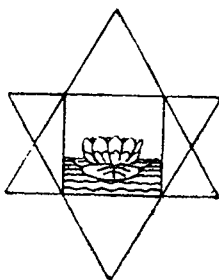


MOTHER INDIA

OCTOBER 1952

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The Supramental is a truth and its advent is in the very nature of things inevitable . . .

I believe the descent of this Truth opening the way to a development of divine consciousness here to be the final sense of the earth evolution.

SRI AUROBINDO

* * *

*A new Light shall break upon the earth,
a new world shall be born: the things that
were promised shall be fulfilled.*

Sri Aurobindo

Translated from the Mother's
"Prayers and Meditations."

MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"

Managing Editor
K. R. PODDAR

Editor.
K. D. SETHNA

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PAGES FROM A JOURNAL

THE EARLY CONVERSATIONS OF SRI AUROBINDO

Compiled from the Notes of Anilbaran Roy

INTRODUCTION

Before Sri Aurobindo went into seclusion in order to carry on a yogic-spiritual action by which he could prepare conditions in earth-life suitable for establishing the Supermind, he used to have long conversations with his disciples. During these conversations a number of subjects were discussed—Sri Aurobindo was asked questions on almost everything under the sun. According to his old disciples, his elucidation of the various problems put before him, whether of human life and thought, or of the practice of Yoga and of the play of spiritual and occult forces beyond the ken of the normal human intelligence, always revealed the same high wisdom and spiritual enlightenment that is apparent in his written works

Exact verbatim reports of all talks were not taken down, but some of the disciples used to keep notes. Anilbaran Roy was in the habit of writing down after the conversations were over most of the things that had been discussed

It is true that Sri Aurobindo later changed his views on some matters to a certain extent, not so much in their fundamental truth as in their application to life amidst the fast-changing conditions of the world; also, as his mastery over the world-forces increased he was led to alter some of his views with regard to the working of the Higher Power in the earth-consciousness. Nevertheless, the fundamental truths he had previously expressed he did not reject but incorporated them in a larger and more complex unity

At some places the notes taken down may not capture the correct tone of Sri Aurobindo's exposition and bring out the precise shade of meaning, or again they may fail to catch the right turn of phrase and the immaculateness of the expression, making the philosophical formulation suffer stylistically to some extent, but on the whole the journal does justice to the informal discourses Sri Aurobindo used to give to his disciples before he went into seclusion, and definitely succeeds in recreating the atmosphere of that period—an atmosphere of erudition and spiritual enlightenment, of friendship and good humour, of love and goodwill, an atmosphere that can only be possible among men who live together in brotherhood for the pursuit of a high spiritual ideal and look up to their God-realised leader to give them light and realisation.

"Synergist"

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Anilbaran Roy's political penchant is well-known among the followers of Sri Aurobindo; especially before he joined the Ashram, his zeal for any kind of political work which would lead to India's independence was tremendous. So when he settled down at Pondicherry, it was but natural that he should frequently ask questions on political matters to one who had so effectively held in his hands the torch of India's Freedom and who was now his spiritual mentor.

Though Sri Aurobindo still possessed his old political *sagesse*, he was now a different person; he saw things from a higher Truth-vision and urged his disciples to do the same by learning to rise to a spiritual consciousness above the mind. His preoccupation was no longer with political problems, but with establishing in earth-existence the Supramental Truth-consciousness he had realised, so that its power could permeate the whole of human life and gradually transform it. Man's social and political life, together with his other activities, was also to be re-shaped in the light of the higher Truth: so he discouraged in his disciples the habit of viewing political problems from the mere mind, but advised them to open it to the light of the Supramental Truth he was bringing down, and allow that Truth to create the necessary forms for the organisation of the external life instead of making ignorant and immature mental constructions. Therefore, whilst answering Anilbaran's questions on Indian politics he would often humorously curb his disciple's zeal, and then make him see the same problem from his own higher spiritual stand-point.

Against this background the following conversations will be better understood and appreciated.

When the disciples had gathered as usual for the evening talks, X remarked: "What about your making a greater India?"

"That is Anilbaran's contribution," came Sri Aurobindo's reply

"But I only quoted from Nolini Kanta," protested Anilbaran. (Anilbaran had previously referred to this matter in a letter to someone.)

Now another disciple joined in—"You said that yourself seven years ago."

"But why should you look backward rather than forward?" replied Sri Aurobindo. "Who has 'made' India that I should 'make' it greater? People do not make a country—all their thoughts and acts are processes in the making of the country. We are only trying to bring the Truth down; if the Truth makes a greater India, that will not be our making. The Truth is greater than we are—we are only its instruments."

But X was not to be denied. The next evening he again brought the conversation round to the same subject. "But you once referred to the making of a greater India when the Truth comes down," he began.

PAGES FROM A JOURNAL

"I did not say that; I think it was either Anilbaran or Nolini."

"In that connection, I think, you said that India would be the starting point. Are you sure of that?"

"Well, I do not make any prophecy. The conditions are favourable here—spirituality is embedded in the race and there is every likelihood that India will be the starting point. But if India neglects this chance, if she follows Anilbaran to the Legislative Council or the Deva Sharma, then India's chance may be lost. Our aspiration is that the Truth may be brought down by us, and that we become the starting point."

Then Anilbaran inquired, "Do those who practise the Supramental Yoga help in any way the spiritual life of other people?"

"Of humanity, you mean?" asked Sri Aurobindo.

"Yes"

"Humanity has yet no spiritual life"

"But people may be brought towards spirituality."

"Of course, when we bring down the Supramental, it will help to raise humanity. A spiritual atmosphere is created by our sadhana which may draw people towards spirituality"

"Do you think that in India the atmosphere is more congenial for leading a spiritual life than in other countries?"

"That is a fact."

"What is the reason for that?"

"It is due to the spiritual sadhana carried on in India for the last four thousand years. Other countries also have a spiritual past—but they have lost it; however, they are again coming back to it. But in India the sadhana has gone on continuously. This does not mean that all men in India are spiritual and that there are no spiritual men in other countries; what is meant is that in India one can more easily take up the spiritual life."

"Can the difficulties in the path be more easily overcome in India?"

"That is not the case. For example, the Mayavada is very difficult to be got over."

Then one day after a discussion on the current political situation Sri Aurobindo remarked, "Politics, as I was saying, is a very dirty affair—but unfortunately, it is a necessity"

Pointing towards Anilbaran, a disciple observed. "He does not seem to swallow this."

"It is for that reason that I am giving him long doses," Sri Aurobindo replied.

Anilbaran joined in. "Tilak used to talk like that. He often said that he would have preferred to be a professor of mathematics, but that he was compelled to take to politics as there was no one else to do this

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work."

"Tilak was cut out for politics. What he said about not liking politics came from his mind, but his vital being required politics. I myself could have said with more truth than Tilak that I unwillingly took to politics; I would have preferred, however not to be a professor but to devote myself to poetry and intellectual pursuits. But even in my case that would not have been wholly true, for my vital being took interest in politics which gives a certain vital satisfaction"

The next evening there was a general talk about different religions when Sri Aurobindo observed, "That has always been the case with aggressive religions—they tend to overrun the earth. Hinduism, on the other hand, has become passive, and therein lies the danger for it."

"How can the passivity of the Hindus be cured?"

"By movement and activity"

Then after one or two questions had been asked, Anilbaran said, "What is the nature of the movement required for the Hindus, and how is it going to be brought about?"

"Have you read the history of India? Take the case of Shivaji in Maharashtra and of Pratapuditya in Bengal. During the Swadeshi movement all the leaders were influenced by some Guru or spiritual man. We were influenced more by Ramakrishna and Vivekananda than by Dadabhai Naoroji and others."

"But there is a marked difference between the national workers of the Swadeshi period and those at the present time," Anilbaran replied. "The former workers drew their inspiration from the Gita; the present workers have discarded the Gita and they laugh at spirituality; they draw their inspiration from Bolshevism or from similar European movements."

"That is the reason why they are unable to achieve much," said Sri Aurobindo. "They only take the forms adopted in the previous movement without realising the changed circumstances and fresh requirements of the time"

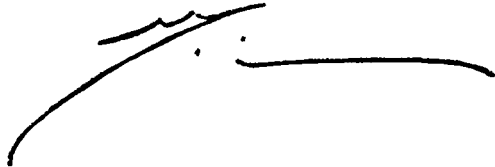
"At present most of our workers and leaders are without any spiritual life," continued Anilbaran.

"I cannot say anything about individuals," Sri Aurobindo replied, "but the central thing in Hinduism is spirituality and there cannot be any big movement without spirituality behind it"

A MESSAGE ON WORK

Here, for each work given, the full strength and Grace are always given at the same time to do the work as it has to be done. If you do not feel the strength and the Grace it proves that there is some mistake in your attitude. The faith is lacking or you have fallen back on old tracks and old creeds and thus you lose all receptivity.

1-10-52



TOWARDS THE ILLIMITABLE

K. D. Sethna

Each of us contains many personalities. Here the author disengages a trend of his nature and gives it full and sole play, letting it run to its own extreme and find its own exclusive turn of thought and expression. The result is a blend of the dramatic and the personal, at once the enactment of a role and genuine self-disclosure.

A moment's warmth and the intimacies of a handful can never be my terminus. I must either possess like a God or feel the universe alien and strive to destroy its endless multitudes by some mystical fiat of my consciousness. If I fail, I move among men like a dusky cloud, depressing them and myself losing all savour of life. Even the poet in me, whose natural being is to discover the veins of gold embedded in dull rock, keeps drifting with a listless countenance. I know that a Light dissolving every imperfection lives somewhere and that I have a home in it which on occasion I attain. But the sense of not having attained it for good is often the verge of lunacy for my wits and devours each poetic thrill as soon as it is born.

Oh I am obsessed with the illimitable! It is not only because the visitations of exalted feeling are rare that dumb blanks occur in the history of my mind. Great inspiration can never be too frequent a capture—we are not strong enough to bear and retain the glowing pressure of deep significances—we are soft and yielding to the downthrusts of divinity, the sublime lights plunge through us and out of us because we hold up no sustained response to their cry and cannot catch their brightness on a firm tablet of memory. If our emotions could stand the impact of high heaven and resound to it instead of answering to rhythms that are commonplace, there would be more poetry in this world. But sometimes a most peculiar numbness debars me from clasping inspiration. It is not that the receptive vessel is weak or the skies are empty. Reflecting that in a thousand million years the sun will be a shrivelled ember, the earth a frozen sleep and no least stir of even a grass-blade pierce the silence, the inanitation, the winter without end and all that passion and poetry have built grandly in the spaces of human consciousness leave not a mark on the vacuity of that distant doom

TOWARDS THE ILLIMITABLE

I stand paralysed. An utter hopelessness comes over me; no stroke of my pen, however delightful, seems worth the trouble of lasting for a mere thousand million years. Does not every phrase claim, by the superb imagination burning in it, an eternity of existence? Why then should I be baulked of the Spirit's immortal right, why suffer the indignity of being fobbed off with a few paltry millenniums when God's own termlessness is my dream in all that I manifest of His creative glory? Most foolish to the practical sense—this petulance of the dreamer in me, but many a page that might have quivered into beauty is left by it a white desert like the snow of that inhuman epoch prophesied by Science as the tomb of all the wonder of words poetry sets winging through the ages.

If my work must perish and I go down the dark road even before, I must seek after a more durable power than is granted to the poet or his poetry. Nothing appears to me satisfying save the breaking of whatever walls guard me from self-loss in the Infinite. To bear the indifference of the winds and the tides, the aloof greatness of wheeling worlds that outsoar man's living, the magnificent and icy touch of the Cosmos, we must ourselves become a greatness, an immensity, a transcendence of all human heat. But a tiny creature who has in him the power to feel the weight of infinitude must be in essence an infinitude that has forgotten its own grandeur. The tremendous gap we suffer is the oblivion of a tremendous fullness which is our deepest life. I cannot help the intuition that we are equal to the Cosmos. But we can know our own immeasurable truth only by dying to the smallness of our ego, the littleness of the whole human race, the finitude of all earth, the limitation of even the sun and the moon and the planets heaped together in a colossal bonfire. Stripped of the least attachment, we must endeavour to become nothing short of a pure Existence stretched without end through space and time, free and featureless and immutable. No form, no period should confine us. That alone is master within us, which can stand outside each object and beyond each circumstance. Once that sovereignty is acquired, then without harm each object and circumstance can be embraced and our life throb with burning details.

You must be considering my mystical megalomania the pursuit of a majestic mirage. What will you think if I fling at you the sublime perversenesses of a nympholept? You will deem me not just reverie-infested but also a Grand Inquisitor putting the human heart-beat on the rack. For, I have a most difficult confession to force out of love's delicate mouth. I want lovers everywhere to admit to themselves that all their consummations are tumultuous betrayers of what the wistful eyes and the hungry hands had promised. Not the brief flare-up of the nerves had lifted a beacon on the hilltop of the future to call forward love's limbs. Surely a mightier fulfil-

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ment had haunted us, mightier than flesh clinging to flesh—mightier also than two souls hurling against flesh-barriers to become each other's possession. Abelard, what you were looking for when Héloïse came to you was not Héloïse but your own priesthood, the command of some absolute Beauty smiling above change. That is why the barred door of your refusal to look beyond her had to be pushed open by Fate smiting away your genitals like an obstinate padlock! But all are not made God's eunuchs in so crude a fashion, and their paths to Truth are cut short instead. In the lives of those who stir with a vague superhuman trouble that wears no familiar face, the stroke of Fate in some form or other is always in waiting. They are beaten down from their proud kisses and the embracing ease of their marriage-beds—down to the dust where they may learn to kneel and worship. But if we are wise and if all would behold the true light behind the surface glitter, lover should speak to lover: "Various miseries will befall us, time will tear many a precious portion out of our lives, and death may divide—who knows how early?—the touch that is our entire happiness. If suffer we must, since none can escape being vulnerable clay, why should we not turn to the Everlasting in the midst of the ephemeral and, separated, clasp yet the Wonder where all separations cease—not the blind clod of death but the shadowless Spirit within, that is always and everywhere one? There the ecstatic pain is found in which, by being cloven apart here, we shall know the love which holds together the quintessence of all things."

Cruel, no doubt, is my admonition. I myself who give it shudder at times. Yet I cannot deny the Truth, for hours are there when I stand in the presence of a Beauty and a Beatitude whose very invisibleness has the power to blot out the gold of our broad day. How can I wrong Thy kingship, O Spirit Eternal, by forgetting those hours? I am called and called beyond each mundane prize. Whatever Thy form, Thou unknown menace to my human heart, I love Thee. O sweet devouring Wideness—from above and around and below Thou comest. Nowhere can I escape Thee then; and at the first touch of Thy seizure of joy there is no desire left in me to escape!

(First published in "The All-India Weekly")

PROBLEMS OF INTEGRAL YOGA

The Unpublished Correspondence of Sri Aurobindo

COMPILER'S NOTE

Many letters of Sri Aurobindo have already been published expressing his views on almost all matters concerning human existence and explaining the process of his Integral Yoga—the Yoga of Supramental Transformation. They have been presented in the form of a philosophical and psychological statement of his leading ideas, experience-concepts and spiritually realised truths, and consequently occupy an important place in the scheme of Aurobindonian literature. The object of this Series, however, is different—it is to present problems of Integral Yoga exactly as they were put before Sri Aurobindo by the disciples from time to time, together with Sri Aurobindo's comments on them. It is felt that a compilation of this type will be a really living document of his teaching and will help the reader to come to close grips with problems of this particular Yoga.

Often, the questions asked by the disciples will not be given when the nature of the problem discussed is easily understandable from Sri Aurobindo's reply; secondly, the letters published will not always be in answer to particular problems—they may either be important injunctions given to the disciples or of a purely informative nature. Sometimes, letters already printed in the various journals and books of the Ashram may also be included if they form an important connecting link in the sequence of questions and answers.

“Synergist”

Sri Aurobindo's letters on his own life and sadhana were published in the August issue. The same Section is continued here with his letters on the Mother. The Miscellaneous Section follows as usual.

SECTION A SRI AUROBINDO'S LETTERS ON THE MOTHER

8-2-34

Disciple: Is the Mother's Grace only general?

Sri Aurobindo: Both general and special

8-2-34

Disciple: How is one to receive what she grants in general?

Sri Aurobindo: You have only to keep yourself open and whatever you need and can receive at the moment will come.

* * *

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10-2-34

Disciple: Is it true that when the Mother plays on the organ she calls down the Gods of the higher planes to help us?

Sri Aurobindo: Not consciously.

9-2-34

Disciple: Then does it mean that they are attracted to the music and come down?

Aurobindo: They may be.

10-2-34

Disciple: Does the Mother bring down something while playing?

Sri Aurobindo: If she did not bring something, why should she play at all?

19-4-34

It is not altogether the way—if the mind is active it is more difficult to become aware of what the Mother is bringing. It is not thoughts she brings, but the higher light, force etc.

