

MOTHER INDIA

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"GREAT IS TRUTH AND IT SHALL PREVAIL"

ALTERNATE SATURDAYS

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SRI AUROBINDO'S LETTERS

(THE QUESTIONS ARE PUT BEFORE THE ANSWERS)

LITERARY VALUES AND SOME MODERN TRENDS

(You have not commented yet on the two poems I sent up—rather "modern" in their irregularity. I doubt if they possess real value. What's your opinion?)

"My opinion is that these two poems reproduce very successfully the fault of most 'modern' (contemporary) poetry, at least what I have seen of it; I admit I have not read much of this poetry, but the little I have is all of the same fundamental quality. It is all very carefully written and versified, *recherché* in thought and expression; it lacks only two things—the inspired phrase and inevitable word and the rhythm that keeps a poem for ever alive. These two poems also are well-written, well-thought; all the material of good poetry is there but not the poetry itself, except the four lines I have marked off, and even these are a little tame in rhythm, though perfect in poetic speech and verbal inspiration. Speech carefully studied and made as perfect as it can be without reaching to inspiration, verse as good as verse can be without rising to inspired rhythm—there are something like a hundred 'great' poets (if you can believe their admirers) writing like that in England just now. It will be easy for you to be the hundred and first, if you like, but I would not advise you to proceed farther on that kind of modern line. It is not the irregular verse or rhymes that matter, one can make perfection out of irregularity—it is that they write from the cultured mind, not from the elemental soul-power within. Not a principle to accept or a method to imitate!" (7-6-31)

(Have you seen the poem, *Limber Horses*, in the copy of *The New Statesman and the Nation* recently sent up to you? What sort of inspiration has it?)

"It is evidently inspired from the vital world—from a certain part of it which seems to be breaking out in much of today's literature and art. All that comes from this source is full of a strange kind of force, but out of focus, misshaped in thought or vision or feeling, sometimes in the form too, ominous and perverse. For that matter, the adverse vital world is very much with us now,—the War was the sign of its descent on the earth and After-war bears its impress. But from another point of view that is not a cause for alarm or discouragement—for it has always been predicted from occult sources that such a descent would be the precursor of the Divine Manifestation."

(What do you think of Georgian poetry in general?)

"The defect of what was called Georgian poetry—though I suppose it would more properly be called late-Victorian-Edwardian-early Georgian—is that it has fullness of language which fails to go home—things that ought to be very fine, but miss being so; so much of the poetry of Rupert Brooke as I have seen, for instance, always gives me that impression. In our own language I might say that it is an inspiration which tries to come from the Higher Mind but only succeeds in inflating the voice of the poetic intelligence." (1-11-36)

(Donne is very much in the limelight these days. How far can we regard the present high estimate of him as justified? Does he not in his ingenuities combine most interestingly the life-force of the Elizabethans with a new intellectual temper?)

"It seems to me that Donne falls between two stools. The Elizabethan ingenuities pass because of the great verve of the life force that makes them attractive; Donne's ingenuities remain intellectual and do not get alive except at times, the vital fire or force is not there to justify them and make

them alive and lively. On the other hand he keeps to an Elizabethan or semi-Elizabethan style, but the Elizabethan energy is no longer there—he does not launch himself as Milton did into a new style suitable for the predominant play of the poetic intelligence. Energy and force of a kind he has, but it is twisted, laboured, something that has not found itself. That is why he is not so great a poet as he might have been. He is admired today because the modern mind has become like his—it too is straining for energy and force without having the life-impulse necessary for a true vividness and verve nor that higher vision which would supply another kind of energy—its intellect too is twisted, laboured, not in possession of itself." (28-2-35)

(I am sending you a sonnet by Edward Shanks, considered to be "one of our best younger poets":

O Dearest, if the touch of common things
Can taint our love or wither, let it die.
The freest-hearted lark that soars and sings
Soon after dawn amid a dew-brushed sky
Takes song from love and knows well where love lies,
Hid in the grass, the dear domestic nest,
The secret, splendid, common paradise.
The strangest joys are not the loveliest.
Passion far-sought is dead when it is found
But love that's born of intimate common things
Cries with a voice of splendour, with a sound
That over stranger feeling shakes and rings.
The best of love, the highest ecstasy
Lies in the intimate touch of you and me.)

