# MOTHER INDIA

Managing Editor: K. R. PODDAR

FORTNIGHTLY REVIEW

Editor: K. D. SETHNA

"GREAT IS TRUTH AND IT SHALL PREVAIL"

ALTERNATE SATURDAYS | MARCH 24, 1951 | VOL. III. No. 3. ANNAS 4


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# THE MIND AND SPIRIT OF OUR AGE

## DILIP KUMAR ROY'S INTERVIEWS WITH FIVE WORLD-FIGURES

### By "LIBRA"

*Among the Great**—a book of conversations packed with pleasure and instruction, a book that is in the short compass of 367 pages and at a trifling expense a most fascinating guide to the mind and spirit of our age as manifested in five outstanding personalities! And the fact that it is such a guide is due in no small measure to the author's own personality, the mind and spirit of Dilip Kumar Roy; for it is his own eager search for truth and beauty and goodness that has taken him to the very centre of each great man interviewed, and has done this across various paths so that the word of wisdom when it comes out throws light on a multiplicity of interests, trends, movements, aspects of life. Dilip Kumar Roy himself emerges as an extremely interesting type, many-sided, acutely modern and at the same time steeped in rich traditions, deeply Indian but no less widely international for that. While being a revelation of the core of Romain Rolland, Mahatma Gandhi, Bertrand Russell, Rabindranath Tagore and Sri Aurobindo, his book is also a subtle disclosure of his own being—a kind of indirect mental autobiography written with the aid of five world-figures.

I said "five", but though that is the number of great ones conversed with, there are in fact six notable personalities represented. For, the author has added to his already glittering treasury by getting Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan to contribute a nine-paged introduction which gives us a general survey of the field of character and thought covered by the book as well as a glimpse of his own attitude and position. Except for two or three phrases in the third paragraph, with a rather exaggerative and indiscriminative ring as if all the individuals here were equally rishis of the ultimate vision, the introduction is balanced and felicitous. To secure it was no mean part of the inspiration which led Roy beyond the interviews to some extra features, the most precious being a substantial sheaf of letters of Sri Aurobindo's, nearly seventy pages of literary criticism, philosophical discussion, mystical knowledge, socio-political analysis, marked by insight, energy and humour.

**Romain Rolland**

The order in which the interviews are arranged is not without meaning. Born a musician, Roy begins with Romain Rolland the literary artist who made musical experience his special study. And many utterances that go to the heart of music in particular and art in general are here recorded. Several striking judgments are also passed on the methods of Indian and European music. In fact, a few flaws of extremism notwithstanding, a more discerning and far-reaching piece of declaration of faith by a great artist who is also a great humanist and idealist would be hard to find anywhere in literature. This is high praise, yet on the whole deserved. The true Rolland stands here, revealed all the more by Roy's sensitive and accurate descriptions of his look and manner; and there is so much clearness of deep thought in the midst of warmth of deep feeling that these conversations of his and the half a dozen letters supplementing them can be regarded as the best rejoinder to those who try to make him out a mushy and gushy thinker. One does not know what to quote out of the beautiful abundance. I particularly liked the discussion about an artist's duty to society and to himself. Rolland says that an artist cannot be impervious to the misery and injustice around him, he should do his bit towards removing them, but never at the sacrifice of his own *métier*. No job can be done better than what one is fitted for: besides, to help humanity one need not always be social-reformist. "Do you think," asks Rolland, "that the creative endeavours of art can't and don't prove a daily succour in our sorrow? A single symphony of Beethoven is certainly worth half a dozen social reforms... The first and paramount duty of the artist and the intellectual is to be true to his inner call and urge—sleeplessly: he must above all keep the lamp burning in the shrine of inner perceptions—and must create whenever his daemon prompts him. This done, his surplus time and energy he may devote to the betterment of social conditions, as Goethe used to. He served society, but only during lulls in his creative inspiration.... A man's duty is not done if he thinks only of his contemporaries—his neighbours: he has to take count of his duties to the Eternal Man who, emerging out of the lowest animality, has climbed obstinately through centuries towards the light. And what constitutes the ransom for the liberation of this Eternal Man in bondage is his conquest of the Spirit. All the efforts of the savant, the thinker and the artist compete for this heroic campaign (campaign in the sense of battling against odds); whoever among them repudiates this obligation—were it even for the sake of altruism—betrays his ultimate mission."

Lest it should be thought that Rolland gives a *carte blanche* to egoism on the artist's part, we must note that for him the true artist is he who never lies on a bed of roses. Rolland agrees with what Tolstoy wrote in a letter to him: "The vindication of the truly artistic vocation lies in the trials and tribulations cheerfully suffered and nobly accepted." But he does not go the whole way with Tolstoy's theory or art. Here a remark of his is worth citing about a point Mahatma Gandhi, the next subject of interview in the book, attempts to drive home. Gandhi wants art to be always universal in appeal, to reach the masses and never to need any specialisation, a certain high level of culture, for its appreciation. Rolland is certainly against pretentious high-browism, against punditism putting on airs, but he cannot for all his passionate admiration of Gandhi share Gandhi's Tolstoyan view that art's supremacy lies in its being not above the heads of peasants. Such a criterion is too rigid, for the artist cannot always keep himself tied to the receptivity of peasants—and his being above common heads does not annul his inward touch with humanity and his contribution to progress. "Humanity," says Rolland, "is always on the march. The intellectual élite are its vanguard, its pioneers, paving the way along which the entire humanity shall pass eventually. It would therefore be wrong to represent the élite as separated from the rank and file because the latter lags behind. And he would be an indifferent leader of the people who would constrain its vanguard to march with the bulk of the army."

**Mahatma Gandhi**

The interviews with Gandhi (the last in an ominous atmosphere on the eve of the shots that rang round the world) are no whit inferior as a document of personality, though their mental value is not as high. They appropriately follow on the heels of that with Rolland because next to being a natural artist Roy was a lover of India when he set out on his life's odyssey. In the minds of many people during the twenties and thirties Gandhi was a symbol of India, and our author's sympathy with him came all the easier for the latter's keen enjoyment of music. The Mahatma is shown as holding that India's music is of her very essence, and it is frequently that he asks Roy to sing to him. About painting, however, he is quite cold—and on all art that strikes him as not the heart's immediate outflow but as going in frequently for complex values he is rather severe. But what constitutes the worth of his presence in the book is not his attitude towards art: the man of action, the man of ethical askesis—that is the real Gandhi. While speaking even of music he brings us face to face with this basic substance of himself. "How well I remember," he says in one place, "the joy and comfort that music used to give me when I was ailing in a South African hospital. I was then recovering from the hurts I had received at the hands of some roughs who had been engaged to cripple me—thanks to the success of my 'Passive Resistance Campaign.' At my request the daughter of a friend of mine used, very often, to sing to me the famous hymn, *Lead Kindly Light!* And how it acted like a healing balm invariably." The heroic "experiment with truth" stands out here, while the mention of *Lead Kindly Light!* confirms the trait which his predilection for devotional songs from among the wealth of **Indian** music

* Revised and enlarged Popular American Edition—Jaico Publishing House, (New York, Bombay, Calcutta)—Price: Rs. 1-12.

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puts forward in the interviews time and again: his religious fervour.

But though his religious fervour is considerable and his life shorn of evil hungers by a strong-willed self-discipline, he is as little the mystic as the philosopher. Just as the philosophical intellect's impartial multi-mooded questing is absent in him, the direct illumination of the ecstatic or the contemplative—leading to Mahatmahood in the original sense of union with the Infinite Being—is also not his. But that scarcely implies that he was not in his own sphere a salutary force in India. He was salutary both because he was straight and strong and because he had a childlike simplicity combined with a twinkling puckish humour. Not to know Gandhi's laughter is not to know him at all. Roy supplies us in four and a half pages with a portrayal of Gandhi's laughter as well as of his agility in political discussion—"the frail athlete", he is called in a priceless phrase—and of his high moral seriousness, a portrayal that is the work of a remarkable artist in character-nuances. A widely human figure steps out of these pages—and that wide humanity tends to make even his prejudice against what Rolland terms the world's vanguard a moving limitation. There will, perhaps, be some to doubt if there is actually a limitation here and for them there will be a convincing sentence pronounced on a part of Rollandian, Tagorean and Aurobindonian aims when Gandhi dogmatically declares: "I maintain that the profoundest utterances of man in every great philosophy or religion as in every great art must appeal equally to all. I cannot for the life of me see much in any specialisation which must mean nothing to the vast multitude. Its only tangible effect seems to be that it gives a swelled head to a few and sows aversion and contempt where there should be sympathy and understanding."

**Bertrand Russell**

I cannot help feeling that to apply this stricture to even a part of Rollandian, Tagorean and Aurobindonian aims is really not to understand their depths—and to take apparent and outward humanitarianism as the only one, the sole true one. A non-understanding no less of a part of these aims and, into the bargain, that of Gandhism itself is Bertrand Russell's "limpid crystalline thought." He is the pure scientific intellect—not standing quite beyond the voice of feeling and whatever is connected with religion but remaining uncoloured by them in its judgments and guiding our nature by its unswerving impersonal regard for demonstrable fact. He is the emblem, in Roy's own life, of the doubting critical outward-shining mentality the latter developed during his tour in Europe. A mentality not to be brushed aside, for there is a lot of stale and cankering superstition, a lot of stifling emotional hot air, which the Russellian open-eyedness can dissipate with profit. For Russell is not merely a destroyer; he has several good things to offer—a sane and frank attitude towards sex, for instance. He is particularly acid about the Roman Catholic Church's ban on birth-control and divorce. He regrets also Gandhi's sympathy with such a ban just as he regrets the belief Gandhi shares, with many great men, in the soul and God. He offers us science as a mighty improver of the human mind by rendering it impervious to religious "irrationalism" and by improving the racial stock through sterilisation of the mentally unfit as well as through judicious birth-control. It is to be supposed that the racial stock might be improved by the means Russell advocates, but his stern censure of religious experience is rather indiscriminate. He can see nothing sound in mysticism: when Roy speaks of mystics preaching lofty principles from their illuminations and ecstasies, he retorts: "I believe in ecstasies as data of definite experience, but when they imply vision of the highest reality I cannot accept them; for, the lofty principles you speak of are by no means the results of these mystic illuminations. As a matter of fact such ecstasies render the mystics distinctly self-centred and selfish. Through such transports they become more and more subjective and get more and more loth to lead a healthy life of varied activities and lose interest in things for themselves. Consequently, their joys tend to become more and more similar to the joys of the voluptuary or the drunkard." To redress the apparent lopsidedness a statement of this kind argues in Russell, Roy opines that it is just a conversational emphasis and that Russell does not really leave the boons of mysticism out of the picture. I am afraid they are left out; for to admit, as Russell does, that equal in value to the scientific pursuit of knowledge are the creation and enjoyment of beauty, the joy of life and human affection, is merely to give a place to the non-intellectual sides of us, not to afford a *locus standi* to religion and mysticism. No true concession is made even by the fine declaration: "The organised life of the community is necessary, but it is necessary as a mechanism, not something to be valued on its own account. What is of most value in human life is more analogous to what all the great religious teachers have spoken of." For, what Russell has in mind, as his book *Religion and Science* proves, are the equanimity and compassion, the radiance and healing atmosphere which the master-mystics speak of but which, according to him, are attainable without mysticism and should be so attained rather than in conjunction with an erroneous belief and an aberrant psychology. To those who have even an inkling of true mystical experience of any type it would be absurd to imply that Buddha's supreme equanimity and compassion are possible without his ego-annulling and desire-destroying Nirvana or Ramakrishna's intensely radiant nature and healing atmosphere can be acquired without his rapturous realisation of the omnipresent Divine Mother. Qualities of the soul reach their acmes only through the soul's awakening to its cosmic and transcendent source. But Russell's failure to assess rightly the validity and worth of spiritual experience must not blind us to the noble, acute, healthy sagacity he is shown by Roy to be commanding in many respects on the outer tangible plane.