* * *

22-3-34

It is the Mother's business. She alone can say what is the right way to deal with people. If she were to deal with people only according to their defects, there would be hardly half a dozen people left in the Ashram.

* * *

19-4-35

The Mother's seriousness (at Pranam) is due to some absorption in some work she is doing or very often to some strong attack of hostile forces in the atmosphere.

In the evening the Mother brings down the silence, but not the silence only—also the power for transformation. But as calm and silence are the first requisite for transformation, you felt that.

* * *

It is only if one can feel the inward touch of the Mother without the necessity of the physical contact that the true value of the latter can be really active. Otherwise there is a danger of its becoming like a mere artificial stimulant or a pulling of vital force from her for one's own benefit.

2-3-37

* * *

If they are so dependent on the physical touch that they cannot feel anything when it is not there, this means that they have not used it at all

PROBLEMS OF INTEGRAL YOGA

for developing the inner connection, if they had, the inner connection after so many years would already be there. The inner connection can only be developed by an inner concentration and aspiration, not by a mere outward pranam every day. What most people do is simply to pull vital force from the Mother and live on it—but that is not the object of the Pranam.

4-3-37

* * *

Pulling is a psychological act—people are always pulling vital force from each other though they do not do it consciously, i.e., with a purpose in the mind—it is instinctive in the vital to draw force from wherever it can. All contact is in fact a receiving and giving of vital forces in a small or great degree. You have yourself said that after meeting such and such person you felt empty and exhausted—that means the person drew your vital force out of you. That is what people do at Pranam, instead of being quiet and receptive, they pull vitally. It can be stopped by cutting off connection, but if the Mother did that at Pranam, then the Pranam would be useless.

5-3-37

* * *

SECTION B. MISCELLANEOUS LETTERS

TWO VISIONS

Anilbaran. During meditation this evening X saw a child coming out of his lower abdomen and making pranam to you. I explained that the lower vital in him was coming under the influence of the Psychic. He asks me to write to you about it for an explanation.

Sri Aurobindo. Yes, your explanation was correct. 12-8-35

* * *

Anilbaran: X writes about a vision his wife saw, and asks whether it has any significance for them. I am sending his letter.*

Sri Aurobindo: These visions are indications of some force at work which passes through the field of the consciousness or perhaps touches it or is at work upon it. Lights and colour indicate forces—when formed like that, it means a formed force at work. Pale blue indicates probably the Sri Krishna light; the meaning of red depends on the exact shade, for there are many red lights each with a different significance. It is however only when the light descends or acts on the consciousness that such things assume a dynamic importance. 11-5-36.

* Unfortunately, this letter is missing from Anilbaran's collection. Therefore it is not included here—Compiler

PROBLEMS OF INTEGRAL YOGA

On receiving this reply Anilbaran wrote back: "The red which X's wife saw in her vision was like the inner part of fire when it is burning well. What does it signify?"

Sri Aurobindo: If it was fire-red, it may have been the Agni-force itself. 23-5-36.

A DREAM EXPERIENCE

Disciple Mother, two days back, on the night I wrote to you last, I saw a peculiar dream; peculiar because it was very much like a real happening. I dreamt that it was a darshan day and that I came late for Pranam. When I came, three letters were just going to be sent to me. one from You, one from Sri Aurobindo and the other from C informing me about Your letters to my enquiry. I took the letters and kept them with me while making Pranam. I prostrated myself at the feet of Sri Aurobindo who was very glad to see me. He blessed me with two hands very lovingly. Then I did the same at Your feet; You were watching me very affectionately—You too gave me Your blessings. You looked full of joy, and I received inexpressible joy and peace from Your blessings.

I interpret the dream as the psychic influence of Your presence and blessings, felt through my physico-vital. Mother, am I right?

Sri Aurobindo: It was evidently a contact on the vital-physical plane or the subtle-physical which is so close to the physical that the effects last afterwards.

THE SADHANA OF SRI AUROBINDO'S YOGA

COMPILER'S NOTE

In recent years Sri Aurobindo's teaching and his Ashram at Pondicherry have attracted a great deal of attention. People from India as well as abroad who visit this spiritual centre are greatly impressed by its numerous activities and by the perfect organisation of the collective life of its seven hundred and fifty residents. Nevertheless, many of them, though they appreciate the outer side of the Ashram life, find it difficult to understand in what way exactly the actual sadhana of the Integral Yoga is done; in the absence of a set form of discipline which they can see being followed by all alike, they are unable to have a clear grasp of the inner yogic life of the sadhaks and their spiritual development.

It is therefore felt that an account of typical day-to-day sadhana of different disciples written by themselves and published in the form of a diary, will greatly help people to have an insight into the working of the inner life of the Ashram.

The account published below is entitled *My Sadhana with the Mother*. This account is all the more interesting and valuable because under each statement there is Sri Aurobindo's comment—often brief, but always illuminating. As the reader will go through it, he will understand, apart from other things, the extremely important part played by the Mother in Sri Aurobindo's Yoga of Transformation, and how She and Sri Aurobindo have established a spiritual poise by which they act together on the sadhaks. He will also begin to realise how this Yoga cannot be done and followed to its logical consummation by one's own efforts, but only through the Mother.

"Synergist"

MY SADHANA WITH THE MOTHER

BY "AB"

THE KNOWLEDGE AND THE RISING OF THE EGO

April, 1935

AB It is true that when one crosses the border of the mind and lives over the head, the word "difficulty" exists no more for him. For the hostile or the lower forces cannot touch the higher planes which are the Mother's.

SRI Aurobindo. From the higher mind upwards all is free from the action of the hostile forces. For they all belong to the spiritual consciousness though with varying degrees of light and power and completeness.

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AB. Till recently, it was I who used to enter into the Mother's consciousness and live in it. Now, it seems as if She is beginning to come into me and be with me all the time.

Sri Aurobindo. It is the next thing that must be perfected.

AB. I think the sadhaks should be satisfied with describing what happens in their sadhana, and have no demands regarding the answers they receive from you. To ask questions urged by the vital ego will only disturb the sadhana.

S.A. It is so indeed because it is their mind and vital that put the question and the ego is always wanting to make use of the answer or the mental ignorance to distort it.

AB. So many are still burdened with difficulties, depression and attacks. This happens, I suppose, because many of them try to seek union with the Mother through Her most material part—the physical being. They seem to be seeking more and more for Her physical nearness, touch, presence, etc. But the fact is that the union of the consciousness with Her physical Self will be actually the last in our sadhana.

Sri Aurobindo. Quite right. To live inside is the first principle of spiritual life and from inside to reshape the physical existence. But so many insist on remaining in the external and their relation with the Mother is governed by the ordinary reactions of the external unspiritualised nature.

AB. During the morning Pranam, the Mother gave me a flower signifying "the psychological perfection." You know that it is a flower with five petals, but what I received had six petals! The five petals mean love, bhakti, surrender, sincerity and faith—what should I understand by the sixth petal?

Sri Aurobindo. The five are purity (not love), devotion, etc. The sixth is steadfastness (stability, etc.).

AB. An increasing muteness spreads all over me. I see that the inhabitants of the region through which I am passing have silence as their speech. Here one does not need to take a plunge into stillness but rather the stillness plunges into one! What shall one pray for since even the knowledge is suspended here!

It is an entire absorption into the Mother's eternal and infinite Peace and Silence. Once it is entered one forgets who one is. To think of leaving this plane even for a second would be torture.

It is a known fact that some getting into this plane found it or rather took it to be so high and absolute that they never dreamt of going beyond it. But it is only the first of the spiritual planes. I must confess that it does not contain Peace, Bliss and Freedom in unlimited quantity. These seem, at least to our human mind, so supreme and profound and utterly intoxicating that it is not surprising that some people should be satisfied

THE SADHANA OF SRI AUROBINDO'S YOGA

to remain eternally plunged in them

Sri Aurobindo. It was the goal for most Yogins, but for us it is the beginning and basis. For it is the state of spiritual liberation which was all they wanted.

AB. Every evening brings a strong voidness—*shama*. I suppose, it is meant as a preparation for my reception of what the Mother brings down during the night Meditation

Sri Aurobindo Yes *

AB. I received some sort of intimation from within that the Mother is working directly from the supramentalised Overmind, and that it is its direct Power that works at present in the Ashram—at least in some sadhakas. Is it not true?

Sri Aurobindo. There is some of truth in that, but it is only a beginning.

AB. A suggestion tells me that, at least for some time I should write to You as little as possible and devote more time to the deeper meditations.

Sri Aurobindo. To write is necessary but it is not necessary to write much. A little is sufficient at present.

AB. I am glad to know that you don't think it necessary for me to write much, but then the difficulty is, how shall I bring down the higher knowledge? You know that it is only whilst writing that I open myself to its descent.

Sri Aurobindo. I suggest "a little" only in case you find it difficult, as you said, to write owing to the pressure of the silence. But if things come, there is no reason to stop them.

AB. Will you please let me know why You write, "You are right", etc., to what I put down in my letters? It is not really I who write; whatever good You find in my correspondence is, as you well know, from the Mother's Knowledge. I, a beggar of the road, what could I know or write!

Sri Aurobindo. I cannot write "Mother is right." When I say, you are right, it is understood that the "you" gets its knowledge from the Mother.

AB. I notice that sometimes in order not to send my letters back without something of Yourself, through love and kindness for me You make some remark on them even when such a remark is not really required. But I feel that this is not really necessary. After reading the letters if You draw a small line at the end it will be sufficient to give me the indication that they have not come back without Your reading them, as it sometimes happens

* In the original the word "Yes" is underlined—Compiler.

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Sri Aurobindo Very well.

A.B. When I suggested about drawing a line, I had thought that it would be possible for me to impose a complete surrender on my outer being. Since three days I have been trying to do it.

The outer nature is losing all interest and joy in responding to the higher knowledge. It says, it is no use spending time in bringing down the higher knowledge, it has now no value (as You don't put Your comments on what I write). How am I to know that all I write is from the higher source without Your written approval, for it could be a mixture of my own mind or of some non-spiritual planes?

Sri Aurobindo All these suggestions are absolutely absurd. It is the ego rising up again and wanting to be patted on the back and told how clever it is and how much knowledge it is getting. (Sri Aurobindo then pointed out to me that since I was aware that the knowledge I received was the Mother's, he saw no necessity in making any comments; however, he added that if the knowledge got mixed with the constructions of my own mind, he would indicate the defects.) If there is none (mixture) why should I put in unnecessary approving comments on it? It was your own psychic that made you suggest putting the line so as to get rid of the remnant of old ego that was secretly feeding on my comments, and it was to help in that that I kept silence.

If there is anything to say, you can trust in me to say it—if there is no remark called for, you should leave me free to keep silence. That is the rule I keep always with those who have advanced sufficiently—not to need mental encouragement or explanations at every step. It seems to me that you have advanced far enough for that also.

THE FUTURE POETRY

Sri Aurobindo

(11)

THE COURSE OF ENGLISH POETRY

(3)

The Elizabethan drama is an expression of the stir of the life-spirit, at its best it is a great or strong, buoyant or rich or beautiful, passionately excessive or gloomily tenebrous force of vital poetry. The rest of the utterance of the time is full of the lyric joy, sweetness or emotion or moved and coloured self-description of the same spirit. There is much in it of curious and delighted thinking, but little of a high and firm intellectual value. Culture is still in its imaginative childhood and the thinking mind rather works for the curiosity and beauty of thought and even more for the curiosity and beauty of the mere expression of thought than for its light and its vision. The poetry which comes out of this mood is likely to have great charm and imaginative, emotional or descriptive appeal, but may very well miss that depth of profounder substance and that self-possessing plenitude of form which are the other characteristics of a rounded artistic creation. Beauty of poetical expression abounds in an unstinted measure, but for the music of a deeper spirit or higher significance we have to wait, the attempt at it we get, but not often all the success of its presence.

Spenser, the poet of second magnitude of the time, gives us in his work this beauty in its fullest abundance but also the limited measure of this deeper but not quite successful endeavour. *The Faerie Queene* is indeed a poem of unfailing imaginative charm and its two opening cantos are exquisite in execution, a stream of liquid harmony, of curiously opulent yet finely tempered description, of fluid poetical phrase and minutely seen image—for these are Spenser's constant gifts. The native form of his genius which displays more of descriptive vision than of the larger creative power or narrative force,—they work out an inspired idea, a little too much lost in detail and in the diffusion of a wealthy prolixity but still holding well together its rather difficult and entangling burden of symbols and forms and achieving in the end some accomplished totality of fine poetic effect. But

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if we look at the poem as a whole, the effect intended fails, not because it happened to be left unfinished, nor even because the power in it is not equally sustained and is too evidently running thinner and thinner as it proceeds, but because it could not have come to a successful completion. Kalidasa's *Birth of the War-God* was left unfinished, or finished by a very inferior hand, yet even in the fragment there is already a masterly totality of effect; there is the sense of a great and admirable design. Vergil's *Aeneid*, though in a way finished, did not receive those last touches which sometimes make all the difference between perfection and the approach to it, and we feel too, not a failure of art,—for that is a defect which could never be alleged against Vergil,—but a relative thinning of the supporting power and inspiration. Still the consummate artistic intelligence of the poet has been so steadily at work, so complete from the very inception, it has so thought out and harmonised its idea from the beginning that a fine and firm total effect is still given. But here there is a defect of the artistic intellect, a vice or insufficiency in its original power of harmonising construction, characteristic of the Elizabethan, almost of the English mind.

Spenser's intention seems to have been to combine in his own way the success of Ariosto with the success of Dante. His work was to have been a rich and beautiful romance and at the same time a great interpretation by image and symbol, not here of the spiritual but of the ethical meaning of human life. A faery-tale and an ethical symbol in one is his conception of his artistic task. That is a kind of combination difficult enough to execute, but capable of a great and beautiful effect in a master hand; it had been achieved with supreme success by Homer and Valmiki. But the Elizabethan intellectual direction runs always towards conceit and curious complication and it is unable to follow an idea for the sake of what is essential in it, but tangles it up in all sorts of turns and accessories, seizing on all manner of disparates it tends to throw them together without any real fusion. Spenser in his idea and its execution fell a victim to all these defects of the intelligence. He has taken his intellectual scheme from his Hellenism, the virtues to be figured in typical human beings, but dressed it up with the obvious mediaeval ingenuity of the allegory. Nor is he satisfied with a simple combination; the turn of the allegory must be at once ethical, ecclesiastical and political in one fell complexity, his witch of Faery-land represents Falsehood, the Roman Catholic Church and Mary Queen of Scots in an irritating jumble. The subject of a poem of this kind has to be the struggle of the powers of good and evil, but the human figures through whom it works out to its issues, cannot be merely the good or the evil, this or that virtue or vice, but must stand for them as their expressive opportunity of life, not as their allegorical body. That

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is how Homer and Valmiki work out their idea. Spenser, a great poet, is not blind to this elementary condition, but his tangled skein of allegory continually hampers the sounder conception and the interpretative narration works itself through the maze of its distractions which we are obliged to accept, not for their own interest or living force and appeal, but for the beauty of the poetic expression and description to which they give occasion.

Besides this fault of the initial conception, there are defects in the execution. After a time at least the virtues and vices altogether lose their way in faery-land or they become mistily vague and negligible which is, but considering the idea of the poem ought not to be, a great relief to the reader. We are content to read the poem or, still better, each canto apart as a romance and leave the meaning to take care of itself,—what was intended as a great ethical interpretative poem of the human soul, as a series of romantic descriptions and incidents. We see where the defect is when we make a comparison with the two other greater poems which had a similar intention. The *Odyssey* is a battle of human will and character supported by divine power against evil men and wrathful gods and adverse circumstance and the deaf opposition of the elements, whose scenes move with an easy inevitability between the lands of romance and the romance of actual human life, losing nowhere in the wealth of incident and description either the harmonising aesthetic colour or the simple central idea. The *Ramayana* too is made up of first materials which belong to the world of faery romance, but, transformed into an epic greatness, they support easily a grandiose picture of the struggle of incarnate God and Titan, of a human culture expressing the highest order and range of ethical values with a reign of embattled anarchic force, egoistic violence and domination and lawless self-assertion. The whole is of a piece and even in its enormous length and protracted detail there is a victorious simplicity, largeness and unity. The English poet loses himself in the outward, in romantic incident and description pursued by his imagination for their own sake. His idea is often too much and too visibly expressed, yet in the end finds no successful expression. Instead of relying upon the force of his deeper poetic idea to sustain him, he depends on intellectual device and parades his machinery. The thread of connection is wandering and confused. He achieves a diffuse and richly confused perplexity, not a unity.

