact that you can love so spontaneously shows that the Divine is more in you than in many another who cannot love or feel for others. The very fact that you are stirred so much by the loftiest sentiments whether of poets like Tagore or atheists like Russell or great Yogis like Sri Ramakrishna shows that the Divine values move you to your depths no matter who advocates them. Never mind what the atheists or the artists say when they claim that they love the human. For their loves and ideas at their purest and loftiest are Divine in essence."

Years later I was reminded of this when I was reading the famous hymn of Akur to Krishna:

*As all the rivers run to meet the sea,
Though some run straight and others deviously,
So all who worship what their hearts adore
Unwittingly, Lord, sail for thine one Shore.**

* Sarva eva yajanti twam Sarvadeva-Maheshwaram
Ye pyanyadevatabhakta yadayapyanyadhiyah Prabho
Yathadviprabhava nadyah parjanya-purtitah Probho
Vishanti sarvatah sindhum tadvat twam gatayontatah.

The Bhagavat. 10.40.

Mother of Deathless Suns

My dim clay hungers for the far
Unattainable glimmer of thy smile;
A white flicker of worship leaps
From the dark mind of my night
And the shadowed foam-steeds of life-seas
Desire the imperishable distances
Of thy star-world beyond our reach....

Dream-calm-enthroned, O high spirit face!
With thy grandeur fill my narrow sleep
And awaken the deep keyless secrecies
Locked in the naked mortal tomb;
My heart yearns to reach thy truth's
Golden space and become thy child of flame
Cradled in thy unbarred diamond soul,
O creator Light, Mother of deathless suns!

ROMEN

THE INTEGRAL YOGA OF SRI AUROBINDO

By RISHABHCHAND

AN EPOCHAL SYNTHESIS

PART I

Ages ago, when the natural unity of the spiritual vision and culture of the Vedas and the Upanishads began to give way before the developing complexity and individualistic self-affirmation of the parts of the being of man, each of which sought its own separate spiritual self-satisfaction and characteristic fulfilment to the neglect and exclusion of the others, the Gita propounded a colossal synthesis and paved the way for a harmonious growth of the whole human personality into the fullness and perfection of the Divine. All the important strands of spiritual culture, current at the time or regarded as essential, were woven together into that comprehensive synthesis which aimed at raising man into the light and freedom of the dynamic divine consciousness. Nowhere, at no period of the spiritual history of mankind, has there ever been such a vast and powerful attempt at a synthesis, at a mighty gathering up of the distinct and divergent elements of human nature into a living and fruitful unity. Sankhyayoga, Karmayoga, Jnanayoga, Bhaktiyoga, Hathayoga, Rajayoga, Mantrayoga, all were given a place and a definite function in that manifold synthesis, and an integrated system of spiritual culture, not indeed apparent on the surface, but implicit in the grain of its thought and active in the unfolding rhythm of its movement, was evolved for the purification and sublimation of the human nature and its transference from the floundering ignorance of the ego into the luminous freedom and bliss of the divine Presence. Works, knowledge and love, cured of their trenchant, separative tendencies, were blended and fused into a single movement of self-offering to the Supreme. The impersonality of the Brahman and the divine Personality, the silence of the omnipresent Immutable and the ceaseless flux of the cosmic movement, the beatific state of liberation and the continued performance of all mundane action—these were some of the most outstanding reconciliations effected by the Gita at a crucial stage of the spiritual culture of India. And this synthesis was achieved, not by any religious or philosophical eclecticism, but by an embracing and unifying spiritual vision and it stands unparalleled in its comprehensiveness in the annals of ancient mystical achievements.

Indian spirituality, however, described a downward curve soon after this gigantic synthesis had lost its hold upon the people's mind. The lower parts of the nature of man, released from the central control of the light of intuition and the co-ordinating force of the illumined intelligence, sought again, each in its distinctive way, its individual self-affirmation and self-satisfaction. Even when they turned towards spirituality, they pursued individual fulfilment, and cared little for a total consummation. The Gita's synthesis had registered a magnificent success even in the midst of an apparent failure—it had outlined an ideal, the shining ideal of a harmonious perfection and a divine fulfilment of man, and left it as a seed in the terrestrial atmosphere to germinate and grow and prepare its future efflorescence in the evolving life of humanity, and if it failed at all, it was because man was not evolved enough for such a global spiritual endeavour: his mind, life and body needed a long individual preparation and development, an intense churning and psychic conversion and correlation, before they could consent to enter into the harmony of the integral orientation.