Before I pass to the author's fruitful contact with Tagore I must pause a moment to quote from Radhakrishnan's introduction a remark apropos Russell. While appreciating the latter's unmuddled courage and humanitarian concern, Radhakrishnan applies a fine intuitive touchstone to the theory of naturalistic evolution which denies the supra-physical soul, the spark of the Divine Spirit: "Russell does not seem to realise that the human individual who can sit in judgment on the universe, who has the intelligence to know that his life is but a brief episode in the history of this planet, who has developed a conscience which protests against the waste and want of the world is not a mere phenomenon among phenomena, an object among objects." I dare say a sceptical and analytic intellect like Russell could give a *riposte* to this subtle thrust—but the *riposte* would be, in any way, effective on the abstract plane, not on the plane of the whole being with its many dimensions, its in-dwelling magnitudes and overbrooding mysteries. A semi-poetic logic is here, far more satisfying and convincing than any pronouncement of that merely intellectual argumentation to which there can be no end.

**Rabindranath Tagore**

This is not to undervalue the intellect—it is to attune it to the integral personality, ponderable and imponderable. The intellect must have a definite play: else we sink mostly into rank vitalism and uncurbed emotionalism and invite the fanatic and the obscurantist more than the seer. Its importance is implicit in the conversations with Tagore and Sri Aurobindo. The one is a skilful thinker at the same time that he is an intuitive poet and the other a profound philosopher plus an illumined Yogi and an inspired bard. Towards Tagore, Roy is drawn by the seeker in him of the Ideal through love and beauty. That seeker is affined to the artistic aspirant who went to Rolland—but with one difference. What drew him to the great Frenchman was something that was in a struggle and trying to break forth and expand, the great Frenchman was himself a fighter, he crusaded for a rare vision that made him lonely, his triumphs and exultations were plucked all the while from a wrestling with dark forces. The wrestling sharpened both his artistic insight and his heart's desire but prevented his full growth. Tagore has a calmer and brighter atmosphere, a less wounded exquisiteness of being, a certain happy poise, some actualised neighbouring of the Ideal—but it is a sort of natural neighbouring and is thus not quite aware of the rigours as distinguished from the graces of art, while it is bathed more than Rolland's edged heroism in sweetness and light. Tagore was a finer artist and his inner self too had a finer fulfilment—though Rolland strikes us as having had possibilities of an inner realisation beyond Tagore's, possibilities which yet fell short of their promise and left him less harmonised. Tagore's talk has not, except in a passage at the end, the burning piercing note—it has a certain degree of assured radiance. Just a faint *soupcon* of self-complacence too is there in a couple of minor places, as if the consummate artist in him as well as the intuitive depth finding voice in his art were not always worthily accompanied by the rest of the consciousness. On the whole, however, the talks are indeed attractive—with a half-humorous personal streak running in and out of serious and beautiful reflection. The poet does not dwell exclusively on his semi-mystical pursuit of the Ideal through love and beauty; he introduces a very human element by remembering his own early shy encounters with romance and by discussing love and beauty in the life of man and woman. He points out the difference between the needs in man's nature and those in woman's. He is no anti-feminist, wanting woman to remain shackled and inferior nor is he in favour of old cramping customs; Russell has a good word for Tagore's progressiveness and, as shown by the excerpt from a letter to Dilip Kumar Roy in the Foreword which adorned the original Indian edition of the book but which has unaccountably been dropped from this American one, Havelock Ellis who has done champion service in breaking ancient taboos agrees with Tagore's conception of man's and woman's offices. Not man's competitor but his complement: this is Tagore's formula for woman. "Woman's function", he says with a poet's flair for simile, "works passively, subterraneaously, like the roots of a tree, while man's fulfilment consists in spreading himself out like branches, through growth, adventure and activity. But in order that his activity may find fruition in lasting contributions to our civilisation, his roots must be strongly embedded in firm soil, otherwise his growth becomes top-heavy." A still more suggestive remark soon follows: "Just as in the physical plane the germ of man works in the background while woman carries it within her and nurses it into life, so in the mental plane the inspiration of woman must first implant its seed in man's subconscious in order that his creative impulses may bear fruit... It is not for nothing that man turns with relief to her in the monotonous round of his activities and is drawn to her as iron to magnet. Her grace and charm and sweetness are necessary to our very existence." Elucidating the dissimilarity of the two sexes, Tagore declares that the personal and the social are more vividly real to the feminine nature, the masculine is inclined more towards impersonality and is in its dealing with the world more utilitarian than humanly intimate and understanding. Another difference, according to Tagore, manifests itself in the deeper spiritual field: man quests for freedom, a rising above earth and embodiment, a flight to the Absolute, whereas woman does not feel earth to be a bondage and she cannot give up the

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beautiful significance of form for the bare and the formless.

Much of all this is, in the main, true, so far as the ordinary disposition of life is concerned. But there is something also to be said for the modern tendency, often crude and superficial though it may be, to equalise the sexes; for, behind it is a pressure towards climbing beyond the outward differentiations, the fundamental human nature being the same and escaping the sex-limits and holding every sort of potentiality and commanding the power of a varied function. In essence this pressure is a highly evolutionary factor. We tend overmuch to see man and woman in relation to each other and in the way their natures manifest commonly on the mental, vital, physical levels. What we often forget is that the two are expressions ultimately of a soul, a spiritual self, and that their destiny is not so much in relation to each other as in relation to the single Godhead they have to evolve side by side and co-operatively on earth. Transcendent of the sex-differentiations and of the physical-vital-mental formula is the more-than-human nature they bring as their basis: considered in the light of that nature, their finest development would appear to lie in a large equality of status and function, with yet a subtle variety of tone and mould and gesture and interaction in that nature's outflowering.

Even as things are in the present stage of our evolution, Tagore seems to slip from the right track when, touching upon the deeper spiritual field to which we have access, he says that the wife of Buddha could not have renounced him for the Infinite as Buddha renounced her. The formless Nirvana may not generally be suited to a woman's aspiration and in that sense she cannot leave her mate and seek the Infinite; yet without violating her *swabhava* she can surely pass beyond her human attchments and pursue the Eternal as a personal Being who, while infinitely exceeding earth, does not in the least disdain it. In the realm of spirituality there is not only Buddha as a type: there is also Mirabai. And the two types are not strictly distributed between the sexes. Tagore himself of the *Gitanjali*-lyrics has the bhakta's disposition. As ardent a bhakta as the woman Mirabai was the man Chaitanya, and Buddhism had nuns as well as monks. Incline as it frequently may in one or the other direction exclusively, the psyche in either sex is two-moded.

**Sri Aurobindo**

This fact gives us a clue to what may be termed the complete spiritual aim for us—inner liberation from earth and from embodiment together with transformation and fulfilment of both, *mukti* in the impersonal Infinite together with ascension to the personal God and incarnation of His powers and purposes in our total nature. That would imply a consummating of all that is truly valuable and creative in Rolland, Gandhi, Tagore and also Russell where his attack on mystical isolation and other-wordliness is concerned, no less than the bringing of a value and creativity beyond any of their achievements or their dreams. And it is just because of discerning such a synthesis of the essential best in them and at the same time an integrality and harmony vastly superior to what they offer that Dilip Kumar Roy reaches his goal at the feet of Sri Aurobindo the Yogi of the dynamic divinisation of the human, the Yogi who is also a poet, a philosopher, a social thinker, a man of idealistic action. Naturally the interviews with which the book closes become its climax, providing the cream of its significance. Here the profoundest feelings and desires of the author are laid before us, his life's various movements and the curves of his character find their intimate record. He opens his heart and mind to Sri Aurobindo and in return Sri Aurobindo pours the rich stream of his illumination, buoying him up, turning him towards the secrets of the Supreme, sweeping around him and into him the myriad currents of his wisdom born of God-realisation. There is conveyed to us, thanks to the inspired "reportage", both the Master's moving humanness and something of his yogic personality's perfume and aura. Sri Aurobindo's "Everlasting Yea" to the challenge of earth-evolution dispels the misapprehension with which the author approached Yoga. "I was scared," writes Roy, "by what I thought Yoga had in store for its devotees: a life of awful asceticism, desiccating discipline and withering solitude, all of which meant for me an utter stultification of life." Meeting Sri Aurobindo he was convinced that far from stultifying life and, with it, art, the Integral Yoga taught at Pondicherry would heighten and fulfil everything.

It must have been novel indeed to find a Yogi who could write in a book of his that the rationalistic Materialism which characterised nineteenth-century Europe had an indispensable utility both in counteracting the spiritual habit of recoiling from the earth and in training the human intellect to a clear austerity without which in the past a real nucleus of spiritual truth had been encrusted with such an accretion of perverting superstitions and dogmas that all advance in true knowledge was rendered impossible. He is as little perturbed by the materialistic mind as he is taken in by it. When Roy puts a certain idea in a rather sceptical manner and adds, "it may be that I have been somewhat Westernised," the Master smiles and, remembering his fourteen years of education in England from the age of seven, remarks: "You may have heard that I too happen to know a thing or two about the West and Westernisation." And he proceeds to flay as forthrightly the defects of the materialists as he has praised their merits: "I know their mentality well with its throw-away-the baby-too-with-the-bathwater attitude. Since mountebanks use trickery to exploit the supra-physical phenomena, therefore—they will argue—all such phenomena are frauds and stagecraft." Having himself been—as he admits—an agnostic at one time, it is extremely interesting to read what he writes in a letter to our author about the demand for the Divine as a concrete certitude, quite as concrete as any physical phenomenon caught by the senses: "Certainly, the Divine must be such a certitude not only as concrete but more concrete than anything sensed by eye or ear or touch in the world of Matter; but it is a certitude not of mental thought but of essential experience. When the Peace of God descends on you, when the Divine Presence is there within you, when the *Ananda* rushes on you like a sea, when you are driven like a leaf before the wind by the breath of the Divine Force, when Love flows out from you on all creation, when Divine Knowledge floods you with a light which illumines and transforms in a moment all that was dark, sorrowful and obscure, when all that is becomes part of the One Reality, when it is all around you felt at once by the spiritual contact, by the inner vision, by the illumined seeing thought, by the vital sensation and even by the very physical sense, when everywhere you see, hear, touch only the Divine, then you can much less doubt it or deny it than you can deny or doubt daylight or air or the sun in heaven—for of all these physical things you cannot be sure that they are what your senses represent them to be; but in the concrete experience of the Divine, doubt is impossible."

It is, of course, by Yoga that this experience arrives at its full intensity: Sri Aurobindo sets no great store by mere religiosity and dogmatic belief, though he never discounts faith as a staff until the realisation comes in our very underlying substance and essence. Even while showing the necessity of faith he does not discourage the sincerely questioning mind, nor does he wish to be dictatorial in any way. The main thing is not to bend the mind by force but to render it possible for the true soul, the inmost psychic being, to emerge and bring its spontaneous contact with the Divine as a constant factor in the evolution of the Divine in the earth-formula. The full evolution would mean the descent of what Sri Aurobindo terms the Supermind, the Truth-consciousness from which all perfection, not excluding the physical body's, can result for us but which no one in the past has securely possessed or brought into manifestation and for whose rapid descent for mankind Sri Aurobindo went into so-called "retirement", leaving his co-worker the Mother in direct day-to-day charge of the Yogic development of his disciples. In this connection some of Roy's questions and Sri Aurobindo's answers are of the utmost value at present when the world seems so gloomed over with terrible possibilities and the *Asura* or Titan is on the march and Sri Aurobindo has withdrawn from his physical body. Apropos a couple of letters in which the Master had written that he was not in the least discouraged by the steady trend from bad to worse in the world-situation since it was temporary and he know and had experienced hundreds of times that behind the blackest darkness there lay for one who was a divine instrument the light of God's victory, Roy shoots out the query: "Have you any direct evidence in favour of such a prognosis?" In the author's own words:

"A smile edged his lips. He held my eyes for a few seconds without replying, then said: 'I have'.

" 'Do I understand that your Supramental means business after all—I mean by coming down at long last for us humans?'

"His smile now broadened into laughter ... 'Do I understand,' I pursued again after the laughter had subsided, 'that the conquest of the Asuric forces will usher in the Supramental Descent?'

" 'Not in itself,' he said with a far-away look, 'but it will create conditions for the Descent to become a possibility.'

"There was something in his tone and look which stirred a chord deep down in me. I hesitated for a little and then hazarded the question, just to have the answer from his lips, was it? I do not know. All I know is that something irresistible impelled me to it.

" 'Is your real work this invocation of the Supramental?'

" 'Yes,' he replied, very simply, 'I have come for that.'