These are the natural limitations of the Elizabethan age, and we have to note them with what may seem at first a disproportionate emphasis, because they are the key to the immediately following reaction of English poetry with its turn in Milton towards a severe and serious intellectual effort and discipline and its fall in Dryden and Pope to a manner which

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got away from the most prominent defects of the Elizabethan mind at the price of a loss of all its great powers. English poetry before Milton had not passed through any training of the poetic and artistic intelligence; it had abounding energy and power, but no self-discipline of the idea. Except in Shakespeare it fails to construct, it at once loses and finds itself in a luxurious indulgence of its power, follows with a loose sweetness or a vehement buoyancy all its impulses good, bad or indifferent. Still what it does achieve is unique and often superlative in its kind. It achieves an unsurpassed splendour of imaginative vitality, vision of the life spirit, and also an unsurpassed intensity of poetical expression, life venting itself in speech, pouring its lyric emotion, its intimate and intuitive description of itself in passionate detail, thinking aloud in a native utterance of poetry packed with expressive image or felicitous in directness. There is no other poetry which has in at all the same degree this achievement.

This poetry is then great in achievement within the limits of its method and substance, but that substance and method belong to the second step of the psychological gradations by which poetry becomes a more and more profound and subtle instrument of the self-expression of the spirit in man. English poetry I have remarked, follows the grades of this ascension with a singular fidelity of sequence. At first it was satisfied with only a primary superficial response to the most external appearances of life, its visible figures, incidents, primary feelings and characteristics, to mirror these things clearly, justly, with a certain harmony of selection and a just sufficient transmutation in the personality and aesthetic temperament is enough for this earlier type of poetry, all the more easily satisfied because everything is fresh, interesting, stimulating, and the liveliness of the poetic impression replaces the necessity of subtlety or depth. Great poetry can be written in early times with this as its substantial method, but not afterwards when the race mind has begun to make an intenser and more inward response to life. It then becomes the resort of a secondary inspiration which is unable to rise to the full heights of poetic possibility; or else this external method still persists as part of the outward manner of a more subjective creation, but with a demand for more heightened effects and a more penetrating expression.

This is what has happened in the Elizabethan age. The external tendency still persists, but it is no longer sufficient. Where it is most preserved, it still demands a more vehement response, strong colours, violent passions, exaggerated figures, out-of-the-way or crowding events. Life is still the Muse of its poetry, but it is a Life which demands to feel itself more and is knocking at the gates of the deeper subjective being. And in all the best work of the time it has already got there, not

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very deep, but still enough to be initially subjective. Whatever Shakespeare may suggest,—a poet's critical theories are not always a just clue to his inspiration,—it is not the holding up of a mirror to life and Nature, but a moved and excited reception and evocation. Life throws its impressions, but what seizes upon them is a greater and deeper life-power in the poet which is not satisfied with mirroring or just beautifully responding, but begins to throw up at once around them its own rich matter of being and so creates something new, more personal, intimate, fuller of an inner vision, emotion, passion of self-expression. This is the source of the new intensity, it is this impulse towards an utterance of the creative life-power within which drives towards the dramatic form and acts with such unexampled power in Shakespeare, at another extremity of the Elizabethan mind, in Spenser, it gets farther away from the actuality of life and takes its impressions as hints only for a purely imaginative creation which has an aim at things symbolic, otherwise revelatory, deeper down in the soul itself, and shadows them out through the magic of romance if it cannot yet intimately seize and express them. Still even there the method of the utterance, if not altogether its aim, is the voice of Life lifting itself out into waves of word and colour and image and sheer beauty of sound. Imagination, thought, vision work with the emotional life-mind as their instrument or rather in it as a medium, accepted as the form and force of their being.

Great poetry is the result, but there are other powers of the human mind which have not yet been mastered, and to get at these is the next immediate step of English poetry. The way it follows is to bring forward the intellect as its chief instrument, the thought-mind no longer carried along in the wave of life, but detaching itself from it to observe and reflect upon it. We have at first an intermediate manner, that of Milton's early work and of the Carolean poets, in which the Elizabethan impulse prolongs itself but is fading away under the stress of an increasing intellectuality. This rises on one side into the ripened classical perfection of Milton, falls away on the other through Waller into the reaction in Dryden and Pope.

KALIDASA'S CHARACTERS

Sri Aurobindo

A large number of writings on Kalidasa by Sri Aurobindo were found among his manuscripts. They are not exactly finished articles but elaborated notes made by him during his stay at Baroda. They will soon be brought out in book-form. A section of these acute and brilliant appraisals is published below for the first time.

The prose of Kalidasa's dialogue is the most unpretentious and admirable prose in Sanskrit literature; it is perfectly simple, easy in pitch and natural in tone with a shining, smiling, rippling lucidity, a soft caroling gait like a little girl running along in a meadow and smiling back at you as she goes. There is the true image of it, a quiet English meadow with wild flowers on a bright summer morning, breezes abroad, the smell of hay in the neighbourhood, honeysuckle on the bank, hedges full of convolvuluses or wild roses, a ditch on one side with cress or forget-me-nots and nothing pronounced or poignant except perhaps a stray whiff of meadow-sweet from a distance. This admirable unobtrusive charm and just observed music (Coleridge) makes it run easily into verse in English. In translating one has at first some vague idea of reproducing the form as well as the spirit of the Sanskrit, rendering verse stanza by verse stanza and prose movement by prose movement. But it will soon be discovered that except in the talk of the buffoon and not always then Kalidasa's prose never evokes its just echo, never finds its answering pitch, tone or quality in English prose. The impression it creates is in no way different from Shakespeare's verse taken anywhere at its easiest and sweetest*

*Your lord does know my mind: I cannot love him:
Yet I suppose him virtuous, know him noble,
Of great estate, of fresh and stamless youth;
In voices well divulged, free, learned and valiant;
And in dimension and in shape of nature
A gracious person; but yet I cannot love him.
He might have took his answer long ago.*

* Twelfth Night—Act I, Sc. V

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Or again, still more close in its subtle and telling simplicity:

Ol. What is your parentage?

Vi Above my fortunes, yet my state is well.

I am a gentleman.

Ol Get you to your lord,

I cannot love him; let him send no more,

Unless perchance you came to me again

To tell me how he takes it

There is absolutely no difference between this and the prose of Kalidasa, since even the absence of metre is compensated by the natural majesty, grace and rhythmic euphony of the Sanskrit language and the sweet seriousness and lucid effectiveness it naturally wears when it is not tortured for effects.

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4

Pururavas is the poet's second study of kingship, he differs substantially from Agnimitra. The latter is a prince, a soldier and man of the world yielding by the way to the allurements of beauty, but not preoccupied with passion, the sub-title of the piece might be, in a more innocent sense than Victor Hugo's, *La Roi S'amuse*. He is the mirror of a courteous and self-possessed gentleman, full of mildness and grace, princely tact, *savoir faire*, indulgent kindness, yet energetic withal and quietly resolute in his pleasure as well as in his serious affairs. "Ah, Sire," says Dharinie with sharp irony, "if you only showed as much diplomatic skill and *savoir faire* in the affairs of your kingdom, what a good thing it would be." But one feels that these are precisely the gifts he would show in all his action, that the innocently unscrupulous and quite delightful tact and diplomacy with which he pursues his love-affair is but the mirror of the methods he pursued in domestic politics. We see in him the typical and ideal king of an age hedonistic, poetic, worldly but withal heroic and capable. Pururavas is made of very different material. He is a king and a hero, a man of high social and princely virtues, otherwise Kalidasa would not have taken the trouble to depict him; but these qualities are like splendid robes which his nature has put on, and which have become so natural to him that he cannot put them off if he would, they are not the naked essential man. The fundamental Pururavas is not the king and the hero but the poet and lover. The poet on a throne has been the theme of Shakespeare in his *Richard II* and of Renan in his *Antichrist*; and from these two great studies we can realise the European view of the phenomenon. To the European mind the meeting of poet and king in one man wears always the appearance of an anomaly, a misplacement, the very qualities which have fitted him to be a poet unfit him to rule. A mastering egotism becomes the mainspring of the poetic temperament so placed; the imagination of the man is centred in himself, and the realm

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and people whose destinies are in his hands, seem to him to be created only to minister to his ingenious or soaring fancies and his dramatic, epic or idealistic sense of what should be; his intellect lives in a poetic world of its own and thinks in tropes and figures instead of grappling with the concrete facts of the world hence he is unfitted for action and once absolute power is out of his hands, once he is no longer able to arrange men and events to his liking as if he were a dramatist manoeuvring the creatures of his brain but is called upon to measure his will and ability against others, he fails and his failure leads to tragic issues, for he persists in attempting to weave his own imaginations into life, he will not see facts; he will not recognize the inexorable logic of events Hence, though not necessarily a coward, though often a man of real courage and even ability, he plays the part of an incompetent or a weakling or both. Moreover, he tends to become a tyrant, to lose moral perspective and often all sense of proportion and sanity, for he regards himself as the centre of a great drama, and to all who will not play the part he assigns them or satisfy his emotional needs and impulses, to all who get in the way of his imaginative egotism he becomes savage and cruel, his rage when a word of this life-drama is mispronounced or a part ill-studied or a conception not complied with is a magnified reflection of the vexation felt by a dramatist at a similar *contretemps* in the performance of his darling piece, and unfortunately unlike the playwright he has the power to vent his indignation on the luckless offenders in a fashion only too effective The last end of the poet-king is almost always tragic, the mad-house the prison, suicide, exile or the dagger of the assassin It must be admitted that this dramatic picture largely reflects the facts of history We know some instances of poet-kings in history, Nero and Ludwig of Bavaria were extreme instances, but we have a far more interesting because typical series in the history of the British Isles The Stuarts were a race of born poets whom the irony of their fate insisted upon placing one after the other upon a throne, with the single exception of Charles II (James VI was a pedant, which for practical purposes is as bad as a poet) they were all men of an imaginative temper, artistic tastes or impossible ideals and the best of them had in a most wonderful degree the poet's faculty of imparting this enthusiasm to others. The terrible fate which dogged them was no mysterious doom of the Atridae, but the natural inexorable result of the incompatibility between their temperament and their position. Charles II was the only capable man of his line, the only one who set before him a worldly and unideal aim and recognised facts and using the only possible ways and means quietly and patiently accomplished it The first James had some practical energy, but it was marred by the political idealism, the disregard of a wise opportunism, and the tyrannical severity towards those who thwarted him which distinguish-

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ed his whole dreamy, fascinating and utterly unpractical race. Nor is the type wanting in Indian History. Sriharsha of Cashmere in the pages of Kalhana affords a most typical picture of the same unhappy temperament. It is interesting therefore to see how Kalidasa dealt with a similar character.

To our surprise we find that the Hindu poet does not associate incompetence, failure and tragedy with this image of the poet-king; on the contrary, Pururavas is a Great Emperor, well-loved of his people, an unconquered hero, the valued ally of the Gods, successful in empire, successful in war, successful in love. Was then Kalidasa at fault in his knowledge of the world and of human nature? Such a solution would be inconsistent with all we know of the poet's genius as shown in his other works. The truth is that Kalidasa simply gives us the other side of the shield. It is not an invariable law of human nature that the poetic temperament should be, by its temperament, absolutely unfitted for practical action and regal power. Nero and Charles I were artistic temperaments cursed with the doom of kingship. But Alexander of Macedon and Napoleon Buonaparte were poets on a throne, and the part they played in history was not that of incompetents and weaklings. There are times when Nature gifts the poetic temperament with a peculiar grasp of the conditions of action and an irresistible tendency to create their poems not in ink and on paper, but in living characters and on the great canvas of the world; such men become portents and wonders, whom posterity admires or hates but can only imperfectly understand. Like Joan of Arc or Mazzini and Garibaldi, they save a dying nation, or like Napoleon and Alexander they dominate a world. They are only possible because they only get full scope in races which unite with an ardent and heroic temperament a keen susceptibility to poetry in life, idealism and hero worship. Now the Hindus, before the fibre of their temperament had been loosened by hedonistic materialism on the one side and Buddhistic impracticability on the other, were not only the most ardent and idealistic race in the world, the most ready to put prose behind them, the most dominated by thought and imagination, but also one of the most heroic, and they still preserved much of this ancient temper in the days of Kalidasa. It was only natural therefore that the national dramatist in representing the great legendary founder of the Kurus as of the poet-emperor type, should mould him of stronger make and material and not as one of the beautiful porcelain vessels that are broken. Yet always, even when gifted with the most extraordinary practical abilities, the poetic temperament remains itself and keeps a flaw of weakness in the heart of its strength. The temperaments of Alexander and Napoleon were both marked by megalomania, gigantic imaginations, impossible ideals; though not wantonly cruel or tyrannical, they at times showed a singular

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insensibility to moral restraints and the demands of generous and humane feeling; especially in times of abnormal excitement or temporary indulgence of their passions, the birth-mark came out and showed itself in acts of often insane tyranny. This was especially the case with Alexander; but Napoleon was not free from the same taint. Alexander, we know, strove consciously to mould his life into an Iliad; Napoleon regarded his as a Titanic epic and when facts would not fit in ideally with his conception of himself as its great protagonist, he would alter and falsify them with as little scruple as a dramatist would feel in dealing licentiously with the facts of history. All men of this type, moreover, show a strange, visionary impracticability in the midst of their practical energy and success, make huge miscalculations and refuse to receive correction, insist that facts shall mould themselves according to their own imaginations and are usually dominated by an unconquerable egoism or self-absorption which is not necessarily base or selfish. Their success seems as much the result of a favouring destiny as of their own ability and when the favour is withdrawn, they collapse like a house of cards at one blow. Joan of Arc dreamed dreams and saw visions, Mazzini and Garibaldi were impracticable idealists and hated Cavour because he would not idealise along with them. The rock of St. Helena, the blazing stake at Rouen, the lifelong impotent exile of Mazzini, the field of Mentana and the island of Caprera, such is the latter end of these great spirits. Alexander was more fortunate, but his greatest good fortune was that he died young; his next greatest that the practical common sense of his followers prevented him from crossing the Ganges; had Napoleon been similarly forced to recognise his limit, his end might have been as great as his beginning. Pururavas in the play is equally fortunate: we feel throughout that the power and favour of the Gods is at his back to save him from all evil fortune and the limits of a legend help him as effectively as an early death helped Alexander.

Kalidasa's presentation of Pururavas therefore is not that of a poetic nature in a false position working out its own ruin; it is rather a study of the poetic temperament in a heroic and royal figure for no issue beyond the study itself. This is in accordance with the temper of the later poetry which, as I have said, troubles itself little with problems, issues and the rest, but is purely romantic, existing only to express disinterested delight in the beauty of human life and emotion and the life and emotion of animate and inanimate Nature.

When Pururavas first appears on the scene it is as the king and hero, the man of prompt courage and action, playing the part which he has assumed like a royal robe of purple, but it is not in the practical side of his character that Kalidasa is interested. He has to introduce it only as a background to his inner temperament, in order to save him from the

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appearance of frivolous weakness and unworthiness which always surrounds the dilettante in life, the epicure of his own emotions. This he does with his usual consummate art. Pururavas is introduced to us at the very beginning in a scene of extraordinary swiftness, decision and tumultuous excitement, like an eagle cleaving the winds in his rushing swoop upon his prey. The remembrance of this rapid and heroic episode lingers with us and gives us a sense of concealed iron behind his most feminine moods as lover and poet. Then when again at the end of the play Kalidasa skilfully strikes the same note and we take leave of the Ilian, it is again as the king and hero whose strong arm is needed by the Gods in their approaching war with the Titans. Thus finding and leaving him as the warlike prince, we always have the impression that however great the part played by his love for Urvashi in his life, it is not the whole, that we are listening only to a love episode in some high epic. This impression again is skilfully aided by brief but telling touches in each Act, such as the song of the Bards, for example, which remind us of the King of Kings, the toiling administrator, the great warrior; in not a single Act are these necessary strokes omitted and the art with which they are introduced naturally and as if without design is beyond praise. But here again Kalidasa does not depart from the artistic principle of "nothing too much, nothing too little"; the purple robes of the Emperor and the bow of the hero being needed only for the background are not allowed to intrude upon the main interest, which is Pururavas the man in his native temperament.

From the very first utterance that temperament reveals itself; the grandiose and confident announcement of his name and his communion with the Gods is characteristic of the epic megalomaniac. We are not deceived by his proud assumption of modesty, which he only wears as a fit outward ornament of the role he is playing on the world's stage, part of the conventional drapery of the heroic king. "For modesty was ever valour's crown." Through this drapery we see the man glorying in himself as a poet might glory in some great creation and when madness has removed all conventional disguise, this temper breaks out with the most splendid frankness. We see his mind empurpled with the consciousness of his world-wide fame, "This is too much, it is not possible he should not know me"; of his marvellous birth, "the grandson to the Sun and Moon"; of his matchless achievements as "the chariot-warrior, great Pururavas"; of his mighty empire, "the universal sceptre of the world and sovran footstool touched by jewelled heads of tributary monarchs". The glory of this triple purple in which he has wrapped himself, matchless valour, matchless fame, matchless empire commingles in his imagination, and he speaks in the proud brief language of the hero but with an evident consciousness of their fine suitability to the part. We

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seem to see Napoleon robing himself in the dramatic splendour of his despatches and proclamations or Alexander dragging Batis at his chariot wheels in order that he may feel himself to be Achilles. Shall we accuse these men as some do of being liars, theatrical braggarts, inhuman mad men, mountebanks? Let us not so in our feeble envy spit our venom on these mighty souls to half whose heights we could never rise even if we have no opportunity given us of sinking to their depths!