"Shanks—Phoebus, what a name!! I am not in love with the sonnet, though it is smoothly and musically rhythmized. The sentiment is rather namby-pamby, some of the lines weak, others too emphatic, e.g. the twelfth. It just misses being a really good poem, or is so, like the curate's egg, in parts: e.g. the two opening lines of the third verse are excellent, but they are immediately spoiled by two lines that shout and rattle. So too the last couplet promises well in its first line, but the last disappoints, it is too obvious a turn and there is no fusion of the idea with the emotion that ought to be there and isn't. Still, the writer is evidently a poet and the sonnet very imperfect but by no means negligible." (12-6-31)

(I should like to have a few words from you on the poetic style and technique of these two quotations. The first is an instance of Gerard Hopkins's polyphony "at its most magnificent and intricate":

Earnest, earthless, equal, attuneable, | vaulty, voluminous... stupendous
Evening strains to be time's vast, | womb-of-all, home-of-all, hearse-of-all
night.

Her fond yellow hornlight wound to the west, | her wild hollow hoarlight
hung to the height

Waste: her earliest stars, earl-stars, | stars principal, overbend us,
Fire-featuring heaven. For earth her being has unbound, her dapple is at
as end as-

tray or aswarm, all through her in throngs; | self in self steeped and
pushed—quite

Disremembering, dismembering | all now. Heart, you round me right
With: Our evening is over us; our night whelms, whelms, and will end us...

The next quotation illustrates Kipling's Tommy-Atkins-music at its most

Sri Aurobindo's Letters—Continued from page 1

vivid and onomatopoeic—lines considered by Lascelles Abercrombie to be a masterly fusion of all the elements necessary in poetic technique:

'Less you want your toes trod off you'd better get back at once,

For the bullocks are walking two by two,

The "byles" are walking two by two,

The bullocks are walking two by two,

An' the elephants bring the guns!

Ho! Yuss!

Great—big—long—black forty-pounder guns:

Jiggery-jolty to and fro,

Each as big as a launch in tow—

Blind—dumb—broad-breached beggars o' battering guns!

"My verdict on Kipling's lines would be that they are fit for the columns of *The Illustrated Weekly of India* and nowhere else. I refuse to accept this journalistic jingle as poetry. As for Abercrombie's comment,—unspeakable rubbish, unhappily spoken!

"Hopkins is a different proposition; he is a poet which Kipling never was nor could be. He has vision, power, originality; but his technique errs by excess; he piles on you his effects, repeats, exaggerates and in the end it is perhaps great in effort, but not great in success. Much material is there, many new suggestions, but not a work realised, not a harmoniously perfect whole." (30-12-32)

(In Arjava's poem *New-Risen Moon's Eclipse*,

Harsh like the shorn head high of a gaunt grey-hooded friar

Who fears the beauty and use of sculptured limbs

(Branding the sculptor-archetype a liar),

O moon but lately risen from the foam where the sea-mew skims—
Form that a wan light cassocks, grace that a tonsure dims.

Joy that the leaden curse is rolled away to leave the golden

Tresses of earth-transforming gramarye

Whereby our wildered flesh-fret is enfolden—

O fair-as the foam-fashioned goddess that awoke from the wondering sea,
Love with the earth-shroud lifted, star from the shade set free!—

would you consider the general verbal impression of the line "Whereby our wildered flesh-fret is enfolden" to be Hopkinsian? Or take the sextuple alliteration—flesh-fret, enfolden, fair, foam-fashioned—which only Hopkins and Swinburns were capable of. And would you say that a compound like "flesh-fret" seems to be just in line with the Hopkinsian "bugle-blue", "silver-surfed", "cuckoo-call", "fast-flying" and (though this is strictly speaking a super-compound) "dapple-dawn-drawn"? Perhaps the very sound of "flesh-fret" would strike one as Hopkinsian? I mean the peculiar rhythm it makes, apart even from the significative element of the style of it.)