"And I was laughing with him, arguing with him, examining his point of view ... because he had given me the right by calling me 'a friend and a son', in his infinite compassion! The remorse of Arjuna in the Gita recurred to me, inevitably:

*Oft I addressed thee as a human mate*
*And laughed with thee—failing to apprehend*
*Thine infinite greatness, sharing with thee my seat*
*Or couch—by right of love for thee as friend:*
*For all such errors of irreverence*
*Thy forgiveness I implore in penitence."*

What are we to think? An Avatar's presence invades us—and with a wonderful promise. If Sri Aurobindo's mission from on high is to call down the Supermind and establish a radical and revolutionary spiritual change on earth, not only will the prevailing chaos and corruption terminate in the near future but also the termination will be aided by the very event which seems to a superficial view so heart-shattering—his departure from the material scene. That departure cannot have been by any compulsion: it must have been of free choice, a strategic sacrifice of his own body to help in some occult way his work of integral earth-transformation!

Dilip Kumar Roy could not have come to a close with a subtler touch. A uniquely large and far seeing, just and careful and profound consciousness which is an undefeatable "secret splendour" behind its human face is the Sri Aurobindo that emerges from Roy's delineation. Remark after acute and satisfying remark—with an indefinable authority of

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# The ESSENCE of the PROBLEM of COMMUNISM

By A. L. CRAMPTON CHALK

The sheer originality of Communism as an effective force in the world is still not understood by its opponents. Until one realises that here is a sort of new revelation to mankind, a sharp and sheer cleavage from the unfolding course of the human spirit as it has progressed to date, the problem that faces the civilised world will simply not be understood; or, much worse, it will be misunderstood.

It is idle to attempt to comprehend Communism by what anyone has written about it—Marx, Lenin or anyone else. Its origins are far too deep in the human spirit for intellectualising or academics to apply. Brains equipped with words will prove anything, therefore they can prove nothing. In dialectics aggression becomes defence, hate is love, and war is peace, under suitable technical treatment.

The techniques of Communism go vastly beyond anything yet found to be acceptable to any significant portion of civilised humanity, or as practical in human life. Like the first wild-fire spread of a great new religion Communism is sweeping its way round the globe, and those who don't like it must understand its mystique—as well as its technique—unless they are to be destroyed by it. It can do things hitherto considered impossible for any system of thought or politics. It makes corrupt men incorruptible, honest men dishonest, sane men mad, and weak men strong. It is a madness, an abnormal experience, a dreadful hallucination, a nectar worth a life's sacrifice, or a vile and soul-corrupting drug—all according to how one reacts to it from the core of one's being.

The fulcrum of its power is the dogma that the end justifies the means. First comes the pseudo-mystical conversion to the revelation of Matter Triumphant, then follows the passion for the conversion of others and ultimately of the whole world. When the first stage has been reached the second is inevitable—statesmen please note, for once lit nothing will quench this passion for conquest; only power in direct opposition will check it until it dies out or spends itself, as passions will.

For the non-Communist all this is strange, new, revolting, and contrary to human instincts. He cannot believe it; he only finds himself able to treat Communism as if it were an extension or a department of something already known and understood. He tries to deal with it by the rules of reason, and according to his own data of human compassion and rightness. He is incapable of seeing that here is something that stands completely apart from the old values he has built into his own heart, and mind, and conscience. To confront it with arguments based upon codes of Christian, Hindu, Mohammedan, Buddhist ethics—all much the same—is to wave an olive-branch in the face of a tiger.

There are two fundamentals to practical Communism, which is the only sort that matters for the academics are only for children, professional pundits, and playboys of the mind. The first is the conversion of the individual either by self-experience or by force, the second is the destruction of all opposing thought and life wherever it is to be found. There is enormous simplicity in Communism and it is based on its complete exclusion of compromise. In turn, it is the vast simplicity of it that gives it its power over certain types of mind, as well as over impoverished bodies and souls.

Communism, then, is in its own way a revelation and passion as was, for example, Christianity when it swept round the civilised world in the great ages of its efflorescence. The illustration is particularly interesting because of the contrasts offered by the two systems; Christianity is devoted to things of the individual Soul, which it places superior to and potentially triumphant over the Body; and Communism is devoted to things of the communal Body, which it makes triumphant over the individual, while it both denies and abhors the very idea of Soul. These are the essential objectives towards which each system is oriented, though intermediate stages may necessitate the purely temporary use of compromising expedients for both systems. To say that one is the very antithesis of the other is scientifically correct; they are mutually exclusive and are directed to opposite poles of endeavour. They must inevitably and forever be in opposition.

When this is grasped there will arise the possibility of understanding how to deal with Communism. When it is deeply realised that rationality and ethical rightness have simply no impact on Communism then one will adopt the only course that remains and take up the weapons of might and main. This does not necessarily mean that war must ensue; indeed, war is only certain to come about if the arming is weak or inconclusive. If Communism confronts a world armed to the teeth and willing to fight it to destruction and death, there will positively be no war. If the gods of policy in Russia know—for absolute certainty—that should they launch an attack the Atlantic Powers will throw into the conflagration all they have in order to suppress and destroy the enemy of their spiritual culture, there will be no attack. But there is no cheap way out; no bluff will win the jack-pot of world-peace. Weakness means war; strength means peace. Sacrifice to the point of being willing to lay down everything including life itself, for the preservation of the inner peace of the souls of men and nations, is required of democracy.

This is neither an unduly harsh nor a particularly pessimistic picture. Communism is a passion, without reason as passions are, but drawing its life from sources outside the mind. The way to quell a passion is to let it wear itself out; if the principles of the great religions of the world are right—and they all point in the same direction—Communism will inevitably burn itself out provided it can now be contained and localised. Democracy must bank upon the final emergence to supreme power of the human soul, even behind the Iron Curtain; if men do have souls and if they contain each a spark from God they will finally assert themselves against the blind usurper of power—the Body and the State. But the area of fire must be contained and this can only be done by erecting barriers against it. Hence the quick and vital necessity for the civilised nations of the world to arm, for already the glaring eyes of the dark gods are probing the possibilities of attack.

One fatal error is to think of or treat Communists as if they were merely bad, degraded, or mistaken Democrats—in lieu of a better word for non-Communists. They are, for all practical purposes, a different sort of human being and have their own scales of values, and their own particular hierarchies of virtues. These are often the precise opposites of the values or virtues which go by the same names in the democratic calendar, but they are vital and real for Communists. It may even be said that they are "true" for Communists, though true and untrue are reversible terms in the two systems. There are, of course, corrupt Communists as by their own codes—there are bribe-takers and slothful officials—but these are minor delinquencies in their evaluation, compared with other crimes which exist for them with strange names indicating lack of subservience—voluntary or involuntary—of minds, bodies, and souls to the State. There are more capital crimes in the codes of Communism than in the laws of the democracies, and their disciplines and punishments are much more severe. But the supreme blasphemy and uttermost darkness of crime in the Communist conception is the rejection by the individual of the supremacy of the State in any field of mind or matter. This calls for worse than death, and the punishments meted out for it are as terrible as they can be made by human ingenuity.

The future for the triumph of the human soul on this planet is dark without, but bright within. In the glorious Sanskrit epic of the Bhagavad-Gita the Hindu deity, Krishna, bids the despairing human soul, Arjuna, to seize his weapons and fight his enemies. These are the very same enemies that we confront to-day, the armies of blind materialism which are seeking to destroy the Light-seeking Arjuna and his nation. In stimulating him to battle Krishna says that Arjuna's enemies are as already dead, for he, Krishna, the immortal guide, friend, and lover of humanity, has ordained their destruction in the interests of the survival of the divine human spirit. There is only one outcome of the fight of the human soul against the armies of dark materialism, it must and will triumph—if it will only fight. Krishna's exhortation is summed up in his own words—freely rendered:

"With Me as your shield,
And with your trust fixed in God,
Arise and resolve to fight!
Think not of the future,
Abandon selfish egoism,
And be free from anxiety!"

So Arjuna fought, and with his armies he utterly vanquished his foes in that crucial battle of Kurukshetra described before the dawn of our history. In this same ever-recurring battle we can conquer to-day—luckily even without fighting—if we are willing to throw all we have into arming our resolution to fight.

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# The Mind and Spirit of Our Age

—Continued from page 3

ultimate truth—cries out for quotation; but there is no space here to do full justice to the interviews and to the letters packed between them. One gets absolutely fascinated by a man who is so much at home in a hundred matters—bringing to each a penetrating word. Among the letters, those treating of poetic values, Frank Harris and Shaw, Anatole France, European philosophy, art and spirituality, the inner meaning of the war with Hitler are perhaps the finest. If not anything else, *Among the Great* is worth buying for these discourses.

Roy is nothing but generous in his gifts to the reading public. Besides these epistolary masterpieces and the precious documents from Rolland elsewhere, he has included in the book beautiful English renderings of the many Bengali or Hindi songs he had sung to his friends. And the Aurobindonian letters he has interspesed with certain pages of correspondence by an English friend of his, Ronald Nixon, erstwhile professor of philosophy at Lucknow, at present practising Yoga in Almora under the name of Krishna Prem. Those pages are apt not only because Sri Aurobindo comments on Krishna Prem's ideas but also because it was through the pointing finger of this Indianised Westerner that Dilip Kumar Roy the Westernised Indian first turned his eyes towards Sri Aurobindo who is the perfect synthesis of East and West. And they are excellent writing, too! It is impossible to thank enough our wanderer among great men for the opulence he has collected for us. But let us not forget that he is no mere collector: himself a creative artist with a sensitive style, the greatnesses in whose midst he has moved are—with the exception of Sri Aurobindo who gets clean out of the cadre of merely human greatness—far from quite overshadowing his own presence and stature.

(First published in a somewhat different version in "The All-India Weekly").

# SRI AUROBINDO, THE LEADER OF THE EVOLUTION

## PART II OF "THE WORLD CRISIS AND INDIA"

By *"Synergist"*

## SECTION III : THE NEW WORLD-VIEW

### (a) THE SPIRITUAL METAPHYSIC

### (ii) KNOWLEDGE OF THE DIVINE REALITY

### REASON AND INTUITION

The last gnostic level to be discussed was that of the Intuitive Mind. Before proceeding further to the next in the hierarchy, the Overmind, it will be necessary to dwell a little longer on this level. In the realm of philosophy there seems to be some confusion regarding the exact meaning of the term intuition and its relation to reason; all kinds of infranormal, paranormal and supranormal intimations and communications are arbitrarily clssified as intuitions without the least effort to find out the level of consciousness from which they have come into the surface-mind. Often intuition is called "irrational", as if the non-rational must necessarily be irrational. The irrational is that which contradicts or offends the reason, but many an intuition has been known to illumine and complete reason—often it has been known to come at the commencement of a rational process and supply a suitable working hypothesis, or at its culmination and furnish the correct conclusion. The rational consciousness is not the highest type of consciousness man is capable of possessing; it is only a particular mode of consciousness on a certain level of organised existence, the mental-vital-physical existence. But this does not imply that intuition should never contradict reason, for a truth received directly into the mind from even a suprarational source—a truth which does not depend for its reality on sense-perception, nor a truth arrived at by the ratiocinative faculty—may seem to contradict the reason on this level, but on a higher level this same truth will find its justification when seen in a larger vision that can apprehend the universal totality and the intrinsic relation between individual existents and their right meaning and significance in the cosmic whole. Therefore it is not philosophically accurate to designate every intuition as irrational. A knowledge of levels of Being other than the normal reveals that intuitions can come from all sources—from infranormal, paranormal as well as supranormal levels.* An intuition cannot properly be called irrational if it comes from the subliminal mental, a region of consciousness which opens out on the plane of the Pure Mind and that of the Ideal Mind, nor if it comes from the superconscient realms over the mind which find their luminous summit in the Supermind. The truth-value, and consequently the knowledge-value of a particular intuition will depend upon the height of the plane from which it comes.

If reason realises its own limitations and opens itself to the influx of a light greater than itself—a light which is basically and intrinsically not alien to itself but is its Ultimate—it can find its fulfilment; it can then become an obedient instrument of this greater light and act as an intermediary between it and the life of man. Mind is a delegate of the Supermind, its subordinate power, and is therefore not extraneous to it; as we have already seen, there is a gnostic gradation from Mind to Supermind.