And then as he rushes in pursuit of the Titan and revels in the speed of his chariot and the scenic splendour of the crumbling thunder-clouds flying up like dust beneath it, all the poet in him breaks out into glories of speech. Surely no king before or after, not even Richard II, had such a royal gift of language as this grandson of the Sun and Moon. It is peculiar to him in the play Others, especially those who habitually move near him, Manavaka the Chamberlain, the Huntsman, the Charioteer catch something at times of this enthusiastic poetry, but their diction is usually simple and unpretending and, when most ambitions, pale to the colour, energy and imaginativeness which floods all his utterance. For example in the scene of the vulture how he catches fire from a single trope of the Huntsman's and his imagination continues coruscating and flashing over the jewel until it has vanished from sight. I have said that his imagination has become empurpled but the tendency is really inborn in him, he sees, thinks and speaks in purple. Not only is his mind stored with pictures which break out in the most splendid tropes and similes, but he cannot see any natural object or feel any simplest emotion without bathing it in the brilliant tones of his imagination and expressing it in regal poetry. He has also the poet's close and inspired observation, the poet's visualizing power, the poet's sensuousness and aim at the concrete. Little things that he has seen in Nature, a portion of the bank of a river collapsing into the current, the rapid lightening of a dark night by the moon, fire at night breaking its way through a volume of smoke, a lotus reddening in early sunlight, a wild swan flying through the sky with a lotus fibre in his beak, remain with his inner eye and at a touch burst out in poetry. So inveterate is this habit of seizing on every situation and emotion and turning it into a poem, that even when he affects a feeling as in his flattery of the queen, he takes fire and acts his part with a glory and fervour of speech which make the feigned emotion momentarily genuine. Thus with a mind stored and brimming with poetry, a habit of speech of royal splendour and fullness and an imagination fired and enlarged by the unequalled grandeur of his own destiny, Pururavas comes to the great event which shall be the touchstone of his nature. Such a man was alone fit to aspire to and win the incarnate Beauty of the world and its sensuous life, the Apsara who sprang from the thigh of the Supreme. The Urvasie of the myth, as has

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been splendidly seen and expressed by a recent Bengali poet,* is the spirit of imaginative beauty in the universe, the unattainable ideal for which the soul of man is eternally panting, the goddess adored of the nympholept in all lands and in all ages. There is but one who can attain her, the man whose mind has become one mass of poetry and idealism and has made life itself identical with poetry, whose glorious and starlike career has itself been a conscious epic and whose soul holds friendship and close converse with the Gods. This is Pururavas, "the noise of whom has gone far and wide", whose mother was Ila, divine aspiration, the strange daughter of Human Mind (Manu), who was once male and is female, and of his father Buddha, inspired and mystic wisdom, Hermes, of the moonlike mind, and his near ancestors therefore are the Sun and Moon. For Urvasie he leaves his human wife, earthly fame and desire, giving her only the passionless kindness which duty demands and absorbs his whole real soul in the divine. Even he, however, does not enjoy uninterrupted the object of his desire; he transgresses with her into that fatal grove of the Virgin War-God where ethereal beauty and delight are not suffered to tread, but only ascetic self-denial and keen swordlike practical will; at once she disappears from his ken. Then must his soul wander through all Nature seeking her, imagining her or hints and tokens of her in everything he meets but never grasping unless by some good chance he accept the Jewel Union born from the crimson of the marvellous feet of Himaloy's Child, Uma, daughter of the mountains, the mighty Mother. She who is the Soul behind Nature. Then he is again united with her. And their child is Ayus, human life and action glorified and ennobled by contact with the divine. It is therefore one of the most profound and splendid of the many profound and splendid allegories in the great repertory of Hindu myth that Kalidasa has here rendered into so sweet, natural and passionate a story of human love and desire. [The religious interpretation of the myth, which is probably older than the poetical, is slightly but not materially different.]†

In one sense therefore the whole previous life of Pururavas has been a preparation for his meeting with Urvasie. He has filled earth and heaven, even as he has filled his own imagination with the splendour of his life as with an epic poem. He has become indeed Pururavas, he who is noised afar, but he has never yet felt his own soul. But now he sees Urvasie and all the force of his nature pours itself into his love for her like a river which has at last found its natural sea. The rich poetry of his temperament, the sights and images with which his memory is stored, his dramatic delight in his own glory and greatness and heroism, are now diverted and poured over the final passion of his life, coruscate and light

* Tagore "Urvasie" (1895).

† The square brackets are in the original

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it up and reveal it as in a wonderful faeryland full of shimmering moonlight. Each thought, image, emotion of his mind as it issues forth, connects itself with his love and for a moment stands illumined in the lustre of his own speech. The same extraordinary vividness of feeling and imagination is poured over Ayus when Pururavas finds himself a father; never has the passion of paternity been expressed with such vivid concreteness or with such ardent sensuousness of feeling. Yet the conventions of life and the dramatic part in it he feels bound to sustain cling about him and hamper his complete utterance. In order therefore to give him his full opportunity, Kalidasa has separated him from Urvasie by a more romantic device than the dramatically unmanageable contrivance of the original legend, and liberated him in the infinite freedom of madness. The fourth Act therefore which seems at first sight episodal is really of essential importance both to the conduct of the play and the full revelation of its protagonist.

Yet madness is hardly the precise word for the condition of Pururavas; he is not mad like Lear or Ophelia; it is rather a temporary exaltation than a perversion or aberration from his natural state. An extraordinarily vivid and active imagination, which has always felt a poetic sense of mind and sympathy in brute life and in the encouragement of romantic "inanimate" Nature, leaps up under the shock of sudden and inexplicable loss into gigantic proportions; it is like a sudden conflagration in a forest which transfigures and magnifies every petty object it enlightens and fills the world with the rush and roar and volume of its progress. The whole essential temperament of the man comes whirling out in a gyrating pomp of tropes, fancies, conceits, quick and changing emotions, everything in existence he gifts with his own mind, speech, feelings and thus moves through the pageantry of Nature draping it in the regal mantle of his imagination until the whole world exists only to be the scene and witness of his sorrow. For splendour of mere poetry united with delicate art of restraint and management, this scene is not easily surpassed. We may note one of the smaller and yet essential feature of its beauty, the skill with which the gradations of his excitement are indicated. When he first rushes in he is in the very height and tumult of it mistaking the cloud for a Titan who carries off his Urvasie and threatening him with a clod of earth which he imagines to be a deadly weapon. But he is not really mad; the next moment he realises his hallucination, and the reaction produces a certain calming down of the fever; yet his mind is still working tumultuously and as it ranges through the forest, every object is converted for a moment into a sign of Urvasie and the megalomaniac in him bursts out into the most splendid flights of self-magnification. But each fresh disappointment brings a reaction that sobers him just a little more; he turns from the inanimate objects of nature to the bee in the flower, then to the birds, then to the beasts; he gifts them with a voice, with articulate

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words, with thoughts lent out of the inexhaustible treasury of his teeming imagination. Next he appeals to the God of the mountain and fancies the Echo to be his answer. Mark that now for the first time it is a real articulate voice that he hears, though but the reflection of his own. And immediately afterwards his mind, coming nearer and nearer to sanity, hits upon something very close to the truth; he realises that a divine force may have transformed her to some object of nature and at first by a natural misapprehension imagines that it must be the river which has the appearance Urvasie wore when she fled from him. Then reason as it returns tells him that if he wishes to find her, it must be nearer the place where she disappeared, as he hurries back he appeals for the last time to an animal to speak to him, but does not lend him a voice or words; again also he sees tokens of her in flower and tree, but they are no longer hallucinations but real or at least possible tokens. He touches the Jewel Union and hears the actual voice of the sage; he is now perfectly restored to reason and when he embraces the creeper, it is not as Urvasie but as an "imitatress of my beloved". Through the rest of the scene it is the old natural Pururavas we hear—though in his most delicate flights of imagination. What a choice of a "conveyance" is that with which the scene closes and who but Pururavas could have imagined it! I dwell on these subtle and just perceptible features of Kalidasa's work, the art concealing art, because the appreciation of them is necessary to the full reception on our mind-canvas of Kalidasa's art and genius and therefore to the full enjoyment of his poetry.

And while Pururavas glorifies and revels in his passion, he is also revealed by it; and not only in the strength of the poetic temperament at its strongest, its grasp of, devotion to and joy in its object, its puissant idealism and energy and the dynamic force with which for a time at least it compels fate to its will, but also in its weaknesses. I have spoken of his self-magnification and touches of megalomania. There is besides this a singular incompetence or paralysis of activity in occasional emergencies which, as I have before suggested, often overtakes the poetic temperament in action even in its most capable possessors. His helplessness when confronted by Aushmarie compares badly with the quiet self-possession and indulgent smile with which Agnimitra faces Iravatie in a much more compromising situation. Characteristic too is his conduct when the jewel is lost. We feel certain that Agnimitra when rushing out of his tent would have caught up his bow and arrows and shot the thief on the spot; Pururavas occupies² in pouring out splendid tropes and similes over the bird and the jewel and appeals helplessly to Manavaka for advice. This is characteristic of the poetic temperament whose mind has long trained

² The word "himself" has evidently got omitted in the MS—Editor

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itself to throw out its imagination to meet every new object or situation and not its acting faculties; except in natures of a very firm balance the habit must lead to paralysis of the will. Such a sapping of vigour has been going on in Pururavas during the long years of absorption in his romantic passion. One must hope that when he stands again in the forefront of battle, "Heaven's great soldier" will have sufficient plasticity of character to recover in the shock of action what he has lost in the peace of the seraglio. Then there are certain moral insensibilities, certain feelings which seem to have been left out in his composition. It is part of his self-assumed role in life to be the ideal king, the mirror of gallantry and conjugal duty, the champion of the gods and of religion. Yet it is Urvashie and not he who remembers that his "high capital awaits him long" and who shrinks from the displeasure of the people. He exhibits deference and a show of love to Aushinarie because he "owes" her respect and affection, but in spite of his glowing language and fine acting we feel that he cherishes towards her none of the genuine respect and affection or of the real and indulgent kindness Agnimitra feels for Dharinie and Iravatie. In the last Act he expresses some fear that he may lose religious calm; one feels that religious calm in Pururavas must have been something like the king's robe in Hans Anderson's story. But it was one of the necessary "belongings" of the great semi-divine king which Pururavas just considered his "part" in life as impassive calm and insensibility to human misfortune and grief was one of the necessary "belongings" of the great demi-god, the human Jove which Napoleon thought to be his destined role. If that vast, flaming and rushing mass of genius and impetuosity which we call Napoleon was incompatible with stoical calm and insensibility, so was the ardent mass of sensuousness and imagination which Kalidasa portrayed in Pururavas incompatible with the high austerity of religion. It is in the mouth of this champion of Heaven Kalidasa has placed one of the few explicit protests in Sanskrit of the ordinary sensuous man against the ascetic idealism of the old religion:

*And yet I cannot think of her
Created by a withered hermit cold.
How could an aged anchoret dull and stale
With poring over Scripture and oblivious
To all this rapture of the senses build
A think so lovely?*

The minor male characters of the piece look too wan in the blaze of this great central figure to command much attention except as his adjuncts. As such the Charioteer, the Huntsman and the Chamberlain, Latasya, appear; the former two merely cross the stage and are only interesting for the shadow of tropical magnificence that their master's personality has thrown over their mode of speech.

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R. Bangaruswami

Continued from previous issue

THE HERO AND THE NYMPH

The Hero and the Nymph, a product of the later Baroda period, captures in English rhythm the subtle beauties and the elusive charms of Kalidasa's immortal drama, *Vikramorvasie*

Indeed, even before undertaking this translation, Sri Aurobindo had been attracted by the beauty of the theme and had written his own *Urvasie*

Though described 'as a piece as yet unknown', the story has been immortalised before Kalidasa in the *Rig Veda* and in *Satapata Brahmana* and in *Harivamsa* with some changes in the plot here and there.

In translating the play from the original Sanskrit into English Sri Aurobindo's main purpose seems to have been to expound Kalidasa to English readers and thus offer his own homage to the genius of the great playwright who was able to produce such a work of architectonic beauty and at the same time enjoy a peep into the eternal mysteries that lie deeply hidden in the ostensible love romance

The drama opens with *Urvasie* and *Chitrlekha*, Heaven's nymphs, falling prisoners at the hands of *Cayshay* and their comrades sending forth loud ullulations at the unexpected calamity King *Pururavas* whose puissance equals *Indra's* hears the cry, rushes forward in his chariot, vanquishes the Titan, rescues them and returns Love seizes hold of *Urvasie* and *Pururavas* Regretfully *Urvasie* leaves for her heavenly abode with her sisters while *Pururavas* exclaims—

O Love! O Love!

Thou mak'st men hot for things impossible

*And mad for dreams.*¹⁹

The beginning of Act II sees *Pururavas* suffering the pangs of love His description of *Urvasie* to *Manavaka* is a jewel by itself:

19-22. "Collected Poems & Plays", II, pp 15, 20, 27, 39.

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*She is ornament's ornament,
And jewels cannot make her beautiful.
They from her body get the grace. And when
You search the universe for similes,
Her greater beauty drives you to express
Fair things by her, not her by lesser fairness
So she's perfection's model²⁰*

Yes, Pururavas is 'sick for her' and the beauties of the coming spring make little impression on his mind. Urvasie too, compelled by Love, comes to the palace garden of Pururavas in the company of Chitrlekha and remaining near, invisible, hears from the King's mouth avowals of his love for her:

*Oh me! she knows not my heart's pain
Or knowing it, with those her heavenly eyes
Scorns my poor passion.²¹*

Urvasie is touched with the sincerity of his emotion. Taking a birch leaf she scrolls a few lines expressing the intensity of her own passion for him and throws it at him, still remaining invisible. The King reads 'the dear small sentence full of beautiful meaning. This gospel of her answering love' and feels thrilled beyond measure. Chitrlekha, at Urvasie's behest, becomes visible and plays the role of Love's ambassador to the King. Urvasie also presently reveals herself and feels happy for a moment.