"Surely, one cannot be accused of being Hopkinsian, merely because of a successfully copious alliteration and an alliterative compound? These things have happened before Hopkins and will go on happening after him even if he is no longer read. It may be that these turns came to Arjava because of the influence of Hopkins—to that only he can plead Yes or No. What I say is that the way he uses them is not Hopkinsian, not Swinburnian, but Arjavan. 'Flesh-fret' has not the least resemblance to 'bugle-blue' or 'cuckoo-call' or 'fast-flying', still less to 'dapple-dawn-drawn' except the mere external fact of the alliterative structure; its spiritual quality is quite different. To take an idea or a formation or anything else from a former poet—as Molière took his 'bon' wherever he found it,—is common to every maker of verse; we don't write on a blank slate virgin of the past. Indian sculpture or architecture may have taken this form from the Greeks or that form from the Persians; but neither is in the least degree Achaemenian or Hellenistic." (1-4-32)

To Arjava about the same poem: "The poem is a very good one. The one thing that can be said against it is that you need to go through it twice or thrice before the full beauty of the thought, rhythm and imagery comes to the surface—but is that a demerit? Poems that are too easily read, as a French critic puts it, are not always the best. I myself doubted a little at first reading about the rhythm of the three first lines of the second verse, but that was because I was listening with the outer ear, my attention having been dulled by much dealing with miscellaneous correspondence before I turned to the poem; but as soon as it got inside to the inner ear, I felt the subtlety and rareness of the movement. There is a great beauty and significant force in the imagery and a remarkably successful fusion of the supporting object (physical symbol) into the revealing or transmuting image and the image into the object, which is part of the highest art of symbolic or mystic poetry. 'Heard before'? If you refer to elements of the rhythm, words or phrases here and there, or images used before though not in the same way, where is the poetry in so old and rich a literature as the English that altogether escapes this suspicion of 'heard before'? Absolute originality in that sense is rare, almost non-existent; we are all those who went before us with something new added that is ourselves, and it is this something added that transfigures and is the real originality. In this sense there is a great impression of original power in the beauty of the first verse and hardly less in the second. It seems to me very successful, and 'triviality' is the description that can be least applied to it while it could lack interest only to those who have no mind for poetry of this character."

(Robert Bridges has invented what is called the loose Alexandrine. Lascelles Abercrombie explains its principle thus: "The novelty is to make the number of syllables the fixt base of the metre; but these are the effective syllables, those which pronunciation easily slurs or combines with following syllables being treated as metrically ineffective. The line consists of 12 metrically effective syllables; and within this constant scheme the metre allows of any variation in the number and placing of the accents. Thus the rhythm attained is purely accentual, in accordance with the genius of the English language, but a new freedom is achieved within the confines of a new kind of discipline." What do you think of the principle?)

"I do not understand how this can be called an accentual rhythm except in the sense that all English rhythm, prose or verse, is accentual. What one usually means by accentual verse is verse with a fixed number of accents for each line, but here accents can be of any number and placed anywhere as it would be in a prose cut up into lines. The only distinctive feature is thus of the number of 'effective' syllables. The result is a kind of free verse movement with a certain irregular regularity in the lengths of the lines." (??-36)

(I am sending you two poems—one is Albert Samain's famous *Pannyre aux talons d'or* and the other is Flecker's much-praised translation of it. I shall be very much interested in your comparison of the two. Here is Samain:

Dans la salle en rumeur un silence a passé.
Pannyre aux talons d'or s'avance pour danser.
Un voile aux mille plis la cache tout entière.
D'un long trille d'argent la flûte, la première,
L'invite; elle s'élançe, entre-croise ses pas,
Et du lent mouvement imprimé par ses bras,
Donne un rythme bizarre à l'étoffe nombreuse,
Qui s'élargit, ondule, et se gonfle et se creuse,
Et se déploie enfin en large tourbillon...
Et Pannyre devient fleur, flamme, papillon!
Tous se taisent; les yeux la suivant en extase.
Peu à peu la fureur de la danse l'embrase.
Elle tourne toujours; vite! plus vite encore!
La flamme éperdument vacille aux flambeaux d'or!
Puis, brusque, elle s'arrête au milieu de la salle;
Et la voile qui tourne autour d'elle en spirale,
Suspendu dans sa course, apaise ses long plis,
Et, se collant aux seins aigus, aux flancs polis,
Comme au travers d'une eau soyeuse et continue,
Dans un divin éclair, montre Pannyre nue.