Consequently, when writing about the relation between reason and intuition, Sri Aurobindo makes statements according to the nature of the intuition under discussion. He advocates a strict intellectual vigilance when the intuition is infrarational, but a quiet receptivity in the being when it descends from the higher ranges. He writes: "... there are seeming intuitions on all levels of the being which are communications rather than intuitions, and these have a very various provenance, value and character. The infrarationl 'mystic', so styled,—for to be a true mystic it is not sufficient to reject reason and rely on sources of thought or action of which one has no understanding,—is often inspired by such communications on the vital level from a dark and dangerous source. In these communications we are driven to rely mainly on the reason and are disposed even to control the suggestions of the intuition—or the pseudo-intuition, which is the more frequent phenomenon,—by the observing and discriminating intelligence; for we feel in our intellectual part that we cannot otherwise be sure what is the true thing and what the mixed or adulterated article or false substitute." But he immediately adds: "... this largely discounts for us the utility of the intuition: for the reason is not in this field a reliable arbiter, since its methods are different, tentative, uncertain, an intellectual seeking . . . An intuition passed in judicial review by the reason ceases to be an intuition and can only have the authority of the reason for which there is no inner source of direct certitude."

But it must be stressed that as long as the mind receives only occasional flashes, which it calls intuitions, from a suprarational source, a difficulty will remain in the organisation of knowledge. The solution lies in a conscious liaison of the mind with the superconscient plane to which Intuition is a native power. On that level the truth which is caught by the mind on a lower level as intuition is entirely pure and unmixed; it is only when it is translated by the mind that it most often gets modified or even distorted. Consequently, the reason cannot be made the arbiter on an intuition, but a higher intuition should be made to correct or complete the first inferior intuition. This can be done either by ascending to a higher plane, or by making the mind receptive to the descent of light from that plane. Here, the reason must play only a passive role; it should be content to observe and record the intimations, judgments and discernments of the light contacted. Only when the mind passes through a modification by the action of the higher power and is changed into what Sri Aurobindo calls "the mind of light" does it act in knowledge; till then, even though it receives intuitions, it still has its station in the world of Ignorance; the mind of light gets poised in the Knowledge.

It is necessary to state here again that the reader must not be led to suppose that once stray intuitions start coming into the mind he will have to surrender his intellect and depend solely on these occasional flashes of light for acquiring knowledge. These flashes are only a beginning of the descent of the higher power of illumination, and as long as they are spasmodic, the intellect will be undoubtedly needed for the organisation of knowledge. But these flashes will gradually become a continuous stream of light till finally the ability to know directly the inner truth of things as well as their cosmic significance and relation becomes natural to it. This is the new modification the mental consciousness has to pass through—the transformation of the rational mind into the enlightened mind, or rather, "the mind of light". There is nothing dubious in all this, as the average mind may be led to think—a mind which does not have a true conception of what an intuition really is, and the difference between one intuition and another. The psychological process described here is a fact of experience whose validity can be ascertained by following a mental-spiritual discipline. Whaever difficulty there is in understanding the action of intuition on reason disappears as soon as one recognises that there are various degrees of mentation, and that those higher than the rational will naturally reveal knowledge which is more apodeictic, luminous and comprehensive than that gained through the instrumentation of the reason.

Once this transformation takes place the mind acquires a direct intuitive power. Sri Aurobindo writes: "Intuition has a fourfold power. A power of revelatory truth-seeing, a power of inspiration or truth-hearing, a power of truth-touch or immediate seizing of significance, which is akin to the ordinary nature of its intervention in our mental intelligence, a power of true and automatic discrimination of the orderly and exact relation of truth to truth,—these are the fourfold potencies of Intuition. *Intuition can therefore perform all the action of reason—including the function of logical intelligence, which is to work out the right relation of things and the right relation of idea with idea,—but by its own superior process and with steps that do not fail or falter."**

This should clear the difficulty raised by Professor Langley in his book, *Sri Aurobindo: Indian Poet, Philosopher and Mystic.* He remarks: "In many eloquent passages such as these Sri Aurobindo pours out the richness of his inner personal yet great and universal experience. In them he is describing a level of spiritual insight which I have not attained. But it appears to me that at times, when showing how such insight is 'superior to any mental cognition', he suggests that, when man has attained this experience, it is possible for him to dispense with purely intellectual procedure in his search for truth... In one passage he writes: 'Intuition can perform all the action of reason—including the function of logical intelligence, which is to work out the right relation of things and the right relation of idea with idea—but by its own superior process and with steps that do not fail or falter.' At other times, however, Aurobindo's view seems to be that for man the employment of ordinary cognitive procedure must remain necessary to enable him to master the problems of his material existence, but that he requires knowledge of a different order for his self-realisation and guidance; and that such knowledge as purely intellectual and scientific enquiry provides is the product of a subordinate mental activity, which should be used under the guidance and control of insight provided by the higher experience. At times Aurobindo goes further and insists on the need for submitting spiritual intuition to critical examination by impartial human reason, so as to eliminate the possibility of illusory interpretation." The idea expressed in the last sentence is not quite accurate, for Sri Aurobindo finds no necessity for submitting spiritual intuition to critical examination by the reason, provided the intuition is really spiritual, that is, if it has a gnostic content, or if it is psychic—coming from the inner soul, the nucleus of divinity around which the whole nature-personality is formed,—or if the intuition

*Continued on page 6*

* These levels have already been discussed in detail in the previous issues—issues of 14th and 28th October, 1950.

* My Italics.

# IN THE MOT

## MONEY AND IT

By RISHAB

The place and importance of money in the creative economy of life cannot be overestimated. Without it nothing can be achieved in the material field. Whether it is the formation and growth of a society; or the promotion of its culture and civilisation and commerce and industry; or the stimulation and progress of scientific research and discovery,—in the great undertakings, in the works of destruction as much as in those of creation and construction, the one indispensable means (but only a means) is money. Even the ascetic, who studiously avoids all contact with money, has perforce to depend upon the money of others for the sustenance of his body and the dissemination of his teachings, if he has any. If we turn to History, we shall see that all great nations, in the heyday of their culture, were sufficiently rich to expand and organise the creations of their individual genius, and any period of decline in the life of a nation has been invariably associated with either a growing poverty or a reckless waste of wealth. Let us take the example of India. When she was great in the realms of the Spirit, when the higher Light moulded and guided the manifold expressions of her expanding life, she was great also in material opulence,—her plenty was the envy of the world. Poverty, famine and pestilence were regarded as exceptional visitations, and reflected upon the integrity and purity of the ruling head. But when the decline set in, corruption too set in, a multiform corruption, which drained the fabulous wealth, by a steady process, and paved the way for the predatory incursions and ruthless exploitation of foreigners. And yet the opulence India possessed even in the sunset glow of her ancient greatness struck the foreigners dumb with amazement and fired the cupidity of unscrupulous adventurers. When the decline was complete and India lay prostrate in the dust, her destitution too was complete—she had been bled white. The land that had flowed with milk and honey and sparkled with diamonds and rubies, became a land of half-starved and half-clad men groaning under the heels of marauders and vampires.

It may be argued that money is the source of much evil, but so are all forces in the world. One never thinks of eschewing fire because it burns or water because it drowns. It is the use to which a force is put that determines its character. A world-shunning spirituality instinctively shrinks from the forces of life and has not the courage to look them in the face. Its achievement is in a cowering retreat and not in conquest. But a complete retreat is not possible, so long as the body is there; therefore the ascetic is compelled to resort to a compromise, a clumsy enough compromise, with the forces he detests and dreads, and yet cannot altogether avoid. A dynamic spirituality, which aims at a divine conquest of the world and all its forces and movements, cannot permit itself the relief and comfort of a retreat, but has to grapple with the very elements which oppose its progress but which, once conquered and converted, would substantially contribute to its creative fullness. If the whole of human life has to be organised anew on the basis of divine consciousness, if all its energies are to be marshalled and mobilised for the revelation of the splendours of the Divine on earth, the money-power has to be utilised with a distinterested control and a perfect knowledge of its potentialities. If spirituality fights shy of the money-power, its material self-expression is bound to be what it has almost always been, poor and halting or squalid. Much of the aversion of the modern mind to spirituality is due to the latter's uncouth expression in life, its lack of control over material things and an uncertain, hesitant and slovenly attitude towards them. This weakness—for, it is nothing short of that—has to be cured and replaced by a masterful dealing with the money-power for the organisation of a rich and powerfully creative material life in the world.

### What is Money?

According to Sri Aurobindo, "Money is the visible sign of a universal force, and this force in its manifestation on earth works on the vital and physical planes and is indispensable to the fullness of the outer life. In its origin and its true action it belongs to the Divine. But like other powers of the Divine, it is delegated here, and in the ignorance of the lower nature can be usurped for the uses of the ego or held by Asuric influences and perverted to their purpose. This is, indeed, one of the three forces—power, wealth, sex—that have the strongest attraction for the human ego and the Asura and are most generally misheld and misused by those who retain them. The seekers or keepers of wealth are more often possessed rather than its possessors; few escape entirely a certain distorting influence stamped on it by its long seizure and perversion by the Asura."[1]

We learn from the above quotation that money is a universal force and is derived, like every other force, from the Divine; but, equally, like every other force, it is appropriated and perverted by the beings of darkness and is used, more often than not, to serve and satisfy their own ends. It is indispensable to the fullness of the outer life, and if the Life Divine is our objective on earth, a divine use of money is an imperative desideratum. Besides, the aversion to and fear of money are usually the result of an illusionistic philosophy or a timid, anaemic spirituality, neither of which is in consonance with the comprehensiveness and robust vitality of the ancient ideal. In Hinduism the very conception of the Divine, Bhagavan, is a global conception of qualities or attributes which include omni-opulence, *samagram, aishwaryyam.* The Divine is not only the naked Spirit of the ascetics, without features and contents and qualities, but the sole Sovereign of the worlds and the sole Master and Ruler of all creatures. If there is wealth in the worlds, if there is splendour and magnificence, where have they come from, if not from the Divine? If Matter is from the Divine, then material wealth is also from Him; only, as says Sri Aurobindo, it is usurped here, in the material world, for the uses of the ego or "held by Asuric influences and perverted to their purpose." It has to be wrested from the hands of the Asuras and used for the service of the Divine in the world. The ancient ideal of divine plenty and plenitude, the divine splendour and magnificence, has to be lived again, if spirituality has to shed its timidity and narrowness and rise to its full stature of an all-conquering might and revealing majesty. For its creations in the material world and the organisation of a harmonious and progressive life of luminous knowledge, power, love and joy, the material means indispensable to it is money.

[1] "The Mother" by Sri Aurobindo.

### The Present Possessors of Money

Most of the present possessors of money are not, really speaking, possessors at all, but possessed. They are slaves of their money and are directly controlled and used by the forces of the vital world, which abounds with all sorts of desires and cravings. What do men mostly spend for? Evidently for the satisfaction of their desires. Usually their desires are "connected with the sex impulses," but very often too they yield to "the desire for fame and consideration, the desire for food or any other that is on the same vital level."[2] Money is allowed to flow like water when these lower appetites clamour for their egoistic satisfaction; and this lavishness is not only justified, but admired as large-hearted munificence. Society praises this self-regarding use of money and transmits an effective tradition of it to future generations. If a super-idealistic nature impugns this use, it does so on altruistic or humanistic grounds, and advocates the spending of money for the service of humanity or all sentient creatures.

Now, let us try to understand the rightness or wrongness of such uses of money by an analysis of the motives that lie behind them. It is a commonplace of psychology that man is a multi-personality—there are many parts and personalities in him, having different, often divergent, desires and propensities, and moved by diverse forces. There are the physical personality, the vital personality, the mental personality and the psychic; and there are besides, many sub-personalities within these main categories. These personalities hardly agree with one another. If the mental personality, for instance, seeks the Divine and hankers for a life of spiritual freedom and bliss, the vital opposes it with its insistent desires and blind attachments. In the vital personality itself there may be a part touched by the light and responsive to a higher call, and another, obscure and perverse, wallowing in turbid sense-pleasures. The physical personality may often find itself oppressed by the mental or the vital and suffering in consequence of a constant, unavailing revolt. It is these different personalities that are responsible at different times for the motives of our actions and the actions themselves. And if we go a little behind these surface personalities—we leave out the soul or the psychic for the moment, for in most men it is not on the surface, but veiled deep within—we discover that most of them have affinity with or a habitual opening to the beings and forces of the subtler worlds; and it is these forces and beings that influence or impel their movements to their own advantage. Men are thus used as puppets by the subtle forces of the invisible worlds. Because they are ignorant of their true self, the secret, eternal reality of their existence, because their beings are divided against themselves, their nature a cockpit of contending and chaotic elements, they fall an easy prey to the forces of ignorance.