But cries are heard summoning Urvasie to Heaven to play her part in the drama. Urvasie departs leaving the King to himself and his dreams. Pururavas now remembers the letter and finding it gone orders a quick search for it. Destiny makes it fall into the hands of the Queen who thus learns the cause of her royal husband's grief. Approaching her lord she presents the letter to him. Confused at the new mishap he blurts out excuses and even falls at her feet! But the Queen 'rushes off like a torrent full of wrath' and Manavaka, ever keen about his meals, urges the King for bath and dinner. But Pururavas, diverted for a moment to the surrounding beauties of Nature, bursts out

*'Tis noon. The tired
And heated peacock sinks to chill delight
Of water in the tree-encircling channel,
The bee divides a crimson bud and creeps
Into its womb; there merged and safe from fire
He's lurking. The duck too leaves her blazing pool
And shelters in cold lilies on the bank,
And in yon summer house weary of heat
The parrot from his cage for water cries.²²*

Love-lorn Urvasie blabbers 'Pururavas' when she ought to say 'Purushottam' in the part assigned to her with the result that her preceptor curses her and pronounces her exit out of Heaven. But Indra modifies the curse to the extent that her sojourn from Heaven will be temporary till the time she begets a child to Pururavas and he sees its face. This incident ushers Urvasie on the terraced House of Gems where 'love-wasted Pururavas' with the inseparable Manavaka is mooning about. Once again Urvasie remains invisible and hears from his mouth a passionate outburst of his yearning for her:

*Neither smoothest flowers
Moonlight, nor sandal visting every limb,
Nor necklaces of cool delightful pearl,
Only Heaven's nymph can perfectly expel
With bliss, or else—²³*

Presently we see Queen Aushinarie come to the King and, declaring the extent of her love for him, vow that on the basis of that love she would treat whatever woman her Lord loved as her sister. After the Queen's departure Urvasie reveals herself to the King and they begin to enjoy the long-delayed love's ecstasies. Out of the abundance of joy in his heart Pururavas exclaims:

*Love's wounding shafts caress the heart like flowers
Thou being with me; all natural sights and sounds,
Once rude and hurtful, now caressing come
Softly because of thee in my embrace.²⁴*

Inexorable Fate makes him gaze at Udanavatie in Gandhamadan green and Urvasie, flying away from him in jealousy and anger, enters 'the grove avoidable of women' and is turned into a creeper. But the King, more love-mad than ever, seeks her on in a pathetic quest, musing, soliloquising, poetizing and querying the 'sapphire-throated peacock', the cuckoo, the swan, the chakraboque, the 'lotus-wooing' bee, the 'rut-dripping' elephant, the inanimate mountains, pouring to one and all his grief. In this Act VI Sri Aurobindo has created some of the most vivid and musical blank verse in the language, a true reflection of the quintessential Kalidasa, the unmatched sensuous rapture that is yet perfectly imaged and expressed, with no lapse into mere violence or rhetoric. We may quote a few passages:

*How shall I trace her,
Or what thing tell me "Here and hers she wandered?"
If she had touched with her beloved feet
The rain-drenched forest-sands, there were a line*

23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30 "Collected Poems & Plays", II, pp 48, 59, 65, 66, 70, 71, 98

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*Of little gracious footprints seen, with lac
Envermeilled, sinking deeper towards the heel
Because o'erburdened by her hips' large glories . . .*²⁶

*Lo, in yon waste of crags the peacock! he
Upon a cool moist rock that breathes of rain
Exults, aspires, his gorgeous mass of plumes
Seized, blown and scattered by the roaring gusts
Pregnant of shrillness is his outstretched throat,
His look is with the clouds Him I will question
Have the bright corners of thine eyes beheld,
O sapphire-throated bird, her, my delight,
My wife, my passion, my sweet grief? Yielding
No answer, he begins his gorgeous dance
Why should he be so glad of my heart's woe?
I know thee, peacock Since my cruel loss
Thy plumes that stream in splendour on the wind,
Have not one rival left For when her heavy
Dark wave of tresses over all the bed
In softness wide magnificently collapsed
On her smooth shoulders massing purple glory
And bright with flowers, she passioning in my arms,
Who then was ravished with thy brilliant plumes,
Vain bird? . . .*²⁷

*O rut-dripping elephant,
Sole monarch of the herd, has not that moon
With jasmynes all a glory in her hair
And limbs of fadeless beauty, carrying
Youth like a banner, whom to see is bliss,
Is madness, fallen in thy far ken, O king? . . .*²⁸

*Darkness! I cannot see her Yet by these gleams
Of lightning I may study, I may find
Ah God! the fruit of guilt is bounded not
With the doer's anguish; this stupendous cloud
Is widowed of the lightning through my sin
Yet I will leave thee not, O thou huge pile
Of scaling crags, unquestioned Hear me, answer me!
O mountain, has she entered then the woods,
Love's green estate—ah, she too utter love!
Her breasts were large like thine, with small sweet space
Between them, and like thine her glorious hips
And smooth fair joints a rapture . . .*²⁹

Echo mocks Pururavas at last with his own words and he falls down in a swoon and recovers later 'all weary and sad' and resumes his queries. Stumbling on the gem Union which a voice assures him as belonging to Urvasie he takes it and passes on to the very creeper which was once Urvasie without in the least being aware of the fact and pours forth his tribulations in one loud homage of amour. Union touching the creeper effects the release of Urvasie who tells him of the curse of Skanda that was responsible for changing her into a creeper. The lovers return home happy.

The last Act opens with the news of the loss of Union by its being snatched away by a vulture which is duly killed and the jewel recovered. It so happens that the boy who killed it is none else than Ayus, son of Pururavas through Urvasie, who was brought up till now in a hermitage. While all the three members of the reunited family are in an ecstasy of joy, Urvasie remembers the words of Indra and tells Pururavas that the hour of her departure has come, hearing which Pururavas swoons.

Narada intervenes at this stage and delivers the happy message that Indra needs the help of Pururavas and he can live happy with Urvasie for the rest of his life in Heaven. Ayus is annointed King and everything ends happily. Pururavas bids farewell with the words—

*May every man find his own good
And every man be merry of his mind,
And all men in all lands taste all desire.³⁰*

The purple passages of the original work, far from losing any of their majestic loveliness, remain as fresh and sweet in this 'perfect and vivid translation' as they were centuries ago at the time when Kalidasa wrote it

VIDULA

Vidula, admittedly a free rendering with also a few changes here and there was originally published under the heading of *Mother to Her Son* in *Bandemataram* weekly. The episode is taken from the Mahabharata, Udhyoga Parva. It must have teemed with a world of meaning to the politically-conscious reader when the ferment of unrest in India was visible everywhere. An appeal by Mother India to her country-men to shed the fear complex, awake, arise and carry on the struggle like upright men and not as slaves, might have been easily read into the story by any patriotic Indian worth his salt.

The substance of the poem may be summed up in a few words. Prince Sunjoy 'hurled down from his lofty throne' by the King of Sindhu lies 'unnerved and abject'. His indomitable mother, the widowed Queen taunts her boy for his dejection and eggs him on to battle and victory. This is

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not fiction but history which repeats. Heroines like her will live for ever in the roll-call of honour in the memory of our countrymen and women.

These little gems of advice culled from the queen-mother's words are worth remembering by one and all:

*Be a king in mind
All subjection spurn
Blaze out like a firebrand.
Falter not in high attempt.
Show thy prowess..
Be not as the vagrant beggar
Waste not thy flame in smoke ..
Leap upon thy foes ..
Make thy man's heart hard like iron ..
Be a prince and chief of men*

No wonder the mother's heroic words floating in a floodtide of burning eloquence at last finds a willing response from the son who acts and wins. The potency of the words surcharged with the fury that is born of shame is such as to move a stone image out of its resting place and send it marching in battle array.

*On he rushed to desperate battle burning in his pride and might,
As a noble warhorse wounded rushes faster to the fight.
Stung with arrows of her speech he did his mother's high command
Driving out the foe and stranger, freeing all the conquered land.³¹*

The moral purpose underlying the 'strong and famous poem' is to make 'men gods for might'. And surely enough the poem preserves all its burning strength undimmed and undiminished in the alluring robes of the English rhythm furnished by Sri Aurobindo.

In this connection reference may be made to *Hymn to the Mother* or *Bandemataram*, India's great song, originally sung by Rishi Bankim Chandra Chatterjee in Bengali and translated into English by Sri Aurobindo and published in *Karmayogin*. About this poem which has stood the test of time and has captivated the hearts of millions of our countrymen, there can be no two opinions. It is a national heritage which we have inherited and which in turn will be handed down to our posterity. Unlike the Germans who regard the country as their fatherland we have always regarded India as our motherland, the embodiment of the Divine Mother in all her aspects and moods. Rishi Bankim Chandra Chatterjee who has bequeathed this poem to the nation stresses this aspect:

*Thine the strength that nerves the arm,
Thine the beauty, thine the charm*

31-33 "Collected Poems & Plays", II, p 246, 228, 228.

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*Every image made divine
In our temples is but thine.*³²

And with this feeling in us we make our obeisance to our motherland—

*Mother, mother mine!
Mother sweet, I bow to thee,
Mother great and free*³³

Another beautiful national song which Sri Aurobindo rendered into English verse recently is *Mother India* by Dwijendralal Roy, originally written in Bengali. It sings of India's glories and her greatness, of her Gita and her Veda, her splendid days of gold and her sacred lore, every stanza ending with the refrain

*India, my India, who dare call thee a thing for pity's grace today,
Mother of wisdom, worship, works, nurse of the spirit's inward ray*³⁴

The poem on *Mahalakshmi* is a translation from the Bengali song of Anilbaran and was first published in 1936. The poet offers his heart as a resting place for the lotus-goddess Laxmi to whom offering any other seat would amount to a sacrilege. For sheer lyrical beauty of both sentiment and rhythm the eight lines are difficult to surpass: they weave a soul-enchantment that is immediately memorable—

*In lotus-groves Thy spirit roves where shall I find a seat for Thee?
To Thy feet's tread—feet dawn-rose red—opening my heart
Thy throne shall be.*

*All things unholy hurt Thy soul
I would become a stainless whole
O World's delight, All-beauty's might! unmoving house Thy grace
in me.*

*An arid heart Thou canst not bear
It is Thy will love's bonds to wear.
Then by Thy sweetness' magic completeness make me Thy love's
eternal sea.*³⁵

LYRICS

Radha's plight as depicted by Chundidas is revealed in two poems imitated in English by Sri Aurobindo with a remarkable degree of success. In *Radha's Complaint in Absence* the divine girl addresses her heart for the 'heavy pain' it is made to suffer by the cruel hand of Love and concludes that there is no other cure but death. In *Radha's Appeal* the poignancy of Radha's passion—unswerving, unchanging and steadfast—is shown with great vividness and vivacity

34-37 "Collected Poems & Plays", II, pp 310, 311, 30, 133.

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*Spurn me not, dear, from thy beloved breast
A woman weak, unblest.³⁶*

In *Karma Radha*, smitten with the lover's pangs of separation from her Lord, avows no other way is open to her except to drown herself in the sea and get cooled from the burning fire of passion that agitates her.

Appeal is a warning not to waste away golden youth, for youth will not be for ever, but to consecrate it with Love. Herrick sang 'Gather ye rosebuds while ye may, Old Time is still a-flying' and advised young people:

*Then be not coy, but use your time,
And while ye may, go marry;
For having lost but once your prime,
You may for ever tarry.*

The Bengali poet in a similar strain says:

*Life is a bliss that cannot long abide,
But while thou livest, love.³⁷*

Sri Aurobindo's translations which form a fourth part of his *Collected Poems and Plays*, while fulfilling almost all the tests for a good translation, give us also an insight into the poetic genius of the translator which adorns whatever it touches.

Concluded

AN ADDRESS*

K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar

We are celebrating today the 5th anniversary of our date with destiny. For the 15th of August is our date with destiny. On the 15th of August 1947 Britain finally withdrew her political hold over India, and so India was indeed free. The day had a further or rather a fundamental significance to some of us—to many of us—because it was the 75th birthday of Sri Aurobindo, the prophet of a new world order, the architect of the Life Divine. Five long years have passed since the birth of freedom, and in a world—in the post-war world—which has been witnessing almost an epidemic of infant mortality among the free nations, we in India have managed to preserve our freedom. Five years have passed, and we are still a free nation.

We are prone in our purblindness and perversity to minimise the significance of this fact. Let us cast our eyes back to 1947. Freedom had come no doubt at long last, but what sort of freedom? The hideous massacres at Calcutta, the abominations in Bihar and in Noakhali, the atrocities at Lahore, had preceded the 15th of August 1947; and the advent of freedom had been followed by unprecedented communal orgies, the exodus of whole populations across the new borders between India and Pakistan, the unfolding tragedy of humanity uprooted. Freedom had come indeed, but it had been a flawed freedom, a fissured freedom, a fractured freedom—flawed because the smell of the blood of the slaughtered innocents still hung in the midnight air, fissured because India had been after all compelled to submit to the surgical operation of the partition, and fractured because there were still the 600 pockets of princedoms, petty and not so petty, to render our new-found freedom all but a hideous mockery. The world anxiously watched India—on the whole, with sympathy and understanding. There was the fear we might fail, there was the hope that we would pull through. Here was a sub-continent, a Republic with a population of 300 millions or more,—what was going to be the fate of this infant Republic, what was going to be the future of this ancient people who had just celebrated their baptism of rebirth as a free nation?

* Delivered before the Andhra University Union on the 15th August, 1952.

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As the days passed, as the weeks accumulated into months and years, behind the clouds of misunderstanding, the fog of prejudice, the storms of controversy, behind the facade of seeming inefficiency and senile incompetence, behind the whirl of words and the whizz of conflicting policies, behind all that was depressing or confusing or exasperating, behind it all a revolution was going on, the links of integration were being forged, the foundations of stability were being laid. All honour to the Sardar—Sardar who never flinched, who never wavered, who never would, nor ever did, turn back, daunted by the difficulties on the way.

It was not Sardar's fault—nor Mahatma Gandhi's—it is not the fault of our President or of our Premiers or of our Prime Minister if the burden of our discontents is still heavy, if Utopia hasn't yet arrived, nor is anywhere around. When we talk of freedom, we often use the term loosely or lazily. A whole spiral of significance has now grown from the base, but at any one time we see only a little bit of the spiral, yet mistake it for the whole. In a manner of speaking, the statement that the country attained freedom on the 15th of August 1947 is true enough. But was there no 'freedom' in India—no freedom—before that date? Isn't freedom a being as well as a becoming,—a becoming more than a being, an ideal that must elude the grasp of our cumbrous hands? Whatever the legal or constitutional position, weren't men like Sri Ramakrishna enfranchised souls long before the 15th of August 1947? Isn't freedom really and truly a condition of mental and spiritual health rather than an unwieldy bundle of ambiguous political privileges? When a patriot and a Yogi like Sri Aurobindo had willed freedom for the country, weren't we already in some measure free?

On the other hand, does the fact of political freedom render everybody necessarily free? Isn't the price of freedom unwearying vigilance? Might it not be that energies which at one time were mobilized against the foreign ruler are now let loose on society to poison and destroy it? Might it not be that petty tyrants sit enthroned in the unlikeliest places—that decadent or recrudescent "nabobism" wags its tail, now here, now there—that the deencies of civilized life and social behaviour are challenged—that humanity here and elsewhere is undergoing a process of progressive dehumanization? The price of freedom is continual alertness, a determination to refuse to be intimidated by the loud voice, the dogmatic assertion, or the menacing gesture, to refuse to be cowed down, the right to think for yourselves, to think rightly, to think justly, and to form your own conclusions. Ibsen said that the strongest man is he who stands out most alone—why, then, need we be afraid of thinking for ourselves, and reaching perhaps conclusions which don't always chime with the popular view? I am not, of course, asking you to be aggressive for the sake of aggression, or think queerly for adver-

AN ADDRESS

tising your originality. I don't approve of dissent for the sake of dissent—this were a very perversity in slavery worse than mere slavery. Self-mastery is the crown of life—not self-indulgence, of whatever kind or colour it may be! I am only asking you to be bold enough to see the truth when you do in fact see it, and even to tell the truth when you have actually seen it. Have always the courage of your convictions, rather than the courage of your teachers' convictions, or of your text-books' convictions, or of an anonymous pamphlet's convictions. Loyalty and patriotism are the stern godheads of the soul—they are spiritual forces—and must not therefore be equated with brazen subservience on the one hand or racial arrogance on the other. Here in the university campus where so many of us are gathered together—when we are gathered here to celebrate our independence—let us not forget that we have constantly to prove worthy of this grace of independence, let us not forget that in timidity and pusillanimity, in parrottry and Quixotry, in humbuggy and charlatanism, in half-headedness and half-heartedness, lies no safety either for ourselves or for the nation.

The air is thick with talk about Plans. We have no dearth of Plans—but the trouble is with Man. Ten moderately clever men in Delhi make the Plans: but if there are hundreds or thousands of men in the country, as clever or even cleverer, who are determined to see that the Plans shall fail, how then are these Plans to help us? Your generation can still save the situation—but only if you are prepared to be yourselves first, refusing to mortgage yourselves to others, be they self-opinionated men or octopus organizations. In a university, at any rate, it should be possible for the students and teachers—for the students at least, if not for the teachers also!—to put first things first, to refuse to sin against the light, to repudiate the fraudulent gods of the noisy market-place. The young student may go wrong, but he is at least not proud of it, he is eager to reform,—at the worst it is a case of the spirit being willing, the flesh alas! being weak. But the elderly man of the world, alias the rake, is mired to his depravity, turns vice into virtue, and becomes even an evangelist on its behalf. Here in the university we teachers and students—in fact, there are only students, some young, some not so young, for there is no teacher worth his name but is a student also—live a reasonably sheltered life here at least let us take heart, let us re-dedicate ourselves to the unblemished service of the Mother, Mother India, let us serve her through the ways of truth and the discipline of ordered knowledge, let us think out our problems in the light of rational inquiry, ironing out our prejudices, reasoning out the ways of bringing our country nearer our heart's desire. If the salt loseth its savour, wherewith then shall it be salted? You the youth of the country, intellectuals one and all, idealists one and all, you are the salt of the earth: if you fail us, if you

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allow your idealism to be corroded, if you are content that the light of new ideas shall be quenched, if you permit yourselves to scoff at loyalty, truth, justice, honour, knowledge, if you suffer Mr. Worldly Wisdom, who is really Giant Unwisdom, to hush up the immortal cravings in you, certainly, we shall then certainly fail as a university, we in the wider world shall fail as a nation, and our freedom will be but an empty bottle of scent or an electric bulb that has fused. I appeal to you therefore on this solemn occasion, on this auspicious occasion, to grow boldly to the height of your destiny as children, as citizens, of a free country, and redeem the time by your courage, the courage to think, by your integrity, the integrity to be unafraid of yourselves, and by your infallible sense of the Right, the Just and the True. And when you redeem yourselves and redeem the time, you will be redeeming even those who are still grovelling in the sloughs of unreason, the grooves of poisoned reaction, the cavernous dungeons of sloth. Many of us, your elders, are perhaps learned, but not wise; we are often bumptious, but not brave, we wear a peacock look of Himalayan self-importance, but we are really unable to save ourselves, because we are entangled in prisons of our own forging, and we have learned nothing and forgotten nothing. The attitude of some of us is indeed that we *will* be drowned, and nobody *shall* save us. But still you will and must save us, even as you will and must save yourselves.