And thus passed* century after eventful century, witnessing signal individual conquests and achievements, triumphs of new trends, enrichment of past gains and an opening up of unforeseen possibilities in the midst of a general spiritual decadence in India. When the Gita's synthesis, which pivoted upon the illumined intelligence, disintegrated, the ethical mind of man rose to attain its absolute in a dual negation of all that was mystically and occultly spiritual on the one hand, and all that was formal and ceremonial on the other. But an ethical extremism usually harbours in itself two disquieting elements—an abstractionism tending to nihilism or agnosticism, and a progressive anti-pragmatism—which break up its original norm and reduce it to a pious, unproductive creed, if not to a tissue of compromises. Of the two elements, abstractionism is a denial of the ultimate Reality in the experience of man, and anti-pragmatism a denial of the truth of material life; and both lead to a deep and rankling discontent in the popular mind, whatever may be their effect upon exceptional individuals. Nihilism or agnosticism cuts away the peaks of the being and anti-pragmatism undermines its base, leaving man suspended in the shimmering haze of an impracticable ethical abstraction.

Therefore the succeeding age saw the death of nihilism and agnosticism in the intense blaze of a resurgent spirituality which drove straight towards the ultimate Reality, making knowledge the sole means of its realisation. But the anti-pragmatic tendency continued as ever. The very fervour of the precipitate drive and the intoxication of the supreme discovery engendered a greater indifference, even an aversion to the world and life. But life and Nature cannot long be ignored or spurned with

impunity. A stream from the inalienable harmony of the supreme Light, life protests against all inequality or unbalance in the steps of the soul's ascent and insists, with sharp pain, if need be, on the harmonious development of all the powers and potentialities of the human being, through whom it seeks its divine fulfilment.

The unilateral drive of the thought-mind culminated in the discovery or recovery of the apex of the ultimate Reality, but its mass, its infinite, living body and face of light remained undiscovered. The seeking of the thought-mind was, therefore, supplemented by the seeking of the awakened heart, and there seemed to be for a time—a very short time indeed—a growing rapprochement between knowledge and love. The intellect of man can remain satisfied with abstractions and even merge itself in the impalpable absolute of its overmastering conception; but the heart and life of man insist on concreteness. They demand that the object of their aspiration and adoration must become a living and tangible reality to them, real to human feeling and sight and sensation. This demand is the justification of their creation and action, and furnishes a clue to the mystery of the divine immanence in the world. And it is a law of Nature that whenever there is an insistent and legitimate demand for a particular experience and realisation in the being of man, there is always found a means to fulfil it. The human mind is content with knowing, but the heart and life of man want to contact and feel in the closeness of an increasing intimacy, and to become, what they love and adore. The total fulfilment of the human being is, therefore, a dynamic union and identification with the Supreme,—a union not only in His transcendence but also in His universal immanence; not only in the abstractions of thought, but in the concreteness of feeling and sensation, will and action. That was why the experience of monism had to be enlarged and enriched by the experience of qualified monism and even of dualism; and what seemed to be—and, in fact, was—a decline, was pregnant with great possibilities of expansion and enrichment for the individual parts of the human being and the ultimate unity and synthesis of them all. Alongside of this development of the mind and heart of man, ran the development of his life—the conquest of its desires and the union of its will with the divine Will, which formed the kernel principle of the Tantric and the Karma yogas. If we take a synoptic view of this progressive spiritual decline in India, we shall see that it was not really a decline, but a divinely-ordained descent of spirituality from part to part of the human being for their exploration, purification and sublimation into the glory of the integral union with the Divine.

The age of the intellectual seeking was followed by the age of the steadily developing yearning of the human heart of love and delight. If the bare altitudes of the omnipresent Reality seemed to suffer a slight eclipse, its massive ranges and shining uplands, its colourful plateaus and smiling table-lands swam into human sight and the thrilled intimacy of human feeling. The distant, inconceivable, relationless Brahman of the Advaitin assumed the majesty and sublimity of the Narayan or the beauty and bliss of the Krishna of the Bhakta.* The response of the heart was more passionate, more transporting, more dynamically purifying and exalting than that of the head, though it was beset with greater dangers from the contiguous sea of the unruly life-forces. Vishishtadwaita, Dwaita, Dwaitadwaita, Shuddadwaita emerged not as conflicting truths of the Supreme, but as complementary envisagings of the various aspects of the One, who is bound neither by His diversity nor by His unity. In the last phase of the cult of love and delight as embodied in Sri Chaitanya, one of the supreme mysteries of the relation between the Divine and the human soul was seized and revealed—the unimaginable, unspeakable mystery of the deepest rapture of union-in-difference between the Divine and the human soul. This rapture is implied but not felt in the Sayujya of the Advaitin, in which the individual consciousness is abolished in the supreme Consciousness, and there is no persistence of the relation of the knower and the object of knowledge to admit of a human enjoyment of the bliss of the perfect union. But this bliss is the highest experience of the embodied soul, the acme of its spiritual freedom and perfection. In Sayujya, there is in fact no union as such, but an extinction of the individual soul (an illusory soul at that according to the Vedantin!) in the undifferentiated absoluteness of the One. It is to the credit of the Yoga of love and delight that it has made the highest union a feasible realisation and its inexpressible ecstasy of joy the highest crest of divine fulfilment.