Here an example will make my point clearer. Let us suppose that a rich man conceives the idea of spending a lakh of rupees for the celebration of his son's marriage. He may have imbibed the idea from the society to which he belongs, or conceived it independently of all social customs

[2] "Words of the Mother".

## REASON AND INTUI

infiltrates into the being from the plane of the Pure Mind or the Ideal Mind. But Sri Aurobindo does find this necessary when, as we have seen, the intuition comes from the infrarational dark and turbid zones. When Professor Langley writes that according to Sri Aurobindo the employment of the ordinary cognitive procedure must remain necessary to enable man to master the problems of his material existence, he is not wrong—that is, of course, if the higher knowledge comes only in flashes; the utility of the intellect remains till the spasmodic intuitions become a continuous stream of knowledge. But his statement is not altogether correct when at another place he writes: "Intellectual activity is necessary to clarify the foundations and the nature of the spiritual experience. Admitting such experience as genuine, human reason has a right to demand on what sure and well-ordered truths of being it is founded. In addition, the intellect has the further right to examine critically the nature of spiritual experience itself. Any such experience, Aurobindo points out, may well be affected with error from influence of the imagination, or of the emotions, or even of the senses and nerves. Or

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and traditions, as the result of an impulse arising in or invading him. "The Power of money," says the Mother, "is at present under the influence or in the hands of the forces and beings of the vital world." Therefore the rich man submits automatically to the organised influence of the vital forces operating in his society, or succumbs unawares to their fresh assault upon him. In any case, it is not the decision of his true self that he follows, but the imperative direction of the enemies of his true self; and it is not really he, but those forces that profit by and enjoy the result of the enormous expenditure. The pleasure derived from the spending of the huge amount is an exclusively vital pleasure, which obscures his consciousness, inflates his pride and egotism and retards, if it does not, indeed, impede, his spiritual evolution. "It is not that those rich men who are more or less toys and instruments in the hands of the vital forces are averse to spend; their avarice is awake only when the vital desires and impulses are not touched. For, when it is to gratify some desire that they call their own, they spend readily; but when they are called to share their ease and the benefits of their wealth with others, then they find it hard to part with their money. The vital power controlling money is like a guardian who keeps his wealth in a big safe always tightly closed. Each time the people who are in its grasp are asked to part with their money, they put all sorts of careful questions before they will consent to open their purses even a very little way; but if a vital impulse arises in them with its demands, the guardian is happy to open wide the coffer and money flows out freely." It is only when we consider this tight hold of the vital forces on the money-power, in the light of the Mother's words, that we appreciate the justice of the severe stricture of the Christ upon the rich that it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven. The Christ saw the grip of the vital forces on the money-power, and it was not any ascetic loathing of money, but a divine solicitude for the deliverance of men from the dark influence of the hostile powers that inspired the stricture. It can be safely asserted that in nine cases out of ten the use we make of money is an illegitimate and unspiritual use, which degrades us and justifies the ascetic's ban on money. Not only do we lose much of the money we use, but we lose into the bargain the precious opportunities offered to us for using it for the service of the Divine to whom it really belongs. "All wealth belongs to the Divine, and those who hold it are trustees, not possessors. It is with them to-day; to-morrow it may be elsewhere. All depends on the way they discharge their trust while it is with them; in what spirit, with what consciousness in their use of it, to what purpose"[3]

**The Conquest of the Money-Power**

No dynamic spirituality which aims at the regeneration of man and the reorganisation of human society, can afford to put a ban on money, for, that will mean leaving the money-power in the hands of the vital forces, on the one hand, and, on the other, allowing its action in the material world to be paralysed by poverty. Like other powers, it has to be reconquered for the Divine and used divinely for the divine purpose in human life. How to achieve this conquest? Individually, he who is inwardly dedicated to the Divine must not fly away from the money-power in a spirit of ascetic aversion or fear, but endeavour with a perfect scrupulousness and vigilance to use all his money in the service of the Divine. In the beginning, it is true, it will be difficult for him to know for certain what the service of the Divine is. His ego may wear various disguises and delude him into wrong decisions. If he forswears all expenditure on vital pleasures, customary, conventional or contingent, the ego may dictate more commendable uses of money, for the service of the society, or the country, or humanity for instance, a service which appears so indubitably disinterested and noble. Very few people have the perspicacity to detect the ego even in these acts of obvious selflessness; most of them do not know that the ego's hold is sometimes strongest when it is bent on altruistic or philanthropic activities. It is immensely more difficult to unmask the Sattwic ego than the Rajasic or the Tamasic. Our mental principles and moral notions come usually to justify and support the Sattwic ego, and the unqualified appreciation of the world always confirms it in its inclinations and actions. But if a man clearly feels that he belongs to the Divine, all he has and is, and that to surrender all himself and his possessions and possibilities to the Divine from whom they are derived, is the sole work of his life, then the ego's dominance begins to diminish and an unsuspected centre of reference opens in the deeps of his consciousness, which gives him the right lead in his use of money, as in everything else. The doubts and hesitations, the uncertainties and indecisions of his mind give place, little by little, to a clear perception and a definite direction of the will, as a result of the growing purity and transparency of his being. What seemed impossible in the beginning becomes not only possible, but even easy and natural . We doubt, because we cannot foresee, the new faculties of perception and determination which develop in us in proportion as we repel our desires and release ourselves from the yoke of the ego. But once the inmost centre opens—and a sincere aspiration and self-giving cannot fail to open it—we cease to take counsel with our mind, even with our ethical conscience, but look deep within for the support and sanction of each of our actions. This is the initial progress. Later, by a further purification and transformation of our consciousness and nature, another centre opens high above, beyond the ranges of the spiritual mind, which gives an immediate and infallible lead to all the movements of our being. It is here, in the supreme creative Consciousness, called by the Upanishads the Truth-Consciousness, that the conquest of the money-power is fully consummated and its divine use permanently assured. This is the way to deal with money, so far as we are individually concerned with it. But its sway over the collectivity has also to go, if mankind in general is to organise its existence on earth in perfect obedience to the will of its Creator. "The hold of the hostile forces upon money-power is powerfully, completely and thoroughly organised, and to extract anything out of this compact organisation is a most difficult task. Each time that you try to draw a little of this money away from its present custodians, you have to undertake a fierce battle. And yet one single victory somewhere over the adverse forces that have the hold upon money would make victory possible simultaneously and automatically at all other points also. If in one place they yielded, all who now feel that they cannot give money to the cause of Truth would suddenly experience a great and intense desire to give."[4]

Only those who are utterly surrendered to the Divine in their active nature and securely superior to the lures of money and the comforts and advantages it confers, but without the least ascetic shrinking and aversion, can conquer the money-power for the Divine and use it freely for the accomplishment of His work in the world.

**The Proper Use of Money**

Once money has been won from the hands of the vital forces whom it serves, it has to be diverted into the developing channels of the divine work. Not to the animal or the Asura in man, but to the Divine Shakti, the supreme Creative Force, alone has it to be offered; for, it belongs to Her and has been created for the purpose of Her work in the material world. "In your personal use of money look on all you have or get or bring as the Mother's. Make no demand but accept what you receive from her and use it for the purposes for which it is given to you. Be entirely selfless, entirely scrupulous, exact, careful in detail, a good trustee; always consider that it is her possessions and not your own that you are handling. On the other hand, what you receive for her, lay religiously before her; turn nothing to your own or anybody else's purpose."[5]

It will not be an unnecessary repetition to state here that the acts of altruism or philanthropy are not, as they are commonly supposed to be, selfless and disinterested. We do them, because the ego in us takes a positive delight in them—a self-regarding delight, full of pride and complacency. The perception that we have been given the material life and its powers and resources not for the egoistic satisfaction of our desires and cravings, not even our mental ideas and predilections and moral principles, but for the realisation of the divine Will and its perfect fulfilment in every movement of our composite being, will loosen and eventually abolish the ego's hold upon us in our use of money, as in every other thing, and lead to an integral consecration of all our consciousness and nature to the dynamic Master of the universe. Money, which is regarded as a source of evil, will thus be turned into a means of self-perfection and divine work. In the New Creation, or the supramental new-moulding of life, money will be restored to the Divine Power and "used for a true and beautiful and harmonious equipment and ordering of a new divinised vital and physical existence in whatever way the Divine Mother Herself decides in Her creative vision."[6] The degrading bondage of money has to be annulled, not by a flight or withdrawal from it, but by a complete conquest and mastery. It is not enough to be unegoistic and disinterested in our use of money, we have to be docile and powerful instruments of the supramental Force, the Mother's Creative Shakti, which alone knows how best to use the money-power for the establishment and fulfilment of the Life Divine on earth. The God-directed supramental use is the only proper use of money.

[3] "The Mother" by Sri Aurobindo.

[4] "The Words of the Mother".
[5] & [6] "The Mother" by Sri Aurobindo.

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**TION**—*Continued from page 5*

again, though the experience be genuine, there is always the possibility of error in interpretation."

According to Sri Aurobindo the intellect can never have the right to sit in judgment on that which transcends it in the hierarchy of Being and Consciousness. His dictum in this matter is always to verify the truth of an intuition by a higher and completer intuition till a stage is reached when the mind is transformed and intuition becomes a power native to it. The last part of Professor Langley's statement can be valid only if it refers to Sri Aurobindo's attitude towards infrarational intimations and communications, pseudo-intuitions, not to the influx of the higher spiritual light which is essentially gnostic. Once there is a clear comprehension of the epistemic and gnostic relation between mind and the higher suprarational ranges of cognition, there should be no difficulty in understanding that both intuition and intellect are powers of the Gnosis, which work in different ways on different levels of organised existence. The highest gnostic development is to possess the Supramental vision and apprehend God-consciousness in all its totality.

# SRI AUROBINDO CAME TO ME

## By DILIP KUMAR ROY

### CHAPTER VI

### THE ASHRAM: SOME DISCIPLES

I have decided, not without hesitation, to write now about a few of the disciples I came to know in the Ashram who made on me an impression for a twofold reason: first because of their native aptitudes and secondly because of the characteristic manner in which each of them reacted to Gurudev's personality and guidance. I have undertaken to attempt this in order to correct a wrong stress I may have unwittingly given while paying my homage to one who has been the most unforgettable character I have ever come to know in my life. This I say apart from the deep debt I shall always owe him as much for having been what he was as for having come down in his compassion to one who was so utterly incapable of making any return for what he received from such a donor for more than two decades. By 'wrong stress' I imply the overemphasis I must have put on my own angle of vision because, when all is said, to each spectator his own vision must, inescapably, seem more important if not more trustworthy and real than that of all others put together. Do what one will, a man cannot break the shell of his ego which separates him from the other egos. But even then surely he can, if he honestly tries, amend partly "the observer's error"—if I may borrow a scientific phrase—by comparing his own appraisement with that of some others.

To make my meaning clear I will begin straightaway with an instance in point.

There was a young lady whom I met in the Ashram in 1928 who interested me because I was told that she had had some remarkable occult experiences. I must conceal her identity for obvious reasons. She came one day straight to my room and talked about music of which she knew something. Then she told me that she had had a previous guide if not Guru whose contact had given her the first push over the edge which made her topple subsequently into the delightful "abyss" of Sri Aurobindo's integral Yoga, as she put it smilingly.

I pricked up my ears at once. This was just what I had been aching for! "God is!"—I said to myself.

"And then?" I gasped.

"What then?" she laughed. "I came here. But I *was* puzzled when Mother first asked me to open myself. 'But how am I to open myself?' I asked her, 'is there a door in my heart?' And she said 'yes' "—and so on.

But she did open: wasn't she an adept? How I admired her! And the result was that one day, while meditating, she saw a strange vision, namely that she was wholly separate from her body, roaming about in space. (This identical experience was related to me once more by an old *sadhaka* a few years later) And she was staggered!

I was thrilled. For this was the experience I had heard so much about of the inner being showing itself distinct and separate from the physical. An experience worth having in these days when consciousness is so triumphantly dismissed by scientific materialism as a function of the body. One would then see without the eyes and know of things happening beyond one's horizon, things that could, besides, be verified, as was done by her many times.

Yes, I was deeply impressed!

But, she left a few years later. I must be cautious and say no more, only hint that she had to go because she could not (or would not, shall I say) change beyond a point.

I learnt, incidentally, that it was not enough to have such "experiences" however startling. One must aspire only for the most startling of all experiences: the change of nature without which no abiding change of consciousness could be achieved.