The first post-independence harvest is over—it has proved a partial failure, but it has been a partial success no less. Yet much of the little coin that came home has been unwisely or wastefully spent—and a portion is perhaps rotting somewhere. But in you are the seedlings of the immediate future—and may be—it may be God's will—I am sure the Mother will have it so—that the next harvest will bring in Plenty to us, and happiness and fulfilment will be ours at last. It is with that hope and the certainty of the fulfilment of that hope that I ask you to join me today and articulate the words that make both an exultant cry and a prayerful mantra—**JAI HIND!**

AFTER PASSING THROUGH SRI AUROBINDO'S ROOM

AUGUST 15, 1952

Here in the unseen sanctum of the Infinite,
Shut behind the impermeable doors of hush,
Unbodied stands the flaming presence of the king,
The august king of the Solitary Noon.
A miracle is here formless, perpetual, free,
Disclosed to the children of immortal fire.
A power is here like a high statued cliff
Surveying the passage of time and fate and death.
A rapture wells from this burning cave of rest,
A voiceless grace is born within these wells,
A sheer quiescence looms from its all-gazing dome
And on the luminous couch of prophetic poise
Sits alone the majestic body of the Sun
In omnipotent grandeur and stillness supreme
With eyes open in wide magnificent trance,
He sights the world from his everlasting throne,
He hears the chariot-wheels of epical advent,
His being bearing the wounds of mortal fall,
His spirit warring with Nihil's terrible force,
His mind the undefeated monarch of the Vast
But a day shall come when the blind dust shall gaze
At his figure built out of the diamond Flame,
Not with occult eyes lit by his compassion-gem
But with stark outwardness of physical eye.
The temple of this viewless recluse of Light
Shall then become his far living thunder's abode.

ROMEN

THE INTEGRAL YOGA OF SRI AUROBINDO

Rishabhchand

CHAPTER X11

MIND AND ITS PURIFICATION

PART III

Purification of the Chitta

As we have already said, the chitta is the basic stuff of our consciousness, teeming with all sorts of impressions of our immediate and remote past. These chaotic impressions go to nourish our desires and give them different, sometimes even contrary directions, form most of our physical and vital habits and tendencies, and affect even our thoughts and judgments. Their action is so subtle and often so swift and sudden that, unless one has acquired a yogic detachment, one may not even be aware of it. Much of it is subconscious and unpredictably automatic. Let us take an illustration of it from one of the poems of Sri Aurobindo in quantitative metre*—a little poem aquiver with a deep rich poignancy.

THE DREAM BOAT

*Who was it that came to me in a boat made of dream-fire,
With his flame brow and his sun-gold body?
Melted was the silence into a sweet secret murmur,
“Do you come now? is the heart’s fire ready?”
Hidden in the recesses of the heart something shuddered
It recalled all that the life’s joy cherished,
Imaged the felicity it must leave lost for ever.
And the boat passed and the gold god vanished
Now within the hollowness of the world’s breast inhabits—
For the love died and the old joy ended—
Void of a felicity that has fled, gone for ever,
And the gold god and the dream boat come not.*

The sense of the poem is crystal clear. “The gold god,” the Hiranmaya Purusha, appears before a devotee who has presumably been praying to Him either to reveal Himself or to take him into His eternal embrace. There is silence within the devotee and without, and a sincerity of call that has obviously induced the revelation. But when the Golden Purusha actually appears and asks in a “sweet secret murmur,” “Do you come now? Is the heart’s fire ready?”, there is in him a sudden upsurge

* “Collected Poems”, Vol II.

of the turbid stuff of his unregenerate chitta, its old desires and longings and attachments, and something shrinks and shudders, something that is "hidden in the recesses of the heart" The devotee was not perhaps even aware of this subconscious scum, but it was there all the same; and when the moment for the final self-giving came, there was an automatic shuddering and quailing, an overpowering of the conscious parts by the dark subconscious energies. "And the boat passed and the gold god vanished"

This tragedy is not a poetic fancy, but a fact enacted in almost every life that aspires to a high self-fulfilment It happens sometimes that the conscious part of a man's being finds itself ready for a great venture,—the will is strung, the gaze of the mind is fixed on the goal, the heart longs and strains for it, and yet when the moment of the irrevocable plunge arrives, something tugs from behind, a wrench is felt, a chord seems to snap somewhere in a remote recess Its sincerity is clouded by an uprush of involuntary insincerity, its unity of will is obscured and disrupted by many invading desires, and it finds itself floundering in a bog of dismal retrogression. Many a flourishing life is thus stranded or wrecked as a result of the sudden incursions of the subconscious chitta. Besides these sudden inroads, the chitta exercises a sort of settled insidious control over our thought and action of which we are hardly aware. It is only when a thought has crossed our mind or an action has been done, that we can detect the occult influence,—subtle, tangled and elusive, yet potently pervasive Even the most masterful intellect often finds itself infected with the noxious stuff of the chitta which distorts and perverts its reasoning and judgement One often catches oneself feeling a sort of unaccountable antipathy towards a person for whom one is normally inclined to entertain only feelings of affection and regard Sometimes we find to our chagrin that we have let slip some words or behaved in a way repugnant to our own reason, strangely actuated by some unknown agency in us We often fail to come up to certain standards of conduct we have erected in our minds, or stick to certain consistent lines of thought and action because of the obscuring and thwarting influence of the chitta, or the dull drag it imposes upon our nature It is rarely, indeed, that our thought and feeling and action escape this subtle influence and express our conscious personality and its reason and will.

The Chief Impurity

The chief impurity of the chitta is a chaotic craving and hunger for possession and enjoyment. This craving is the chrysalis of desire Therefore any serious attempt at the purification of the chitta must aim at the eradication of this essential craving. We have already dealt with the process by which we can rid our being of desire, but an important and indispensable part of this initial process is a directing of the Mother's light to the

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subconscious and its blind energies. A constant detection and uncompromising rejection of all conscious desires must proceed on the basis of the true psychic consciousness, which alone can enable us to detach ourselves from the lower nature and its desires, but a mere detachment from conscious desires is not enough, there must also be a probing and penetration of the depths and a vigilant observation of the subtle action of the essential craving of the chitta. In proportion as the psychic consciousness or the consciousness of the soul grows in the being, the observation of the working of the nature and an analysis of its hidden mechanism will become easier and more precise. But still there will be enough working going on below the surface and occult to our consciousness. It is, therefore, essential that the Mother's Light be called down and directed to these arcane regions. Her Light will illumine the subconscious obscurity and eliminate the impurities with which it abounds, either by a steady process of expulsion or by raising up and working them out, as it thinks best in the interest of a radical purification. All that the sadhaka is asked to do at this stage is to have a perfect faith in the infallible guidance of the Mother's Light and a state of unreserved surrender to it. Later, in the course of progress, a stage may come when he has to go down in consciousness into these obscure depths, with the Mother's Light leading him, for the final grapple with the subconscious and inconscient forces of darkness. For, nothing must be left, not the least vestige of the primitive cravings, that could prolong the action of the Ignorance. All the boundless energy of desires must go to feed the divine Will revealing itself more and more in the being as it undergoes the psychic change. It is to be remarked here that in the Integral Yoga there is no question of killing or crippling the life energies, whether they manifest themselves as cravings and passions or as ambitions and aspirations. As the ancient Rishis knew well, all blind energies of the lower nature are but perversions of their spiritual counterparts and can, therefore, be converted into them. Anger, for instance, is a perversion of the tejas of the Rudrashakti, which destroys what has to be destroyed, but without any reactions of anger or vindictive violence. It hurls its destructive fire from a poise of all-seeing calm and impelled by the divine Love, which hurts in order to rouse and exalt, and destroys in order to new-create. Lust is a perversion of love, and sorrow and suffering of the essential delight of existence. All these energies will be purified, illumined and converted into their spiritual equivalents by the self-unfolding process of the Integral Yoga proceeding under the guidance of the Mother's Light and fulfilling itself by the Mother's Force.

Desires are Formative Energies

Very few people care to study the working of the energies called desires, which have a powerful formative force and carry in themselves the

potentiality both of happiness and suffering, light and darkness, progress and retrogression. When we desire something with a sustained intensity, we create in us an eddy of subtle energies which sweep out in search of their object, causing many upheavals in our psychological and environmental conditions and introducing into us elements which are not often congenial to the normal development of our life. And the desires being fickle, the forces and elements they introduce into us are usually of a chaotic and conflicting nature. One desire creates certain psychological reactions and forms certain whirls of energy-vibrations which may and very often do come into conflict with those of another desire, and a third drives in a different direction and a fourth in yet another, inviting forces which make havoc of all order and rhythmic progress. That is why we frequently find ourselves surrounded and harassed by conditions which are of such a confused and discordant character that they entail nothing but struggle and suffering. Life seems to stumble on through an interminable series of disturbing and disparate phases, zigzagging through steep and perilous paths and tossing about from one set of circumstances to another. Aimless and rudderless, we drift on the currents and cross-currents of Time. Through birth after birth we chase the same wild geese, the phantom objects of desire, which elude us before we have secured them well within our grasp. Moments of joy and exhilaration are followed by long spells of pain and gloom. But the goad of desire never ceases, a treacherous hope lures us on. If only we could foresee the consequences before we conceived or indulged desires!

Desire and Will

The steady vision of the Buddha probed into the heart of this mortal disease of desire, and he was perfectly right in his insistence on the extermination of desire as the surest way to the attainment of freedom from the agony of rebirth. But he failed to probe beyond the desires into the Will of which they are but darkened and distorted fragments in the ignorance. If the distortions are removed, we get at a concentration of radiant energy which is the real motive power of our whole nature, swabhava, seeking an unhampered play and fulfilment in our life. It is the self-expressive *élan* of the fire and force of our being—the central will, one yet multiple, and attuned to, or more precisely, an individual self-formation of, the universal divine Will. To destroy the distortions and preserve the will, the real motive power of our swabhava, and unite it with the self-revealing divine Will, is then the whole method and aim of our dealing with prana and its desires. And that goes a long way to purify the chitta.

Dealing with the subject of purification, Sri Aurobindo says in his *The Synthesis of Yoga**, "The essential turn of the soul to possession and

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enjoyment of the world consists in a will to delight, and the enjoyment of the satisfaction of craving is only a vital and physical degradation of the will to delight. To tread down altogether the prana, the vital being, is to kill the force of life by which the large action of the embodied soul in the human being must be supported; to indulge the gross will to live is to remain satisfied with imperfection; to compromise between them is to stop half way and possess neither earth nor heaven. But if we get at the pure will undeformed by desire,—which we shall find to be a much more free, tranquil, steady and effective force than the leaping, smoke-stifled, soon fatigued and baffled flame of desire,—and at the calm inner will of delight not afflicted or limited by any trouble of craving, we can then transform the prana from a tyrant, enemy, assailant of the mind into an obedient instrument. To rid the prana of desire and incidentally to reverse the ordinary poise of our nature and turn the vital being from a troublesomely dominant power into the obedient instrument of a free and unattached mind, is then the first step in purification. As this deformation of the psychic prana is corrected, the purification of the rest of the intermediary parts of the antahkarana is facilitated, and when that correction is completed, their purification too can be easily made absolute”.

Purification of the Emotional Being

The essential cravings of the chitta enter into the emotions of our heart and create there emotional responses and reactions of raga-dwesha, liking and disliking. If we watch our heart from the serene poise of the enlightened buddhi, or, better still, from the luminous calm of the soul, we shall see that it is constantly subjected to the tyranny of alternating emotions caused by the impacts of the outer world. The emotional mind is rightly likened to a sea tossing with the waves of love and hate, attraction and repulsion, hope and fear, joy and grief. It is always restless, always agitated, except when it is fatigued or depressed. And the emotions heave not only the heart, they convulse and tear the whole being; they even cloud and pervert the intellect and deflect it from its course. This automatic action of raga-dwesha derives from our mental, vital and nervous habits in the formation of which the chitta has a considerable hand. The whole structure of these formed habits has to be pulled down in order that our psychological being may be remoulded by the force and substance of the soul

The sway of the emotional dualities derives its strength and tenacity from attachment. The renunciation of desires and a steady practice of detachment will weaken and finally annul the hold of attachment; but even when attachment has lost all its power, a habitual, mechanical action of raga-dwesha may continue for some time by the sheer force of habit. It can then be more easily got rid of by the will of the illumined buddhi. A

complete elimination of raga-dwesa from the emotional mind may lead to one of the three following results: (1) "a neutral condition of blank indifference," (2) "a luminous state of peaceful impartiality" and (3) a universal psychic love and an untroubled sweetness and clarity, receiving and responding to all contacts of the world with an equal delight. In the Integral Yoga there is no nirodha or suppression of the emotional movements, chitta vrittis. Like the other movements of the nature, they too have to be purified and transformed. Behind the tossings and heavings of the human heart, there is the tranquil heart of psychic emotions, radiant and rhythmic in its self-expression. All its emotions are waves of love and joy, deploying infinite variations and even embracing all human relations, but divinely secure against any deformation or degradation by desire. This psychic heart has to be released into expression and its emotions of love and joy must take the place of the normal, agitating dualities of the human heart. A progressive infusion of the psychic emotions into the outer heart will revolutionise the latter and impart to it a glowing rapture and sweetness and musical cadence which characterise the emotions of the gods. The emotions of the psychic heart are perfectly immune to all attacks of fear, grief, pain, hatred and depression, whether they rise from the unreclaimed chitta or assal from the environmental nature; and when they occupy and begin their play in the human heart, they change it from a cauldron of conflicting emotions into a perennial fount of universal love and joy.

The essential function of the emotions is a rhythmic expression of the love and delight the being feels in its contacts with Reality, inner and outer. Their business is not to dictate or direct the thoughts of the mind or the actions of the vital-physical being. If they did, they would give rise to a dharma-sankara, a confusion of the essential functions of the members of the being, which should act in a perfect autonomy in an integrated scheme of organic harmony. The general nature of man is, however, such a dharma-sankara—a hopeless tangle and confusion. His emotions vitiate his thought and reason, obscure his perception, and seek to deflect him from the right course of action. But the psychic emotions only contribute their characteristic warmth and throb to the thought and judgement of the buddhi and a thrill and glow to the movements of the physical being. The choice of thought and action must lie with the buddhi, and later on in the sadhana, with the supramental Truth-Consciousness, possessing and perfecting the whole nature, but never with the emotional being.

The Two Basic Movements in Purification

The entire process of the purification of the mind boils down to two most important basic movements: (1) the emergence and increasing control of the psychic or the soul, and (2) the sincerity and completeness of

the surrender of our integral being to the Consciousness-Force of the Mother. Psychic detachment, psychic love and devotion and psychic offering are the most effective means of delivering the nature-parts from the darkness of egoistic ignorance and initiating in them the reign of Light and Love and Bliss. And a full and conscious surrender to the Mother's Force and Light is the only way to illumine and transform the chitta and abolish its uncanny hold upon the different parts of our nature. For, the human mind, even at its best, is incapable of dealing with the subconscious and the inconscient, and it is these, as we have seen, that dominate the major portion of our nature. The practice of psycho-analysis or any other current psychological expedients for the raising up and purification of the subconscious energies is fraught with serious dangers from the Yogic standpoint, besides being a puerile and very superficial method. Does the psychologist know how much of his own subconscious and his personal prepossessions and predilections enters into his deductions and hypotheses? How can he hope to be able to take an impersonal and disinterested view of the data of his observation, so long as he has not himself become disinterested and impersonal? And how can he become an impersonal witness, so long as he has not discovered something that surpasses his shifting phenomenal personality? All ancient tradition bases true knowledge on the discovery and attainment of the soul, the imperishable entity in our perishable earthly tenement. This soul must be made the priest and leader of our spiritual journey. In the Integral Yoga the lead and control of the psychic being is of the utmost importance. "If the inmost soul is awakened, if there is a new birth out of the mere mental, vital and physical into the psychic consciousness, then this Yoga can be done; otherwise (by the sole power of the mind or any other part) it is impossible."* The lead of the human intellect is a foolish and futile endeavour. And so far as the subconscious and the inconscient are concerned, even the lead of the psychic is not enough,—it has to be fortified and directed by the supreme Light, the ritam jyotih, of the Mother; otherwise it will be difficult to avoid a repetition of the deplorable tragedy of the Tantric experiment which, losing hold of the light it had started with,—though it was not the highest light—sank into the swamp of the subconscious and could never rise again. For, the darkness is great there below, its forces are blind and subtle and dangerous, and the temptation of power almost irresistible. It is the supramental Light of the Mother alone that can protect and pilot us in those obscure reaches of our own being

* "Lights on Yoga", by Sri Aurobindo.