Another line of Yoga, the mighty Tantra concerned itself with the spiritual purification and preparation of life and its will. It was a very daring adventure which necessitated a descent into the dark regions of

*The immutable Impersonal was swallowed up in the infinite personality of the Supreme Being, the Purusha of the Upanishads, the Purushottama of the Gita.

AN EPOCHAL SYNTHESIS—Continued from previous page

the being and a grappling with the most powerful forces of human nature, desire and lust and passion, in their own field; but it had to be undertaken, if the whole being and nature of man were to be transmuted into the being and nature of the Divine to ensure the integrality and permanence of the dynamic divine union, which is the goal of human life. The task to which Tantra addressed itself was immense and infinitely difficult; and its failure far outweighed its slender success; but it evoked into activity a possibility of perfection which, since the days of the Vedas, had lain latent and overlooked in the human consciousness. This was the great contribution of Tantra. Its ideal was, not the self-annihilating merger in the Brahman, *śayujya*, nor an eternal proximity to the luminous presence of the Beloved, *sāmpīya* and *sālokya*, but a union through the remoulding of human nature into the divine nature, a growing into the likeness of the Divine, *sādrishya*.

The next part to feel the pressure of the descending spirit force was the physical being of man. Two immediate outstanding consequences of this descent were, first, a growing obsession of the national mind with material things and, second, an uprush of the subconscious scum and obscurity. But that is an eventuality which has to be faced in any work of radical purification.

At this juncture of Indian spiritual culture, when the higher light seemed to hide behind the veil and the material life pressed forward with its clamorous demands and irresistible claims, came the impact of the materialistic West, at once disruptive and galvanizing. It disrupted the spiritual values which had been the sustenance of Indian culture and galvanised the material and intellectual life of the people. The fatigue and the flagging of vitality which had marked the close of a long epoch of inner exploration, and the incrustation that had begun in time-worn traditions and dead formalism, seemed to disappear under this powerful and fateful impact. The material life which is the foundation of the Spirit's self-manifestation on the earth and which had been sedulously neglected and repressed in the mental absorption of the followers of Jnanayoga or in the emotional fervours of the Bhaktas, and blighted under the mist of Illusionism (*Mayavada*) and the chill of apotheosised asceticism revived, widened and throbbled with new, creative impulses. A general awakening, a pervasive renaissance was the result of the absorption of the influence of the West, which came to India as the priest and champion of the life-spirit and the interpreter of its evolutionary values.

The last stage had been reached. With the long past of her unparalleled spirituality, rich with signal achievements and varied conquests, not dead but living and vibrant, behind her back, India accepted the quickening message of Western Materialism and the gift of life it brought to her. But she cannot live without God. To follow in the steps of the West would have been to advance towards spiritual suicide. A life of material welfare and intellectual advancement in front of her and a life of light and immortality and spiritual fulfilment behind her, India stood uncertain and wavering for a brief moment, as if poised on the brink of a crucial decision. But her soul repeated once more what it had declared throughout the history of its evolution, "*Yenaham namritasyam kimaham tena kuryam?*"—"What shall I do with that which will not make me immortal?" India accepted the gift of life, but reverted to the fount of Light to link the two together, so that her future may be great again and glorious and immortal with the unprecedented triumph of a dynamic spirituality. At that passing moment of the crucial decision, she seemed to glimpse, as if in a flash, the meaning of her soul's long travail through the eventful centuries of a declining curve and the saviour Hand that was guiding her destiny. She clasped the Hand and decided in favour of the life in Light, the Life Divine.