But, unhappily for me, she induced in me an expectation that gave me no end of trouble. For I started meditating for hours but, alas, not even the shadow of such an experience so much as peeped on the threshold of my expectancy! And I was told by others that this was because I failed to "open myself", which decided many who said that I might be a good poet and musician but a bad yogi. So I wrote to Sri Aurobindo in despair that I could not have any experiences because I could not "open" the closed doors of my inner being as so many pointed out. I also wrote to him what someone else had told me—about there being a division in me—that is why I was where I was (whatever it might mean). I took it to mean that there was a self-contradiction in me which must have been the cause of the lack of response. In the end I wrote, crestfallen, that probably this self-contradiction or division was an index to my insincerity and the lack of response the dire retribution.

To which he wrote back with his unfailing kindness and patience:

"The peculiarity you note—of self-contradiction in yourself—is universal—it is one part of the being which believes and speaks the right and beautiful things; it is another which doubts and says the opposite. I get communications for instance from X in which for several pages he writes wise and perfect things about the sadhana—suddenly without transition, he drops into his physical mind and peevishly and complainingly says, well, things ignorant and incompatible with all that wisdom. X is not insincere when he does that—he is simply giving voice to two parts of his nature. Nobody can understand himself or human nature if he does not perceive the multi-personality of the human being. To get all parts into harmony, that is the difficult thing.

"As for the lack of response, well, can't you see that you are in the ancient tradition? Read the lives of the saints—you will find them all (perhaps not all, but at least so many) shouting like you that there was no response and getting frightful tumults and agonies and desperations until the response came. Many people here who can't say that they haven't had experience do just the same—so it does not depend on experiences. I don't advise the procedure to anybody, mind you. I only say that the feeling of your never having had a very concrete response does not mean that you will never have it and that fits of despair at having arrived nowhere do not mean that one will never arrive..."

* * * *

I come now to a dear friend of mine about whom it is a joy to write. I warn the reader, however, that I lay no claim to be above bias. A saying of the great Goethe always raised an echo in my mind: "Aufrichtig zu zein kann ich versprechen, unparteiish zu zein, aber nicht."* I do not mean I like, consciously, to say things in a friend's favour which my judgment is reluctant to sanction. But I do mean that when one is very fond of a person one becomes, willy-nilly, a little more vividly responsive to his qualities than can be fully approved by those who are uninfluenced by such a strong predilection. Naturally, one could here too—as in everything else—go on arguing till doomsday the pros and cons: whether sympathy is more likely to be nearer the truth than a cold critical appraisement. I feel no urge to swell the inconclusive babel of such a debate. So I will only repeat what Tagore told me once sighing, with a picturesque charm all his own (which I lack): "I really long to praise, Dilip! Sometimes it even grows on me like hunger or thirst. But I can't, alas! Many there are of whom I feel like speaking appreciatively. But as I rush on, my critical intellect protests aghast and then I have to weigh my words. The result——a sorry tribute which makes it difficult for me to repress a regret, to obviate which I have to keep silent rather than dole out an inadequate measure and stay honest." May this apology suffice: Amen!

The friend who impressed me so deeply in the early years of my Ashram life was K. D. Sethna who has since become famous both as a poet and a priest of high—or shall I say spiritual—journalism. I can clearly recapture with my mind's eye his delicate sensitive face which first attracted me with its fine crop of Christ-like whiskers which he discarded subsequently, to the universal regret of his friends and admirers. For we did admire it without pressing the 'resemblance' any further. And let me add, with a sigh, that those who have never seen him with his whiskers will never be able to appreciate our sigh over its merciless eradication. And then his eyes: how they radiated a keen though not unkind glint of intelligence! For he was nothing if not sympathetic and enthusiastic. Fortunately, he knew where to draw the line when expressing his sympathy in favour of this or that person.

Which brings me to his alert common sense. I have been told that Sri Aurobindo once said, in joke, that the Divine wanted the aspirants to surrender many things which they guarded jealously but one thing they did surrender with alacrity which was not exacted: common sense. Sethna was not one of these. His common sense was never an absentee in his talks and adjudications which seemed remarkable to me as he talked and passed verdicts readily enough. I remember once (years later, when he had matured further) his debate with Krishnaprem in my living-room. How I envied his dialectical intelligence! And Krishnaprem not only admired his mental robustness in a frail physique but enjoyed to the full breaking a lance with him. But he had to go all out to hold his own against Sethna, which is saying much. Yet, Sethna was nothing if not keenly intelligent on top of being sensible. It was refreshing to talk with him and stimulating to differ from him, since even when one differed from his point of view one could not help looking at things from a new angle as it were. In a word his talks were always suggestive. But to come now to something more important.

One meets clever people often, and highly intelligent people, too, now and then. But seldom does one meet an intelligence which aspires to be replenished at the fount of a deeper wisdom. Intelligence in itself is indeed admirable and none but a fool will deny its unquestionable usefulness. But what is not as often suspected, far less admitted, is that intelligence is a mediator not a creator. It can help in giving expression to something which it receives from something—call it aspiration, knowledge, love and what not.

I am afraid many (especially "the intellectuals") will take umbrage at this—what they will call—disparagement of the intellect. But alas, one cannot both eat one's cake and have it: one cannot glimpse something higher than what the mind can reveal and yet retain one's faith in it unimpaired. That is why most intelligent people fight shy of mystic wisdom. They are not wrong in dreading this, for the savour of the higher joys is not simply creative, but destructive also, being by its very nature against the *status quo*.

Those who are not born with an exceptional intelligence are somewhat

* I can promise to be sincere but not impartial.

# SRI AUROBINDO CAME TO ME

—Continued from opposite page

fortunate as they have no axe to grind in favour of the *status quo* established and jealously guarded by the intellect. But those who have once tasted of intellectual joys find it not a little hard to relinquish what they have grown to love. That is why I admired Sethna more than I admired many another who claimed being *advanced sadhakas* much to the annoyance of Sri Aurobindo. For when somebody once claimed that he was an advanced sadhaka and men like Sethna were mere poets he wrote: "Why X's claim to be an advanced *sadhaka* and what is the sense of it? It resolves itself into an egoistic assertion of superiority over others which is not justified so long as there is the egoism and the need of assertion, accompanied as it always is by a weakness and turbid imperfections which belie the claim of having a superior consciousness to the 'inadvanced *sadhaka*'. It is time these crudities disappeared from the Asram atmosphere."

This is not irrelevant. For Sethna impressed me the more because he not only never made such claim to having reached "a superior consciousness" but he had the uncommon wisdom of common sense to see that one should accept what the Guru said even if it seemed—as it often enough must, intellectual egoism being what it is—unacceptable to one's mental preconceptions. That is why he often helped me by bowing to Sri Aurobindo's verdicts even though he too, like me, wanted first to understand with the mind as far as one could achieve it.

Luckily for him, he had an advantage over many another who came to the Ashram with a deep religious *samskara* (preconception) and could thus pour his heart's worship, unstintedly at the altar of our Master. This I say with a full knowledge of its implications. For I myself dared not compare Sri Aurobindo with some of his predecessors whom I need not name. But Sethna could—and with an honest conviction. It was this honesty married to an intelligence which drew me to him more and more for I have sometimes quarrelled with some *sadhakas* who talked with disrespect about past prophets and seers. I did not venture to compare, possibly because I could not at the time feel quite the same degree of enthusiasm about Sri Aurobindo as Sethna did. Here I have to admit that he scored over me in his *gurubhakti*. But what I found personally rather charming of him was that he never flaunted the initial advantage he had in coming to Sri Aurobindo with a clean heart-tablet with no other holy figure etched on it—which was assuredly one of the reasons why he received so much from Gurudev especially in insight into mystic poetry. I do not know personally of any living critic who has read Sri Aurobindo's poetry so thoroughly and acquired such a deep grasp of both its poetical beauty and technical mastery, insomuch that he may easily be adjudged a specialist in these two capacities. (I say 'living critic' because Chadwick has, alas, departed this life—about whose outstanding poetical gift and *sadhana* I will have a good deal to say presently.)

Naturally I liked Sethna also because he was, like Chadwick and myself a poet who continued all along to be a recipient of Sri Aurobindo's letters on poetry. I was fond of his poems too but as my knowledge of English verse was rather poor at the time, I could not sufficiently appreciate his technique. Still I loved some of his poems even in those days—nearly twenty years ago—and translated them, which knit us together into a closer bond. One such poem which was singled out for special praise by Gurudev was entitled *This Errant Life* which I must quote to bring out the side of aspiration to his nature which he never flaunted:

*This errant life is dear although it dies;*
*And human lips are sweet though they but sing*
*Of stars estranged from us; and youth's emprise*
*Is wondrous yet, although an unsure thing.*

*Sky-lucent Bliss untouched by earthiness!*
*I fear to soar lest tender bonds decrease.*
*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!*

When I sent Gurudev my Bengali translation he wrote, commenting:

"Amal's* lines are not easily translatable, least of all into Bengali. There is in them a union or rather fusion of high severity of speech with exaltation and both with a pervading intense sweetness which it is almost impossible to transfer bodily without loss into another language. There is no word in excess, none that could have been added or changed without spoiling the expression, every word just the right revelatory one—no colour, no ornamentation, but a sort of suppressed burning glow, no similes, but images which have been fused inseparably into the substance of the thought and feeling—the thought perfectly developed, not idea added to idea at the will of the fancy, but perfectly interrelated and linked together like the limbs of an organic body. It is high poetic style in its full perfection and nothing of all that is transferable. You have taken his last line and put in a lotus-face and made divine love bloom in it,—a pretty image, but how far from the glowing impassioned severity of phrase: 'And mould thy love into a human face!'"

I shall pass by the constant and ready help plus encourgement which Sethna has given me all along in my poetic aspirations in English as that will be going beyond the immediate and urgent aim of this humble homage to one under whose aegis our little colony endeavoured to follow, as best we could, the ideal that had drawn us together. I will refrain, for the same reason, from enumerating his other rare qualities such as his sheer love of poetry or innate generosity which prompted him to praise many a budding Ashram poet. But I might as well write here of my fruitful contact with the great poet A. E. for which Sethna was partly responsible. It happened like this.

Sethna, and later Chadwick, used to give me valuable subsidiary advice about English prosody and verse-making which I was learning under the direct guidance of Sri Aurobindo. I will have more to write, in a subsequent chapter, on our Master's corrections and counsels and so will confine myself here to Sethna who became the leader of our little cenacle almost as naturally as water finds its own level. One day, without telling him, I sent to A. E. a few of his poems along with some extracts from Sri Aurobindo's *Future Poetry* which moved us to a deep admiration, extracts such as (I quote these from a then diary of mine):

"All art worth the name must go beyond the visible, must reveal, must show us something that is hidden."

"So poetry arrives at the indication of infinite meanings beyond the finite intellectual meaning the word carries."

"Poetical speech is the spiritual excitement of a rhythmic voyage of self-discovery among the magic islands of form and name in these inner and outer worlds."

"The aim of poetry, as of all true art, is neither a photographic or otherwise realistic imitation of Nature, nor a romantic furbishing and painting or idealistic improvement of her image, but an interpretation by the images she herself affords us not on one, but on many planes of her creation, of that which she conceals from us, but is ready, when rightly approached, to reveal." And so on.

Also I asked his permission to publish my translations of some of his lovely poems like *Warning, Krishna*, etc.

I enclosed also a poem on silence written by a friend, a poem which I could not sincerely sympathise with since I preferred *expression:* I wrote.

He sent me his kind reply written in his own hand (that is, not a *typed* letter) in which he signed himself A. E. (his pen-name) and not George Russell.

The letter was from Dublin and was dated January 6, 1932:

"Dear Dilip Roy,

"Your letter has come at a time when I am too troubled in mind to write, as I would like, about the poems you send me. Yes, you have my permission to translate the verses or any others you may desire.

"I think the extracts from Sri Aurobindo very fine, and the verses you sent of Mr. Sethna have a genuine poetic quality. There are many fine lines, like

'The song-impetuous mind.'
'The Eternal Glory is a wanderer
Hungry for lips of clay.'

"Many such lines show a feeling for rhythm which is remarkable since the poet is not writing in his native but a learned language. I refer to this because the only advice one writer can give to another rightly is technical criticism. The craft of any art, painting, music, poetry, sculpture, is continually growing and much can be taught in the schools. But the inspiration cannot be passed on from one to another. So I confine myself to a technical criticism.