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

SHRUTANJALI

By INDIRA DEVI

Translated by Dilip Kumar Roy

(Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry. Price: Rs. 5/-)

It is said that in this scientific age nothing is to be believed unless one has sufficient proof for it. This claim seems to be reasonable so far as it goes, but it should also be considered that the realm of spirit and matter have their own laws which dominate and regulate them. To the materialist the reason is the last word. To those who have faith in spiritual values the spirit is the ultimate reality. It cannot be demonstrated in any shape or form to the material-minded man in the same manner as the material objects are. The materialist scientists assert their view when they are convinced of any thing which they find true after test and experiment. Similarly such of us as have faith and unshakable conviction in the reality of spiritual values, have to assert fearlessly and unblushingly what we think and believe to be right as the result of our own direct experience.

The moral and intellectual integrity of a spiritual aspirant and artist like Dilip Kumar Roy or of a philosophic seeker of mystical truth like Dr. Indra Sen could not and should not be doubted. They would never attest a fact which they have not reason enough to know and verify for themselves.

If the human spirit as accepted by the saints and sages of the world is immortal, it must continue to exist in some form or other. What is called death does not put an end to the real man but to his vehicles only. The whole history of the religious pursuit of mankind would lose its value and lesson if the makers of history, the founders of religious denominations and propounders of spiritual philosophies would have gone away once for all; their cultural and spiritual continuity would have ceased once and for ever, and humanity would have been orphaned without their guidance.

More than five thousand years ago, Sri Krishna trod this earth. His influence is still felt by those who have learnt to attune themselves to him.

His great devotees like Sri Chaitanya deva, Surdas and Mira Bai-- to mention only a few names—are still cherished in our memory and they

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have not done a little to keep the fire of Krishna-love alive.

Mira Bai has become immortal and she lives for ever in the Lord of Her love.

On June, 25th 1951 Mira Bai revealed herself to Indira Devi and bore undying testimony to her *Ishtadeva's* grace and blessings in these words:—
“I claim neither knowledge nor wisdom. I know only Krishna and Love. But one thing I can tell you. *That it has never happened in history that a devotee has wanted Him truly and then died without attaining Him.*”

The same Mira with all her age-long spiritual glory, utter renunciation and whole-hearted devotion to her Ideal is still inspiring and guiding worthy aspirants and devout souls. One such example is found in the life-story of Indira Devi. She has been virtually saved twice from the jaws of death. She goes into a trance whenever there is a spiritual stimulus to do so like a bhajan song, and during that concentrated state of consciousness her body and mind are taken possession of by Mira Bai who also occasionally reveals her identity to those fortunate few who sit near her for the moment. Mira Bai has enchanted the Hindi-speaking world with her devotional songs during the last few centuries. Her present gift to this distracted and sceptical world is a number of devotional songs which she has passed on to us through Indira Devi. They are completely original and up till now unheard of anywhere. They are couched in flawless Hindi and sing nothing else than the praise of the Lord to whom she dedicated her own royal life.

When these songs were brought to the notice of Sri Aurobindo he wrote to Dilip Kumar Roy in the following words:—“There would be nothing impossible in Mira Bai manifesting in this way through the agency of Indira's trance. In any case the poems Mira Bai has written through Indira are indeed beautiful and the whole phenomenon of Indira writing them in a language she does not well know and in a metrical prosody of which is not master is truly remarkable and very convincing of the genuineness of the whole thing.”

Dilip Kumar Roy, Sisir Kumar Ghosh and Dr. Indra Sen have borne fullest and undeniable testimony to the fact that Indira is the worthy agent of Mira Bai through whom new songs she has condescended to give to the world. Dilip Kumar Roy has rendered these songs into Bengali and English verses. The devotees of Lord Krishna and the religious-minded people of India should be grateful to him for allowing them to share the joy and peace vouchsafed to them through these elevating, soul-inspiring and altogether magnificent songs as well as for the cullings from Indira Devi's diary in which profound truths of the spiritual life are revealed by Mira Bai with a rare directness and vividness of anecdote and parable and homily.

M. HAFIZ SYED

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

RETURN TO CHESTERTON

By MAISIE WARD

(Sheed and Ward, London, 21s.)

G. K. Chesterton was a delightful writer. But he had a personality that was even more delightful. He radiated such affection and cheer, such rollicking fun and such good feeling that to be in his company was a blessing that all who knew him desired to enjoy. Miss Maisie Ward had brought out a great deal of this, and Chesterton's own autobiography is a classic because it reflects the man. But even more than in set writings, whether biographies or autobiographies, it is in the stray stories, wisecracks, anecdotes and intimate little recollections that the essential personality of a man comes again to life. If Boswell's *Life of Johnson* is such a success it is because it contains so much that many might have dismissed as lacking in the "high serious." Maisie Ward, like many biographers who have followed Boswell, had introduced a great many such revealing things into her excellent book. But since then she has come across many letters, stories and recollections of various people who knew Chesterton and had moved with him on varying terms of intimacy, and these were such good material and so large in volume that she has made a new book out of them. All who are interested in G. K. C. and all who wish to share again his wit, wisdom and goodness of heart will be extremely grateful for having got this new book.

Chesterton's relish of life and his looking at every aspect and experience of life and character with a cheerful, humorous and delighted disposition is well known.

What was the secret of this cheerful disposition and outlook? There was nature, of course. But even more than that was the happy home life he always had. What a contrast between the home experiences of the young Bernard Shaw with his drunken father and his too independent mother and those of the young Gilbert Chesterton! And what harmony, affection and steady loyalty between Chesterton and his wife! It is as delightful as a magnificent realistic romance to read the story of his love and marriage. Further details are found in this book of the intensity of his love, his extreme bashfulness, the long wait before the marriage for lack of funds, and the devoted attachment after marriage. There is a poem which shows the humility of the ardent lover. One stanza runs —

*Lord, I have been a waster of the sun,
A sleeper on the highways of the world,
A garner of thistles and of weeds,
A hewer of waste wood that no man buys,*

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*A lover of things violent, things perverse,
Grotesque and grinning and inscrutable
A savage and a clown—and there she stands
Straight as the living lily of the Lord.
O thy world-wisdom speak—am I the man?*

If he did not know he was the man, Frances knew it and they married. What was the great attraction she had for him may be seen from a passage in one of his letters. He says, "I know that there was a Cleopatra of Egypt who in your temporary absence attracted the male sex to a large extent. But these people do not possess beauty in your sense: what they had was animal regularity. There is one kind of beauty which begins inside and works outside—first it makes spring in the heart and then the whole blossoms like a tree, on every twig and spray. The soul is like a flame and it makes the whole body transparent. Any actress with a pot of rouge and a stick of grease-paint could make herself like Helen of Troy. But no one **COULD** look like you without having a benediction in her heart: something more than a stick of grease-paint is required to 'make up' your face—laughter loud with sympathy and tears honourable with silence." There it is, and that being so a very happy married life followed.

Chesterton's cheer and happiness was due not only to his sense of humour but also to his great fair-mindedness. He had many debates and quarrels in his time. But he always knew how to distinguish between men and their opinions. He attacked the opinions but he was on good terms with the men. Many were the public debates he had with Bernard Shaw, H. G. Wells and others, and yet he respected them and they respected him. Wells said, "Chesterton and I are antagonists with an undying feud, but in the fight against human selfishness and narrowness and for a finer juster law we are brothers—at the remotest half-brothers." Of Wells Chesterton said he was "the fairest man in England."

In the account of Chesterton as a literary man perhaps the most interesting chapter in this book may be the one called **A SAGA OF SECRETARIES**. For in it we see Chesterton at work, his method or lack of method, his human relationship with his various secretaries, and how in spite of all his literary ability in certain respects he was no better than a grown-up child. In a man like G.K.C. it is to be expected that he would be behind the date with his contributions. He would postpone till the last moment and that too being gone, "the post had been missed, the article must go by the train, Frances must telephone to London to have the train met, the secretary must bicycle in hot haste to the station and tip the guard to take the article. 'Even the dog was affected', says one secretary, speaking of the general state of agitation."

G.K.C. was not merely a literary man. He was interested in human

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well-being, and consequently he devoted a great deal of attention to the improvement of the economic condition of the world at large. At the same time he was anxious that the best in the existing social order should not be swept aside. It was the result of this position that made him a "distributist", and to further his views he ran *G.K.'s Weekly*. The story of that Weekly run for an ideal is told here with many little known facts about its starting and work. Maisie Ward says about it, "*G.K.'s Weekly* foretold the economic crisis that today has come. It foretold the perils of a dying agriculture, it kept alive that free press in which alone men and institutions can be openly criticised. But it could not put into the people a spirit to take up the beds on which they lay paralysed and to walk into a freer world." That is a neat summing up of what the *Weekly* did and what it could not do; and it shows what interest we are to attach to the details connected with that remarkable adventure in journalistic idealism.

As one reads this additional book on Chesterton from the pen of his biographer one gets into closer touch with that great and good man. Every aspect of his character and many details of his activities stand out more clearly, and thus while the biography was full enough the present book makes G.K.C. become more intimate to the reader; and as his is such a charming personality the reading of the book is in more than the ordinary sense a most delightful experience.

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THE AGE OF THE SPIRIT*

Sisirkumar Mitra

If man is a progressive being, his history must have in it a principle of organic growth which evolves with whatever progress man makes in his earthly adventure. All the facts, events and movements that are woven by history into the story of man's development through the ages are so many steps of his onward march, milestones, as it were, in his glorious pilgrimage. The various forms of culture produced by a race or people thus come into the pageant of history not as so many isolated factors pieced together but as harmonious expressions of the soul of the race, the outer articulations of its inner impulse, all tending towards the fulfilment of Nature's intention—the advancement of the race as a whole.

History therefore is a continuous process through which the faculties of man flower into greater and grander possibilities. And this process has its stages at each of which man takes to those activities that give him the varied experiences he needs for his growth towards the ultimate goal of his collective existence

These activities and experiences while sustaining his life, mind, heart and soul, promote their expansion and development for larger and wider fulfilments of the future. Each such stage, however, is generally found to have one particular idea that governs most of its activities through which a particular part of man's being is helped into its fruition. And as in this way man progresses, he gathers strength by which to reach the goal of his adventure, the vision of which came to him almost at the very outset of his journey, as if by some pre-arranged divine dispensation

But the historic development of mankind is too complex a phenomenon to allow of any clear division into separate periods which may be presented against a common background. That history is fundamentally the working out of a 'predetermined Plan' or a 'creative Idea' is even more difficult to discover in what external epochs appear to the student of human affairs. But a deeper view of things vouchsafed to the seers reads in history a hidden purpose for whose accomplishment evolutionary Nature is ever at work leading man from age to age that he may rise to the summit of his earthly possibilities individually as well as collectively. History reflects this integral vision when it studies all the efforts and achievements of man as a manifold organic progression, and the vision finds its wider meaning in history when it depicts the story of how man as a race moves forward in his chequered march to that goal.

* Unless otherwise mentioned, the quotations in this article are from Sri Aurobindo's writings to be mentioned at the end of the article. The hymns of the Veda and the meanings of the Sanskrit terms used in the chapter are all his renderings

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A perfect order of collective life—and no perfect order of life can be anything but a life lived in the Spirit—is the secret aim inherent in the evolution of humanity. Perfection of the individual translates itself in the coming into being of a perfect community. The core of all human progress is an inner preparation of the whole being of man for the great end of his social existence. The Seer sees in this progress several broad stages through which man passes in order to be fully developed in every part and plane of his being with a view to become ready for the highest point of his evolution on earth. The story of man is therefore the story of his upward endeavours by which he prepares himself for his divine destiny.

The first of these stages is the symbolic stage when came to the vision of man truths of the highest kind, truths about God, man and universe, which no mind could conceive, comprehend or express. It was the golden gates of man's intuitive faculty that swung open for the descending splendours of heaven to burst through, and illumine his consciousness. In order that these truth-visions might not be distorted, misused or otherwise profaned, the Seers preserved them inviolate in symbolic figures, the key to which could be seized and turned only by adepts and initiates.

In India the age of Symbols began when the earliest and the most luminous of the spiritual dawns radiated its golden rays on the intuitive horizon of the Vedic Seers who saw in them the infinite glories of the Supreme and His supernal Light which was to come down upon earth and new-create man into a divine perfection, or rather, manifest the divinity already in him, because that is his ultimate destiny for the attainment of which Nature in him has been in ceaseless travail. It is to these early Fathers of Knowledge that the race is indebted for the profoundest truth-visions that have ever come to any mortal in known history. And intuition was the particular faculty of human consciousness that received its fruition in this period. This is the first touch of the Spirit on the mind of India by which she began in that great dawn to open to the Light and develop the intuitive bent of her mind, her inborn spirituality.

If Indian history is to discharge its highest function it must show how that ancient vision of man's perfection has ever been the motivating force behind whatever Indians have done from early times to build up their culture and civilisation and how by these efforts they have grown in their readiness for the realisation of that vision in the life of the race.

Strangely enough, millions in India have for ages been uttering the mystic Word of the Veda, the Sacred Book of Knowledge, as the very name implies, without understanding its deeper significance, not to speak of the bearing it has on their own future as well as on the future of the human race as a whole.

The Vedic Paradox

Sanskrit literature, both sacred and secular, has down the ages used a very significant term for the Veda—*Shruti* meaning 'Revealed Scripture'. It is from this word that has sprung the traditional belief in the Veda as the only authentic source of all that is of value in Indian culture, the source of its religious, philosophical and spiritual ideas, of its aesthetic, social and political thought, of even deep scientific and mathematical concepts. The Brahmanas—a later Vedic literature—are the first to use this term. The Upanishads continued it. The Puranas, the Tantras and the later classical works used no other words in speaking of it than this most profound and expressive one.

Yet there have always existed, almost from the time of the Veda itself, a class of commentators to whom the Veda was only a book of myths and rituals. This however does not discount the truth-value of the Veda but betrays the natural tendency of the spiritually undeveloped mind which, sadly in ignorance, clings to secular values more than any other and cannot look beneath the surface meaning of things. It is the seeing of this kind which is largely responsible for the Veda being known to India as nothing but a text containing hymns for the worship of Nature-Gods, and to the world as 'an obscure, confused and barbarous hymnal'; and all the more so because man today has lost his original inner capacity which was in constant touch with its intuitive plane, and because his mind, mainly governed by reason, accepts as facts of life only the things that are cognisable by his senses and rejects or discounts what is beyond their grasp.

In India, as elsewhere, man's religious sense showed its first dawn in a worship of the forces and powers of the physical world, and these early phases continued to remain confined to those forms owing perhaps to his natural instinct of conservation born of long association or to the incapacity of the masses to go further. But this was a stage, a crude beginning of man's career on earth, when he had not yet fully developed his human faculties. With the growth of his intuitive faculty—and this had been long before his mind developed sufficient sharpness for the intricacies of its movement—man began to open more and more to the higher and psychological actions and influences of these powers, their deeper and esoteric meanings, and to the perception of how they responded to the prayer of man's soul whose helper they really are when it seeks to liberate itself from the powers of darkness and evil into the light and freedom of the Spirit.

This idea developed in India into a system of mystic symbology in that the forces of Nature and many other things of daily life were used by the Vedic seers as symbols of their mystic experiences. But it is only for the initiates that a teaching of this kind could be meant. The laity did not,

because they could not, ordinarily surpass the ritualistic stage which might have been a little more advanced than the purely propitiatory ceremonials of the earlier beginnings of the Vedic cult whose origins are shrouded in a misty past.

The ritualistic stage had its exponents too, even during the time of the R̥gveda itself, a period of intense spiritual activity in human history extending over the even more brilliant centuries of the Upanishads when the mind, heart and soul of India were stirred to their inmost depths by the force of a passionate quest for the Infinite, which led to a wider dissemination of the Vedic truths among those who sincerely sought them. But the tendency of the generality of people was, as always naturally, towards the external forms of religion. The Vedas were therefore followed by the Brahmanas which upheld the ritualistic school, satisfying the religious needs of the masses. The zeal for spiritual knowledge which characterised the previous period receded again to smaller circles of illumined souls which kept burning within them the fire of the ancient vision, striving all the time to reaffirm it to the higher mind of the race, so that it might remain preserved in its memory and help in the growth of spirituality which was again to inspire and motivate all the movements of Indian life and culture in later ages.

There is then the other way in which the Vedic idea continued in the religious consciousness of India. It was through the mystical potency of the Word of the Veda, of the *mantras*—inspired hymns—of which the *Gayatri*—the morning and evening prayer—has ever been the most popular, whose chanting has enshrined in the hearts and minds of the people the sanctity and supremacy of the Veda governing their life from start to finish. And as in the past it dominated all aspects of their life, in particular the religious, so does it even in the present though there is the inevitable qualitative difference.