Here is Flecker:

The revel pauses, and the room is still,
The silver flute invites her with a trill,
And buried in her great veils, fold on fold,
Rises to dance Pannyra, Heel of Gold.
Her light steps cross, her subtle arm impels
The clinging drapery, it shrinks and swells,
Hollows and floats, and bursts into a whirl;
She is a flower, a moth, a flaming girl.
All lips are silent; eyes are all in trance,
She slowly wakes the madness of the dance;
Windy and wild the golden torches burn;
She turns, and swifter yet she tries to turn,
Then stops; a sudden marble stiff she stands,
The veil that round her coiled its spiral bands,
Checked in its course, brings all its folds to rest,
And clinging to bright limb and pointed breast
Shows, as beneath silk waters woven fine,
Pannyra naked in a flash divine!

"All here", says a critic, "is bright and sparkling as the jewels on the dancer's breast, but there is one ill-adjusted word—pointed breast—which is perhaps more physiological than poetic." Personally I don't somehow react very happily to the word "girl" in line 8.)

"Samain's poem is a fine piece of work, inspired and perfect; Flecker's is good only in substance, an adequate picture, one may say, but the expression and verse are admirable within their limits. The difference is that the French has vision and the inspired movement that comes with vision—all on the vital plane, of course,—but the English version has only physical sight, sometimes with a little glow in it, and the precision that comes with that sight. I don't know why your critical sense objects to 'girl'. This line,

She is a flower, a moth, a flaming girl,

and one other,

Windy and wild the golden torches burn,

are the only two that rise above the plane of physical sight. But both these poems have the distinction of being perfectly satisfying in their own kind.

P.S. 'Flaming girl' and 'pointed breast' might be wrong in spirit as a translation of the French—but that is just what Flecker's poem is not, in spite of its apparent or outward fidelity, it is in spirit quite a different poem." (23-6-32)

SRI AUROBINDO, THE LEADER OF THE EVOLUTION

PART II OF "THE WORLD CRISIS AND INDIA"

By "Synergist"

SECTION III : THE NEW WORLD-VIEW

(a) THE SPIRITUAL METAPHYSIC

(ii) KNOWLEDGE OF THE DIVINE REALITY

POWERS OF MIND AND SUPERMIND

(Continued from the issue of Dec. 5)

A detailed exposition of the powers and faculties of the gnostic consciousness was begun in the last essay. It was pointed out that the supramental knowledge is not essentially a "thought-knowledge" based on separate and indirect contacts, but a direct knowledge based on identity and attained through "a pure awareness of the self-truth of things in the self and by the self"—thought could only be, on the supramental level, a particular means of manifesting, to a limited degree, what is really self-existing in this higher knowledge.

It was also shown that this identity-knowledge carries within itself as a secondary power a supramental vision. This power has the characteristic of sight, and needs no image to support its action—one who possesses it does not require thought to aid him in the acquisition of knowledge, but uses it only as a means of representation.

In this essay the gnostic action which the mental powers of thought, reason, and observation receive on the supramental level is discussed. Of course, all these powers cannot really be put into separate categories and examined individually—that would be to carry the ignorance of the unilluminated rational mentality into the domain of supra-rational knowledge, it would mean using the rational-analytical method of inquiry to attain to a knowledge which is total and integral, and not piecemeal like intellectual knowledge. However, for the convenience of the mind these powers have to be described in terms of intellectual knowledge and classified in its categories.