"You, like many Indians, are so familiar with your great traditions that it is natural for you to deal with ideas verging on the spiritual more than European writers do. The danger of this when writing poetry is that there is a tendency to use or rather overuse great words like 'immensity' 'omnipotence', 'inexhaustible', 'limitless', etc. By the very nature of the ideas which inspire you, you are led to use words of that nature because of a kinship with the infinity of the spirit. But in the art of verse if one uses these words overmuch they tend to lose their power just as painting in which only the primary colours would weary the eye.

"I would ask Mr. Sethna to try to reserve the use of such great words, as a painter keeps his high light, for the sun and moon or radiant water and the rest of his canvas is in low tones. So the light appears radiant by contrast. English is a great language but it has very few words relating to spiritual ideas. For example the word *Karma* in Sanskrit embodies a philosophy. There is no word in English embodying the same idea. There are many words in Sankrit charged with meanings which have no counterpart in English: *Dhyani, Sushupti, Turiya*, etc., and I am sure the languages which the Hindus speak today must be richer in words fitted for spiritual expression than English, in which there are few luminous words that can be used when there is a spiritual emotion to be expressed. I found this diffiulty myself of finding a vocabulary though English is the language I heard from my cradle.

"I hope Sethna will forgive my saying all this. I do so because I find a talent in the verses you sent me and do not wish him to do without such burnishing as a fellow-craftsman can help to give.

"Will you tell your philosophic friend who praises silence that with the poet the silence cannot be for ever? He sings and then keeps silent until the cup is filled up again by sacrifice and meditation and then he must give away what he gets, or nothing more will be poured into his cup. The secret of this is that through the free giver the song flows freely and whoever constrains life in himself, in him it is constrained. There is indeed the Divine silence, but we do not come to that being by negation."

Sethna sent some impressions of this letter to Gurudev who wrote back:

"If you send your poems to five different poets, you are likely to get five absolutely disparate and discordant estimates of them. A poet likes only the

*Sethna was given by Gurudev the name of "Amal Kiran" which means "The Clear Ray." I have reverted to his original name as he is better known outside as K. D. Sethna.

# SRI AUROBINDO CAME TO ME—*Continued from page 9*

poetry that appeals to his own temperament or taste, the rest he condemns or ignores. (My own case is different because I have made in criticism a practice of appreciating everything that can be appreciated as a catholic critic would.) Contemporary poetry, besides, seldom gets its right judgement from contemporary critics even.

"Nothing can be more futile than for a poet to write in expectation of contemporary fame or praise, however agreeable that may be, if it comes; but it is not of much value; for very poor poets have enjoyed a great contemporary fame and very great poets have been neglected in their time. A poet has to go on his way, trying to gather hints from what people say for or against, when their criticisms are things he can profit by, but not otherwise moved (if he can manage it)—seeking mainly to sharpen his own sense of self-criticism by the help of others. Difference of estimate need not surprise him at all."

Sethna asked him next a pointed question (which will be readily inferred from his reply) and he wrote to him again:

"Your letter suggested a more critical attitude on A.E.'s part than his actual appreciation warrants. His appreciation is, on the contrary, sufficiently warm; 'a genuine poetic quality' and 'many fine lines'—he could not be expected to say more. The two quotations he makes certainly deserve the praise he gives them and they are moreover of the kind, which A. E. and Yeats also would naturally like. But your poem, *This Errant Life*, selected for especial praise, has no striking expression, like these standing out from the rest, just as in a Greek statue there would be no single feature standing out in a special beauty (eyes, lips, head or hands) but the whole has a harmoniously modelled grace of equal perfection everywhere as, let us say, in the perfect charm of a statue by Praxiteles. This—apart from the idea and feeling which goes psychically and emotionally much deeper than the idea in the lines quoted by A. E. which are poetically striking but have not the same subtle spiritual appeal; they touch the mind and vital strongly but the other goes home into the soul . . . . .

"His remarks about 'immensity' etc. are very interesting to me; for these are the very words, with others like them, that are constantly recurring at short intervals in my poetry when I express not spiritual thought, but spiritual experience. I knew perfectly well that this recurrence would be objected to as bad technique or an inadmissible technique; but this seems to me a reasoning from the conventions of a past order which cannot apply to a new poetry dealing with spiritual things. *A new art of words written from a new consciousness demands a new technique.* A. E. himself admits that this rule makes a great difficulty because these 'high light' words are few in the English language. His solution may do well enough where the realisation which they represent are mental ones or intuitions occurring on the summits of the consciousness, rare 'highlights' over the low tones of ordinary natural or occult experience (ordinary, of course, to the poet, not the average man); there his solution would not violate the truth of the vision, would not misrepresent the balance of harmony of its actual tones. But what of one who lives in an atmosphere of these high lights—in a consciousness in which the finite, not only the occult but even the earthly finite, is bathed in the sense of the eternal, the illimitable infinite, the immensities or intimacies of the timeless? To follow A. E.'s rule might well mean to falsify this atmosphere, to substitute a merely aesthetic fabrication for a true seeing and experience. Truth first—a technique expressive of the truth in the forms of beauty has to be found, if it does not exist. It is no use arguing from the spiritual inadequacy of the English language; the inadequacy does not exist and even if it did, the language will have to be made adequate. It has been plastic enough in the past to succeed in expressing all that it was asked to express, however new; it must now be urged to a farther new progress. In fact the power is there and has only to be brought out more fully to serve the full occult, mystic, spiritual purpose."

And then in another letter:

"What you say may be correct (that our oriental luxury in poetry makes it unappealing to Westerners), but on the other hand it is possible that the mind of the future will be more international than it is now. In that case the expression of various temperaments in English poetry will have a chance.

"If our aim is not success and personal fame but to arrive at the expression of spiritual truth and experience of all kinds in poetry, the English tongue is the most widespread and is capable of profound turns of mystic expression which make it admirably fitted for the purpose; if it could be used for the highest spiritual expression, that is worth trying."

And then in another letter:

"The idea that Indians cannot succeed in English poetry is very much in the air just now but it cannot be taken as absolutely valid . . . At present many are turning to India for its sources of spirituality, but the eye has been directed only towards yoga and philosophy, not to the poetical expression of it. When the full day comes, however, it may well be that this too will be discovered, and then an Indian who is at once a mystic and a true poet and able to write in English as if in his mother-tongue (that is essential) would have his full chance. Many barriers are breaking; moreover, both in French and English there are instances of foreigners who have taken their place as prose-writers or poets."

I have been at some pains here to labour this point because I feel it necessary to combat the unhelpful attitude of those who cannot create and yet presume to adjudicate on our highly laudable attempt to express our deepest perceptions in English, as also because I feel sure, among other things, that Sri Aurobindo will be recognised in future not only as a poet but also as a poet-maker. It will take me too much space to bring out what I mean when I say this. So I will confine myself at present to saying that those of us who have *seen* not one, but many poets flower under his inspiration (some of whom had never before written a single poem) cannot possibly accept the verdicts of those who have no access to such data, for the simple reason that no-experience is incompetent *per se* to adjudicate on the validity or otherwise of experience.

But before I conclude my account of Sethna I must stress something about his poetic perspicacity and insight, the more because these native gifts, which matured rapidly under Gurudev's fostering, he utilised religiously not only to understand our Master's special contribution to poetry, but—what is more important for the public—to pave the way to a more critical and deeper understanding of his genius by his luminous studies of Sri Aurobindo's form and message in different journals. I am myself definitely persuaded—even from what little I have imbibed with my limited receptivity of the supreme beauty of his epic *Savitri*—that he will be regarded as by far the greatest poet of this age, a new epoch-maker in poetry, or to quote from Sethna's own estimate:*

"On the brow of this giant we must place a crown of triple triumph. For, Sri Aurobindo has done three exceedingly rare things. First, he has to his credit a bulk of excellent blank verse—a statement possible about poets we can count on our fingers. At least five thousand lines in the *Collected Poems and Plays* published a few years back are a diversly modulated beauty and power with no appreciable fall below a fine adequacy and with peak after peak of superb frenzy. They put him cheek by jowl with Keats in both essence and amount. The huge epic *Savitri*, still unfinished, is a marvel which places him at once in the company of the absolute top-rankers by a sustained abundance of first-rate quality. Add to living lengths of blank verse a large number of sublime or delicate shorter pieces, mostly in rhyme, and we have a further testimony of Sri Aurobindo's creativeness. But what is of extraordinary import is that among them we have a body of successful work in a medium that has eluded English poets: quantitative metre. Sri Aurobindo has solved once for all the problem of quantity in English—a feat which gives the language 'a brave new world' of consciousness. Quantitative metre is the second tier in Sri Aurobindo's poetic crown. The third is not merely a revelation of strange rhythm-moulds, but also the laying bare of a rhythmic life beyond the ranges of inspired consciousness to which we have been so far accustomed. To bring the epic surge or the lyric stream of the quantitative metres of Greece and Rome in English is not necessarily to go psychologically beyond the ranges of inspiration we find in the epic or lyric moods of England. It could very well be just an opening up of fresh movements on psychological planes already possessed by those moods. Over and above opening up such movements Sri Aurobindo discloses planes that have been secret hitherto except for stray lines here and there, occurring as if by a luminous accident. Only the ancient Vedas and Upanishads embody with anything like a royal freedom these ranges of mystical and spiritual being, hidden beyond the deepest plunge and highest leap of intuition known to the great masters. Sri Aurobindo stands as the creator of a new Vedic and Upanishadic age of poetry."

I do not feel called upon to apologise for giving such a long quotation from Sethna's book, the less because I cannot help a deep regret that we Indians, who have already flowered, at our loveliest, into no mean creators in English poetry should have chosen to cling to a cautious if not timid silence about Sri Aurobindo's epic achievement in poetry (an achievement which has been making history while we remain standing in a non-committal silence), simply because we want to play safe and so dare not give our verdicts lest our highbrow English tutors reverse it later on. I will not go into the cause of the unresponsiveness on the part of the English but I feel I owe it to truth to speak out my deep conviction: that not to know Sri Aurobindo as a poet will be, in the near future, to argue oneself unknown as a critic and lover of poetry. Fortunately, Krishnaprem has made *some* atonement at least for the silence of his compatriots, the English, by writing in his tribute to *Savitri:*

"Such poetry can only be written either in the early days before the rise to power of self-conscious mind or when that particular cycle has run its course and life establishes itself once more in the unity beyond, this time with all the added range and power that has been gained during the reign of mind. It is an omen of the utmost significance and hope that in these years of darkness and despair such a poem as *Savitri* should have appeared. Let us salute the Dawn."

And one must congratulate him—the more because he is English—on his courage for having anticipated a hackneyed objection: "The English language has been given to the world and its usages and limits can now no longer be determined exclusively by the ears of the islanders whose tongue it originally was. Those who would remain sole rulers of their language must abjure empire." But to revert to Sethna. I have felt this about him and a few others, isolated appraisers† of Sri Aurobindo's poetry, that when, in the not-too-distant future Sri Aurobindo will have been acknowledged by the whole world as by far the greatest of modern poets to whom the *mantric* word came as native as soaring to the eagle, this first small band of ardent admirers led by Sethna shall receive the smile of the great Goddess of Poetry, Saraswati, not only for having (in the words of Chesterton)

. . . . . *watched when all men slept*
*And seen the stars which never see the sun.*

but also for having readily acquitted themselves of their sacred responsibility, the sense of which prompted them to "salute the Dawn" they had

* Quoted from his book, "The Poetic Genius of Sri Aurobindo." Prologue. Published by Sri Aurobindo Circle, Bombay.

†For there have been a few others like Sisir Kumar Ghosh of Santiniketan, Srimati Latika Ghosh, Sri Rajanikant Modi.

# THE AMATEUR IN SCIENCE

By J. BRONOWSKI

In 1943 the allied troops in the Far East met the deadliest enemy of the whole campaign; and this enemy was not the Japanese but disease—the dreaded scrub-typhus. Scrub-typhus is a fever which is carried by a tiny mite, and in order to stamp it out it is necessary to go behind the fever and attack the mites themselves. The Commander in Chief in Asia therefore asked to have sent out to him the greatest authority on disease-carrying mites. The greatest authority went, though he had a little trouble in getting his employers to let him go. For Charles Radford, the great authority, was not a professional scientist at all, but an amateur who studied mites in his spare time, but earned his living as a worker in the British Post Office.