When, however, the mystics became more mystical, more indrawn, therefore more inaccessible, and the laity more inclined to externalism, the ritualists took the field and usurped the function of Vedic scholarship with the result that the ancient lore found itself cut in two, the first part as of Works, comprising the Vedas, and the second as of Knowledge, embodied in the Upanishads. This approach was strongly criticised in the Upanishads and the Gīta,—an evidence of the spiritual tendency of the periods of these two authorities of Indian thought. Even most of the ritualistic commentators never forgot to acknowledge that the Veda did allow of a spiritual interpretation, though that for them was not its sole meaning.

The most notable writer on the Veda in ancient times was Yaska, who, according to tradition, lived about 100 B.C. and compiled the first Vedic grammar on more or less scientific lines, using etymology as one of his bases.

He speaks of several schools of Vedic exegesis, ritualistic, mythological, grammatical, logical and spiritual. He himself knew the Veda as embodying three kinds of knowledge, a sacrificial knowledge, a knowledge of the gods, and a spiritual knowledge. The hymns, he says, admit of this triple meaning. Yaska's declaration that 'the Rishis saw the truth, the true law of things, directly by an inner vision' shows on the one hand that the esoteric significance of the Vedic symbolism was not completely lost at that time, whereas, on the other, the confession of Yaska that he did not know even in his time the meaning of more than four hundred words of the Riks, hymns, indicates that the inner sense of the Vedic truths had already begun to fade in the consciousness of the late generations of the ancients. What remained and grew in influence was the exoteric interpretation of the Riks, which emphasised the sacrifices and all that they meant to the lay people.

Centuries had elapsed after Yaska when arose the Mimansakas who compiled the sacrificial rules and pointed out how important they were for the proper performance of the Vedic rites. In the fourteenth century there appeared in the field of Vedic scholarship the great figure Sayanacharya whose commentary on traditional lines is now regarded as the only authority on the Veda, Sayana's work, which he completed in collaboration with other scholars of his time, is so much dominated by his exclusive acceptance of the ritualistic formula that it renders more obscure the suggestiveness of even the external sense of the ancient Scripture, not to speak of its inner and real significance. "It also renders the ancient reverence for the Veda, its sacred authority, its divine reputation incomprehensible to the reason or only explicable as a blind and unquestioning tradition of faith starting from an original error."

Sayana does not seem to be so indifferent to the historic and mythological elements in the *Shruti* as to its spiritual, philosophic or psychological interpretations. He accepts the inner meaning of a number of Vedic terms but he does not always follow it up. Once, following this line he mentions Vritra as the Coverer who holds back from man the objects of his desire and his aspirations, but when he interprets the word he calls him simply the enemy of man or the physical cloud-demon who holds back the waters and has therefore to be pierced by the Rain-giver. This is only an external sense on which as also on the ritualistic conception Sayana builds his whole exegesis which has too an element in it of naturalistic interpretation in that it identifies the Vedic gods with personifications of Nature-Powers, such as the Sun, Moon, Heaven, Earth, Wind, Rain and Storm. European scholarship has taken its cue from this approach and has in its own way developed a theory of naturalistic interpretation which also has sadly influenced and misdirected the mind of modern India. The result is that the Veda is gene-

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rally referred to as a book of hymns and sacrifices to the godheads of Nature, and in India with this view is associated the belief of the Hindus that the Veda is a revealed scripture. This belief, however, is something more than an instance of how a conservative people clings to an old tradition. Implanted in its memory right at the beginning of its history, the tradition is preserved by the race which perhaps has never fully known what it really means. Nevertheless, the deep-rooted belief in the revelatory character of the Veda has served a purpose of Nature who has been patiently preparing the mind and soul of man for an understanding of the essential truth of the Veda when it is re-visioned and re-presented in its own true light by the Master-Seer of the race. And does not this truth show also the path by which man can grow into his divine destiny? The fact, however, is there that for thousands of years India has remained ignorant of the real teachings of the Veda, although they were indirectly influencing the race through the Upanishads, the Gita, the Puranas and the Tantras, all of which are more or less elaborations of the Vedic ideas in more intellectual and understandable terms. But this does not solve the problem. Whatever of the Veda is known to Indians today or to the world, is always from the commentary of Sayana, whittled down by European scholarship from a yet more materialistic standpoint. In works on Indian history starting from this standpoint, casual references to the high spirituality shown by Indians through the ages are explained by the uplifting tone of the spiritual fervour of the Upanishads, the Veda being mentioned only as a 'Book' in which godheads of Nature are propitiated for whatever they could do for the material well-being of man.

Why should the Knowledge of the Veda remain hidden from man for such a long stretch of time? Why is it that he should be deprived of such sublime world-moving truths? This brings us to the problem of man's readiness for them which he acquires through progressive stages of conscious activity in the long history of his development whose psychology has been outlined in the beginning. The Vedic truths are not for the ordinary seeker to discover, far less to understand and realise. And the time must also come in the cycle of man's progress when only the secret of a newer and diviner perfection, as envisaged in the Veda, can be revealed to him. And, above all, the Seer must come to whom will open the golden door of that Home of Light in which dwell the immortals shining in the eternal radiance of the Supreme.

The Veda is verily a Revealed Scripture of mystic symbols concealing within them the highest truths of man's ascension to the luminous heavens of the Spirit. But who is to vindicate this in this age of Iron? In one of the hymns of the Rigveda the Seer describes himself as one illumined, expressing through his thought and speech words of guidance, 'secret words',

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'seer-wisdoms that utter their meaning to the seer' Another Rishi speaks of the Riks of the Veda as existing in 'a supreme ether imperishable and immutable in which all the gods are seated', and he adds, 'one who knows not That what shall he do with the Rik?' That is why the Vedic Rishis—the inspired Mystics—reserved the secret knowledge of the Riks for the initiates shielding it from profanation, misuse or misinterpretation. They veiled the Knowledge in concrete and material figures and symbols and passed it only to the accepted seekers who had made themselves ready for it by going through systematic discipline and training. Thus arose the system of Vedic symbology with a double significance. "These symbols centred around the idea and forms of the sacrifice, for sacrifice was the universal and central institution of the prevailing cult. The hymns were written round this institution and were understood by the vulgar as ritual chants in praise of Nature-gods. Indra, Agni, Surya Savitri, Varuna, Mitra, and Bhaga, the Aswins, Ribhus, Maruts, Rudra, Vishnu, Saraswati, with the object of provoking by the sacrifice the gifts of the gods,—cows, horses, gold and other forms of wealth of a pastoral people, victory over enemies, safety in travel, sons, servants, prosperity, every kind of material good fortune. But behind this mask of primitive and materialistic naturalism, lay another and esoteric cult which would reveal itself if we once penetrated the meaning of the Vedic symbols.'

The Rishis knew that the Word of the Veda came from the topmost height of speech from where, hidden in secrecy, it passed into the truth-seers and could be found only by following the track of their speech through an inner seeing and hearing—the Rishis are also called 'hearers'—which the seeker of the secret knowledge, unless he was a born one, had to develop by meditation and tapasya, as Yaska reiterates. Says Sri Aurobindo: 'To enter into the very heart of the mystic doctrine, we must ourselves have trod the ancient paths and renewed the lost discipline, the forgotten experience.' The Seer must therefore come who would follow the path of the ancient Illuminates, rediscover the mystic lore in its original inner sense and reveal it to man at that great hour of the world when Nature will be ready to take her next evolutionary *saltus* and evolve out of the present mental man a higher supramental being.

The Truths Re-visioned

Sri Aurobindo started his Vedic studies under circumstances which were, as his whole life was, peculiar to himself. While deep in his yogic contemplations he was regularly having certain spiritual experiences through which there used to arise in his mind a number of symbolic names which, on reading the Veda later, he could easily identify with its gods.

This is how he found the clue to the figures and symbols of the Veda. As an instance, he cites Sarama who, according to Sayana, is just a heavenly hound, but who was seen by Sri Aurobindo as the Vedic hound of heaven representing an image of the physical Dawn entering in its pursuit of the vanished herds of Light into the cave of the powers of Darkness. With the physical Light taken as a subjective phenomenon, the hound of heaven is the intuition entering into the dark caverns of the subconscious mind 'to prepare the delivery and out-flashing of the bright illuminations of knowledge which have there been imprisoned'. Thus the Vedic terms, particularly the names, came to him as identities of symbols, and a new world of Light came into the possession of the Seer whose revelatory discoveries and whose phraseology are freely drawn upon here as the very basis of and clue to a new approach to the story of India for which the profound Scripture, the R̥gveda, now proves to be the most important document, important as well for the history of human thought and of the spiritual evolution of the human race. It is impossible within our scope to give even an idea of the vast literature comprising his esoteric exposition of the Veda which the Master has given to mankind for its spiritual illumination. A very bare outline touching on the fundamentals of Vedic thought as reconstructed by him is attempted here so that the motivating force—for that is the central meaning of the Vedic vision of man's future—behind all the endeavours of India throughout her history, may be understood.

As Sri Aurobindo pursued his Vedic study from his own standpoint, the Veda appeared to him to be 'a constant vein of richest gold of thought and spiritual experience running all through it'. The whole wealth of its inner meaning came to him as his natural inheritance. Sri Aurobindo found that often the exoteric sense is itself a part of the esoteric. *Go*, for instance, means both cow and light, the latter being its psychological sense; *dhī* also is variously rendered as thought, prayer, action, food, etc., thought being its psychological sense. There are images whose esoteric implications are quite clear. For instance, when in certain passages it is said that a son is born, what is implied is the image of some inner birth, 'the sonhood of the birth of knowledge, the inspired hearing of the truth', as suggested in the hymns to the Dawn. Similarly, natural phenomena used as figures for inner facts and other external things generally connected with sacrifices, are meant to symbolise forces and phases of the inner world. *Ghrita* means clarified butter, but also luminous thought, *Soma* means the wine of the moon-plant, but also delight, *madhu* is honey and also sweetness. 'Horse' is the symbol of strength and power as the twin of 'cow', the light. In the vision of the Mystics who represented the intuitive and symbolic mentality of the age 'the physical melted its shades into the lustres of the psychic, the psychic deepened into the light of the spiritual and there was

no sharp dividing line in the transition, but a natural blending and inter-shading of their suggestions and colours' The invocation 'Play, O Ray, and manifest in us' is at once a suggestion of the leaping up and radiant play of the potent sacrificial flame on the physical altar and of a similar psychical phenomenon, the manifestation of the saving flame of a divine power and light within us.

The Vedic Seers took the life of man as the field of their quest. And since theirs was a whole view, they knew that this life belongs not only to earth but also to heaven. Thus were they able to make the right approach to the problem, the problem of discovering the harmony between the two poles of existence which in the integral vision of the Seers were fundamentally one. The seeking after and the realisation of God should certainly be the chief concern of the spiritual aspirant. But unless and until the fruits of these endeavours are equated with what his life means for man, the problem of life remains unsolved. That is why in those early days of the magnificent youth of the nation, when 'a subtle intuitive vision and fathomless spiritual insight was at work', the inspired Mystics voyaging into the vast of God discovered how He embraces both the hemispheres of existence, heaven and earth, and promotes between them a constant commerce of their forces, heaven seeking to descend on earth, and earth aspiring to ascend to heaven, so that the marriage might take place of these two powers for the growth on earth of a larger life of harmony in the Spirit.

In the depth and intensity of their vision the Seers saw in man the mighty summit of earth and in the gods powers of the Infinite Consciousness, both bound by the unseen light of a heavenly Glory whose sole aim is to manifest on earth and evolve out of man a new being, its own immortal embodiment. Man indeed is of heaven even as gods are of the earth. Thus did the life of man unveil its secret significance to these Mystics who discovered in it 'a thing of mixed truth and falsehood, a movement from mortality to immortality, from mixed light and darkness to the splendour of a divine Truth whose home is above in the Infinite but which can be built up here in man's soul and life.' To be able to achieve this supreme end of his life man must cleave through the barriers he has himself erected in and around him by his subjection to the dark forces, particularly of death and falsehood. He must rise beyond death to immortality, turn from falsehood to the truth, battle with and conquer the powers of Darkness. And this he can do only by constant communion with the divine powers and with their aid, by a building of the godheads within him, a formation of the universality of the divine nature. Indeed, the gods who are children of Infinity, were born in the Truth and the Truth was their home but they descended into the lower planes and had in each plane their appropriate functions, their mental, vital and physical cosmic motions, and all these so that they could increase the Truth in man by the Truth and lead him to

felicity and immortality

Immortality then is what his life on earth is meant for, but man attains it only when he is able to break beyond the limitations not only of the physical, but also of his mental and psychical being into the highest native plane of the Truth where exist in all their heavenly plenitude the glories of immortality and infinity. Thus came to man the vision of the highest aim of his life almost when he started on his earthly adventure. The Vedic Rishi therefore voices in those early days the inmost aspiration of man's soul when he says:

‘That which is immortal in mortals and possessed of the truth, is a god and established inwardly as an energy working out in our divine powers . . . Become high-uplifted, O Strength, pierce all veils, manifest in us the things of the Godhead.’

Truth, Light and Immortality were to the Seers the highest treasures that heaven could offer to man and it is the attainment of these that they emphasised as the consummation of man's endeavour on earth. There is a Truth deeper and higher than the truth of outward existence, a Light greater and higher than the light of human understanding, which comes by revelation and inspiration, an immortality towards which the soul of man has to rise. It is for man to find his way to that, to get into touch with this Truth and immortality, to be born into the Truth, to grow in it, to ascend in spirit into the world of Truth and live in it for ever. To do this is to unite with the Godhead and to pass from mortality to immortality. This higher world of Truth was known to the Vedic Mystics as having below it the world of inferior truth, which is derived from the higher but mixed with falsehood and error, yet nonetheless a field for the growth of the human warrior who must be ever struggling to overcome the forces of Evil that the luminous home of the Divine Truth can be built up on earth, the home of the Truth, the Right, the Vast, *satyam, ritam, brihat*, where all is Truth-conscious, *ritachit*, all is in eternal harmony. There are many worlds in between up to the triple heavens and their lights but this is the world of the highest light—the world of the Sun of Truth, the Great Heaven, the path to which—called the path of the gods—it is for man to discover by an inner striving. But when he awakes from his sleep—the ignorance—of a desire-driven existence and begins to open to the light of his soul and makes the endeavour to live always in that light, he finds himself confronted by the powers of Darkness which had their sway over him so long and which are spoken of in the Veda under various names as Vritra (coverers of the light), Vala (withholders of the light) and Panis (traffickers in sense-mind), the Dasyus, the Rakshasas, and their kings, the powers of Falsehood, Division and Darkness, who always assail man but more vehemently whenever they find him truly responding to the call of the Spirit. The deepest meaning of man's life is a battle between the powers of Light

and Truth who call man to their heavens, and their opposing powers, those of Darkness and Falsehood, who obstruct all possibility of divine existence and divine action. All these latter have to be overcome and their domination over man and earth overthrown. In order that the gods may win a decisive victory in this battle and that on earth may be established a permanent reign of the Divine, man must seek the aid of the gods, the gods who are the guardians and increasers of the Truth and who alone can destroy the opposition of the adverse forces and clear for man the path to immortality. To the Vedic Seers these gods were living realities, and the vicissitudes of the human soul, a cosmic struggle not merely of principles and tendencies but of the Cosmic Powers which support and embody them. These are the Gods and the Demons. On the world-stage and in the individual soul the same poignant drama with the same actors is enacted.

The Vedic deities represent some essential pussions of the Divine Being. 'They manifest the cosmos and are manifest in it. Children of Light, sons of the Infinite, they recognise in the soul of man their brother and ally and desire to help and increase him by themselves increasing in him so as to possess his world with their light, strength and beauty. The Gods call man to a divine companionship and alliance; they attract and uplift him to their luminous fraternity, invite his aid and offer theirs against the sons of Darkness and Division. Man in return calls the Gods to his sacrifice, offers to them his swiftnesses and strengths, his clarities and his sweetnesses,—milk and butter of the shining Cow, distilled juices of the Plant of Joy, the Horse of Sacrifice, the cake and the wine, the grain for the God-Mind's radiant coursers. He receives them into his being and their gifts into his life, increases them by the hymn and the wine and forms perfectly—as a smith forges iron, says the Veda—their great and luminous godheads.'

The Yoga done by the Vedic seekers opened them to the way of the Truth by which they grew in the law of the Truth and became themselves the possessors of its solar splendours, 'masters of the Truth-Light who make the Truth grow by the Truth' They saw the higher worlds, and worlds beyond them, the gods, and gods beyond them, and knew that these are to descend upon earth and make of it a new heaven. They therefore declared:

'A perfect path of the Truth has come into being for our journey to the other shore beyond the darkness.'

'Beholding the higher Light beyond the darkness we come to the divine Sun in the Godhead, to the highest Light of all.'

Almost similar testaments—evidently echoes of the Veda—are found in the Upanishads, the profoundest creation of the spiritual mind of a later Vedic India.

To be continued