Together with the knowledge by identity in essence and dynamism and the supramental vision, there is developed what may be called a supramental thought as one grows into the gnostic consciousness; but this thought is not at all like the mental thought, a twilight dimness groping for the light, but is a direct movement of consciousness which contacts the object of knowledge in immediate apprehension; it presents the idea not as an abstract image of the truth, but as a form of luminous substance of being which has taken shape according to its inherent truth—its real-idea. Whilst the intellectual thought is a partial and diminished reflection of Truth on the Mental plane, the supramental thought is a luminous form of Truth itself as it deploys its real-ideas, forces and powers—its truth-value increases as it reaches the heights of the Supermind. Sri Aurobindo writes from his personal experience that "the supramental thought is a form of the knowledge by identity and a development, in the idea, of the truth presented to the supramental vision. The identity and the vision give the truth in its essence, its body and its parts in a single view: the thought translates this direct consciousness and immediate power of the truth into idea-knowledge and will. It adds or need add otherwise nothing new, but reproduces, articulates, moves round the body of the knowledge. Where, however, the identity and the vision are still incomplete, the supramental thought has a larger office and reveals, interprets or recalls as it were to the soul's memory what they are not yet ready to give. And where these greater states and powers are still veiled, the thought comes in front and prepares and to a certain extent effects a partial rending or helps actively in the removal of the veil. Therefore in the development out of the mental ignorance into the supramental knowledge this illumined thought comes to us often though not always first, to open the way to the vision or else to give first supports to the growing consciousness of identity and its greater knowledge. This thought is also an effective means of communication and expression and helps to an impression or fixation of the truth whether on one's own lower mind and being or on that of others. The supramental thought differs from the intellectual not only because it is the direct truth idea and not a representation of truth to the ignorance,—it is the truth consciousness of the spirit always presenting to itself its-own right forms, the *satyam* and *ritam* of the Veda,—but because of its strong reality, body of light and substance.

"The intellectual thought refines and sublimates to a rarefied abstractness; the supramental thought as it rises in its height increases to a greater spiritual concreteness. The thought of the intellect presents itself to us as an abstraction from something seized by the mind sense and is as if supported in a void and subtle air of mind by an intangible force of the intelligence. It has to resort to a use of the mind's power of image if it wishes to make itself more concretely felt and seen by the soul sense and soul vision. The supramental thought on the contrary presents always the idea as a luminous substance of being, luminous stuff of consciousness taking significant thought form and it therefore creates no such sense of a gulf between the idea and the real as we are liable to feel in the mind, but is itself a reality, it is real-idea and the body of a reality. It has as a result, associated with it when it acts according to its own nature, a phenomenon of spiritual

light other than the intellectual clarity, a great realising force and a luminous ecstasy. It is an intensely sensible vibration of being, consciousness and Ananda.

"The supramental thought, as has already been indicated, has three elevations of its intensity, one of direct thought vision, another of interpretative vision pointing to and preparing the greater revelatory idea-sight, a third of representative vision recalling as it were to the spirit's knowledge the truth that is called out more directly by the higher powers. In the mind these things take the form of the three ordinary powers of the intuitive mentality,—the suggestive and discriminating intuition, the inspiration and the thought that is of the nature of revelation. Above they correspond to three elevations of the supramental being and consciousness and, as we ascend, the lower first calls down into itself and is then taken up into the higher, so that on each level all the three elevations are reproduced, but always there predominates in the thought essence the character that belongs to that level's proper form of consciousness and spiritual substance. It is necessary to bear this in mind; for otherwise the mentality, looking up to the ranges of the supermind as they reveal themselves, may think it has got the vision of the highest heights when it is only the highest range of the lower ascent that is being presented to its experience."

Another gnostic power that develops in the consciousness is what may be called the supramental reason; it will be examined here together with the power of observation. As we have seen, the action of the intellect is first lifted up into an intermediate intuitive mentality and then gradually raised into the supramental consciousness. In this movement of ascension the first well-organised action of the Supermind is, says Sri Aurobindo, "the supramental reason, not a higher logical intellect, but a directly luminous organisation of intimately subjective and intimately objective knowledge The supramental reason does all the work of the reasoning intelligence and does much more, but with a greater power and in a different fashion. It is then itself taken up into a higher range of the power of knowledge and in that too nothing is lost, but all farther heightened, enlarged in scope, transformed in power of action"

"The supramental reason observes all that the intelligence observes—and much more; it makes, that is to say, the thing to be known the field of a perceptual action, in a certain way objective, that causes to emerge its nature, character, quality, action. But this is not that artificial objectivity by which the reason in its observation tries to extrude the element of personal or subjective error. The supermind sees everything in the self and its observation must therefore be subjectively objective and much nearer to, though not the same as the observation of our own internal movements regarded as an object of knowledge. It is not in the separately personal self or by its power that it sees and therefore it has not to be on guard against the element of personal error: that interferes only while a mental substratum or environing atmosphere yet remains and can still throw in its influence or while the supermind is still acting by descent into the mind to change it. And the supramental method with error is to eliminate it, not by any other device, but by an increasing spontaneity of the supramental discrimination and a constant heightening of its own energy. The consciousness of supermind is a cosmic consciousness and it is in this self of universal consciousness, in which the individual knower lives and with which he is more or less closely united, that it holds before him the object of knowledge."