This story has two morals. First, it reminds us that whether our problems are those of war or of peace, victory rests on a strong scientific understanding of them. A nation indifferent to suffering and disease is handicapped in all its tasks, and this even in wartime. The well-being of the world or the well-being of a nation is founded on the well-being of its individual men, women, and children. A philosophy which believes that poverty and disease help to make a nation noble and strong is always wrong. Nothing did so much to defeat the Japanese as a mistaken indifference to the real enemies—disease, hardship, and ignorance.

But the second moral is just as important; that in a society which sets a true value on the individual, science is more than a profession and more than a duty. Science is a democracy, in which all men can be happy and can fulfil themselves. In a good society, it is just as open to the spare-time amateur as to the full-time professional; but more than this, the amateur has a refreshing and unorthodox contribution to make from which science must continually renew its vigour. When Charles Radford first began to spend his evenings in peering at mites, he had little to guide him except enthusiasm and common sense. These two, enthusiasm and common sense, give the work of the amateur its power; and it is a power of which science has constant need. They carried Charles Radford to the top of his strange border-land subject, mites as carriers of disease.

I have used the word "border-land" intentionally, because it is another key both to the kind of work which the amateur does best and to its value. Think back a moment to some of the remarkable amateur scientists of the past and to the work which they did. They came from every walk of life, and they had a finger in every subject of their day which the professional scientists had not yet made respectable. Benjamin Franklin was a great American statesman, but he was also an amateur scientist who was excited about the new discoveries in electricity which were being made around about 1750. No-one but, an amateur would have had his wild but ingenious notion of flying a kite in a thunderstorm which, as the professionals have often pointed out since, risked almost certain death. But no-one but a bold amateur could have proved so trenchantly that lighting is an electric discharge,—an idea which, as Franklin records, "was laughed at by the connoisseurs". His English radical friend Joseph Priestley was an amateur who approached the chemistry of his day with the same agnostic spirit which he brought to all established doctrine. He promptly revolutionised chemistry by showing that burning depends on the presence of oxygen, which he discovered. On this amateur work of Priestley the French professional chemist Lavoisier was able to rebuild the whole science of chemistry in roughly its present form.

The great German poet Goethe spent time on several sciences. Where he entered a field which had already been well worked by the professionals, as in the science of light, he did little of value. But where he broke fresh ground, his work was remarkable: he founded the science of morphology as the study of living forms, and was a pioneer in anticipating the idea of evolution. And at the other extreme of famous amateurs, consider the little English girl Mary Anning, a carpenter's daughter of no education who at the age of twelve in the year 1811 discovered the first ichthyosaur. For the next twenty years or so she went on finding the skeletons of prehistoric reptiles of many remarkable kinds which had been lying there for more than fifty million years waiting for some such talented spotter to recognise them. Almost all our modern knowledge of the age of the dinosaurs, the great lizards, is based on the sharp eyes and the keen recognition of untaught Mary Anning.

These examples show us the amateur's strength. To him science is not an accepted body of doctrine and a vested interest; and he is in no danger of losing his reputation and his livelihood if he falls out with the big-wigs in his subject. But more than this, the amateur's unconscious attitude to science is different. To the amateur the leisure hours he can give to science are a continual adventure in which everything is possible. Is there a subject which lies off the beaten track of the professionals—say the dancing language of the bees, or the reflection of radio waves from meteors? There at once is ideal work for the free and unhurried amateur; and indeed in the two subjects I have just mentioned in passing, amateurs have made delightful discoveries in the last few years. Is there a subject which is not quite respectable, like telepathy? All the little that is known has come from the patent work of amateurs with real scientific standards. Is there an odd fact in some border-land between different sciences which needs a quick eye to spot it and a leisurely mind to worry at it? Perhaps the green flash which is sometimes seen for an instant at sunset, or the lifeless ring in a laboratory culture round a spot of mould? The amateur may not be able to solve these problems to the end, but he can seize them and start the serious interest in them. The two unprofessional observations I have mentioned did much to create interest, the one in the electric state of the upper atmosphere, and the other in the remarkable effects of what have since turned out to be all the wonder drugs beginning with penicillin.

Yes, say scientists and laymen in chorus; all this is very true, or rather, all this was very true when science was simpler. There was a time, they say, when the man with a kite or a magnifying glass or a small garden could make decisive experiments. But that time has passed, they say. Today the laws of heredity must be studied not as they were by Mendel growing a few sweet-peas in a monastery garden, but by a whole battery of research stations. Today the electric structure of matter is studied in cyclotrons which cost millions and have to be hidden under six foot of concrete. And what hope has the man with a magnifying glass of competing today with the electron microscope?

By way of answer, let me tell a simple story. In the seventeenth century, a Dutch draper called Leeuwenhoek became interested in making miscroscopes, and as a result made many revolutionary discoveries about the structure of small plants and animals. Today scientists are interested in even smaller creatures, the viruses, and it is true that some of their structure can only be traced by the electron microscope. However, one of the most distinguished workers on the microscopic behaviour of viruses, including the deadly polio virus, is Frederick Grigg. And he is an amateur; he does his work in the evenings over his own ordinary microscope, because during the day, Frederick Grigg is a draper in an English village.

Certainly the amateur cannot compete with the professional in those branches of scientific research which demand high organisation and elaborate equipment. But apparatus and organisation are only the tools of science; the essence of science is in the mind. The essence of science

*(Continued on page 12)*



# SRI AUROBINDO CAME TO ME—*Continued from page 10*

seen and announce the high Herald of a new consciousness in poetry, who sang vibrantly of earth's deepest aspiration and highest fulfilment:

*An inarticulate whisper drives her steps*
*Of which she feels the force but not the sense;*
*A few rare intimations come as guides,*
*Immense divining flashes cleave her brain...*
*Outstretching arms to the unconscious Void,*
*Passionate she prays to invisible forms of Gods,*
*Soliciting from dumb Fate and toiling Time*
*What most she needs, what most exceeds her scope,*
*A Mind unvisited by illusion's gleams,*
*A Will expressive of soul's deity,*
*A Strength not forced to stumble by its speed,*
*A Joy that drags not sorrow as its shade.*
*For these she yearns and feels them destined hers:*
*Heaven's privilege she claims as her own right.*
*Just is her claim the all-witnessing Gods approve,*
*Clear in a greater light than reason owns:*
*Our intuitions are its title-deeds;*
*Our souls accept what our blind thoughts refuse.*
*Earth's winged chimeras are Truth's steeds in Heaven,*
*The impossible God's sign of things to be.*

* * * *

*To be continued*

# Indian Congress For Cultural Freedom

An Indian Congress for Cultural Freedom is going to be convened in Bombay on March 28 to 31 inclusive, under the sponsorship of more than seventy persons representing literature, arts and education.

The idea behind the Congress is that Indian men of culture should foregather and recall once again the true basis of all genuine culture—namely, freedom of the mind. This becomes particularly important at the present time when the ideals of individual liberty and dignity are being invaded by totalitarian creeds, and interested parties serving a foreign cause are making use of the generous impulses of the young writers and artists and, by subtle ways, channelising them into singing and painting dictatorship. The Congress of Indian writers and artists would pledge their faith afresh in the age-long ideals of human liberty, the inspiration of the individual artist and the individual as a moral and political unit of utmost importance and sacredness.

Foreign delegates will also participate in the Conference. Stephen Spender, W. H. Auden, Salvador de Madariaga James Burnham, Norman Thomas and Raymond Aron have already accepted the invitation. Mrs. Roosevelt, Bertrand Russell, Arthur Koestler are expected. Invitations have also been issued among others to Aldous Huxley, John Dewey, Sartre, Attlee, Albert Einstein, Lin Yu-tang, Upton Sinclair, J. B. Priestley and Ralph Bunche.

Those who are interested should write to the Secretary, Indian Congress for Cultural Freedom c/o Democratic Research Service, Manekji Wadia Building, Bell Lane, Fort, Bombay.

## PROGRAMME

**WEDNESDAY, March 28, 1951**

11-00 **Delegates Meeting**

(i) Election of Steering Committee.
(ii) Election of Chairman or Praesidium.
(iii) Presentation of draft declaration and draft Memoranda.

12-00 to 13-30 **Steering Committee**

(i) Appointment of Sectional Chairmen and Rapporteurs.

17.00 **Open Session**

(i) Speech of Reception.
(ii) Inaugural Address.
(iii) Messages.
(iv) Speeches by some overseas delegates.
(v) Address by President.

**THURSDAY, March 29, 1951:**

09-30 to 12-30 **Sectional Conferences.**

14-30 to 17-30

(i) "Ideals of Cultural Freedom".
(ii) "Planning and Freedom".
(iii) "Threats to Cultural Freedom".
(iv) "Contemporary Trends in Art and Letters".

**FRIDAY, March 30, 1951:**

09-30 to 12-30 **Sectional Conferences (Final)**

Reports on Sectional Conferences.

14-30 to 17-30 **Delegates Meeting**

Consideration of Draft Declaration etc.

Evening

21-00 to 23-00 (?) **Cultural Show**

**SATURDAY, March 31, 1951:**

09-30 to 12-30 **Delegates Meeting**

(Draft Declaration—Continued).

15-00 to 16-30

17-30 to 20-30 **Open Session**

Declaration
Resolutions
Speeches by Indian and International Delegations
President's Speech.
Thanks etc.

## *Two Spirals*

Liquid spirals spinning,
One black, one white,
Spinning, spiraling upward
Through supernatural Night.

This: My central Liquid,
My Age-old Right,
Spinning, spiraling upward,
Tapering white.

And that, ah that, was other
Black and bright,
Spinning, spiraling upward
Through blacker Night.

My choice was destined always,
Yet choose I could—
And did! And moved with the spiraling,
Liquid, black blood.

*ELEANOR MONTGOMERY*

## THE AMATEUR IN SCIENCE

*(Continued from page 11)*

is enquiry, individuality, even a certain scepticism, a patient enthusiasm, and the search for an underlying order in the many different aspects of nature. All these are still and always will be within the reach of the amateur, and some of them by their nature are more easily sustained by him than by the professional. In spite of all the gloomy talk about human specialisation and specialisation of laboratories, therefore, the last fifty years have been as rich in bright amateurs as any other. They have come from all walks of life and they have contributed to all branches of science. There was Ramanujan, a poor clerk in an Indian shipping office, who turned out to have a fabulous gift for abstract mathematics; ever since his early death twenty five years ago, mathematicians have been busy proving, one after another, all the bulky testament of new theorems which he left behind. There was a pioneer in the theory of statistics who modestly signed himself "Student", who when he died recently was disclosed to be a respectable brewer. There was the amateur astronomer who in 1933 discovered a rare phenomenon of Saturn, and who was in fact the world famous comedian Will Hay. A Rothschild did pioneer work on insects and a Prince of Monaco in the study of the oceans. There has been amateur work as lively and as heartening in biology, in archaeology, in biochemistry, in plant breeding, in anthropology, in electrical engineering, in the study of the weather and of migration and of a hundred other subjects.

For this is the true reservoir of science, this bottomless fund of human curiosity and enthusiasm. While you read this, somewhere in the world a dozen amateur astronomers wrapped in their greatcoats are sitting here and there on the roofs of houses watching the night sky for no other reward but the love of what they are doing. Each of them at least once in his lifetime will be the first to see a comet or some other rare occurrence, and will report it to his national observatory so that they may follow its course. Elsewhere half-a dozen amateurs are watching their home-made seismographs, and at the next big earthquake the professional earthquake stations will be glad to have their observations. In other countries, amateurs are hunting for uranium, and as they yearn to handle a Geiger counter and an equation in physics, some of them will grow interested in the subject and one or two will make scientific discoveries of real value. No-one is barred from joining this great company of the amateur scientists. It is open to those who have never handled a formula and those who tried but didn't do very well the first time. After all, fifty years ago a young mathematician who had not done very well either at school or at college gave up the idea of becoming a university teacher and took a modest job in the Swiss Patent Office. He went on working at his equation of an evening after the day's work was over. At the end of five years he astonished the scientific world which had never heard of him by publishing *The Theory of Relativity*. His name was Albert Einstein.

(An "Exclusive" from UNESCO).

**Printed by K. R. Poddar at the Popular Press (Bombay) Ltd., 35, Tardeo Road, Bombay 7 and published by him from 32, Rampart Row, Fort, Bombay.**