The first reaction of the soul of India to the impact of the Western Materialism was a reaffirmation of the bare truth of the transcendent Absolute and an uncompromising rejection of almost all that constitutes the richness and diversity of Indian spirituality. It was, as if, at that moment of eager return, the soul of India was trying to clutch at the roots of spirituality, which was its mainstay, and hack at the branches and leaves and flowers that had developed out of those very roots during the long centuries of its evolution. But the ardours of the first return soon shed their narrow intensity and began to assume the large catholicity of the ancient spiritual tradition; for the decision taken by the soul of India at the fateful turning of its life was not for any narrow and one-sided achievement, however high it might be, but for the widest synthesis: for the reconcilia-

tion of Spirit and Matter, Heaven and Earth, Light and Life, and One and Many.

As the most perfect embodiment of that decision of the national soul, an epitome of its past manifold achievements and a harbinger of the great synthesis that was preparing in the womb of the approaching future, came Sri Ramakrishna. Four things in his illustrious life stand out with a remarkable significance. First, his coming to live very near the most modernised, that is to say, westernised metropolis of the country. He built his spiritual citadel in close vicinity to Calcutta from where he could aim infallible shots at the monster of Materialism and bring to birth a robust and opulent spirituality in India. Second, he practised most of the great Yogas of the world (not only of India), and attained the highest realisation possible in each. Third, he conquered and converted the most representative Indian of the times, a brilliant product of Western culture, Vivekananda—Narendranath Dutt as he was then named—and moulded him into his chief instrument for the accomplishment of his mission. Fourth, he heralded the coming synthesis in spirituality and foreshadowed something of its outline in his life and teachings.

In Sri Ramakrishna Indian spirituality came to close grips with the materialistic culture of the West. And what was the result of the combat? Vivekananda and resurgent India. Vivekananda, the "cyclonic Hindu", as he was described in America, the preacher of the gospel of the Vedanta, shook the whole world with his message of the unity of all life and the divinity of all men. Perhaps he did not bring out the full significance of the central truth of his Master's vision: the synthesis of all religions. This synthesis was interpreted as meaning simply that all religions lead to the same goal, but it seems hardly likely that Sri Ramakrishna underwent the superhuman labour of practising the principal Yogas of the world only to arrive at and prove the truth of this age-old truism. There was a great teleological intention behind. Though he practised the Yogas separately, yet he assimilated the highest achievements of them all, which combined and crystallised into a sort of synthesis in the paths of his being. He retained the distilled essence of each in himself till the last day of his life. He was at once a man of knowledge, a man of unfathomable love and devotion, a man of undeviating will and power and, as the world knows only too well, a creator of probably the greatest paradoxical personality—a Jnanayogi-cum-Karmayogi—of modern times. He was an Advaitin, a Vishishtadvaitin, even a Dvaitin, a Christian of Christians and a devout Moslem—all these and many things more rolled into one. His successive practice of the different Yogas was an experiment, a bold breaking of the ground; but the result was an incipient synthesis, unavoidably somewhat vague and uncertain in the then state of spiritual possibilities, but an unmistakable prelude to its coming perfection. A synthesis of Yogas means an integration of all the parts of the human being, including even the physical, which has as much claim to perfection and divine fulfilment as any other, and their global turning to the Divine. Our synoptic survey of the spiritual curve of India since the Upanishadic age has shown us that when the synthesis of the Gita broke up, it was the reason of man that turned towards the supreme Reality and underwent, in consequence, a great purification and heightening; the heart had then its turn, and the life, and, last, the physical consciousness. The downward curve seems to be complete now, and there are indications that the upward has already started. The synthesis that Sri Ramakrishna foresaw, foreshadowed and foretold, a mightier synthesis than even that of the Gita, seems to be the destined means of the integral perfection aspired after by the progressive mind of modern man. A totality in aspiration betokens a totality in realisation. The entire being of man yearning for the Divine shall attain the most perfect union with the entire being of the Divine.

Sri Aurobindo stands for this entire turning, this completest synthesis and integral spiritual fulfilment of man. Having realised it in himself, he calls upon humanity to proceed towards the Divine by the way of this synthesis. His call is the call of God, the call of the earth-soul, the call of the Time-Spirit, the call of the East and the West and the call of the awaking soul of man himself. The world moves to a multi-dimensional synthesis.

In the next part of this article we shall see what exactly this synthesis means and by what process and psycho-spiritual potencies it aims at achieving the glorious result it has set before itself—the harmonious perfection and divine fulfilment of the whole being of man upon earth, or the perfect manifestation of God in man.

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Sri Aurobindo consecrated his whole life to the realisation of a new consciousness in humanity that will make it transcend itself, rise out of falsehood and ignorance and live in light and truth. The University is meant to give a practical and concrete shape to Sri Aurobindo's life-long effort.

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