But it must not be imagined that as a knower is in the position of a witness, he is psycho-epistemically on the same level as the observer who attempts to acquire mental knowledge and who looks upon himself as a separate self and upon the object he is observing as "not-self." On the supramental level there is no such separateness; the essential underlying oneness is constantly felt and known. It must be borne in mind that this act of apprehension does not take place in an egocentric but in a universalised consciousness. In the universal self the object to be known is seen as a thing within oneself brought forward before the witness-consciousness. The witness on the supramental level is really one in being and consciousness with the object of knowledge and is therefore capable of knowing it in essence and functional relationships by the force of this oneness. When the object is brought in view for observation it is only a movement which brings out the latent knowledge within the Self.

There is a fundamental unity of consciousness evenly and equally manifested in stasis, but greater or less in power and kinesis, and more or less immediately revelatory of its contents of knowledge according to the stage of the gnostic development of the individual. Sri Aurobindo says

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POWERS OF MIND AND SUPERMIND —Continued from page 3

that as a result of this inherent unity, there is established between the knower and the object of knowledge "a stream or bridge of conscious connection... and as a consequence a contact or active union enabling one to see, feel, sense supramentally what is to be known in the object or about it... The necessity of this stream or this bridge of connection ceases when the fundamental oneness becomes a complete active oneness." This identity in dynamism reaches real completeness on the summit of the supramental ranges in the Divine Truth-consciousness, where Omniscience is one with Omnipotence, and Knowledge and Power are one with a self-effective Will.

There are three movements of the supramental observation—their description given by Sri Aurobindo here is extremely interesting. Whilst reading it the reader is asked to bear two things in mind—first, that the movements take place in a universal consciousness, a consciousness that has been liberated from its egocentric mould and widened to embrace all existence, and secondly, that there is a basic identity between the observer and the object of knowledge; if he does this, he will not find it very

difficult to understand this description.

"There are three possible movements of this kind of supramental observation. First, the knower may project himself in consciousness on the object, feel his cognition in contact or enveloping or penetrating it and there, as it were in the object itself, become aware of what he has to know. Or he may by the contact become aware of that which is in it or belongs to it, as for example the thought or feeling of another, coming from it and entering into himself where he stands in his station of the witness. Or he may simply know in himself by a sort of supramental cognition in his own witness station without any such projection or entrance. The starting point and apparent basis of the observation may be the presence of the object to the physical or other senses, but to the supermind this is not indispensable. It may be instead an inner image or simply the idea of the object. The simple will to know may bring to the supramental consciousness the needed knowledge—or, it may be, the will to be known or communicate itself of the object of knowledge."

To be continued

The SPIRITUAL LIFE & WORLD-RENUNCIATION —Continued from page 5

come to grief, for when one strives to rise beyond the routine of human existence one gets into touch with strange beings and forces and unless one has a deep purity and sincerity they may make use of one in ways that are far from spiritual and they may even derange one's mind. That is why, I may remark, a matter of prime moment is the development of some kind of peace. The Guru can give this peace as well as a protection by his own power. Unless one is a spiritual genius, one cannot do without the Guru.

Here I may dwell a little on the life of the cloister which you seem to regard as very desirable. Apart from the unnatural tax it lays on one by its rigid rules and its grinding tasks, there is the very great possibility of its not spiritualising one at all. Who is usually in charge of a nunnery? Not a St. Teresa or a St. Catherine, but an ordinary Mother Superior who has an ability to govern and organise, but no special spiritual radiance. How is she to help one's soul? Of course one may turn to the occult Christ and worship him and call down his help. But how much is one's own capacity for doing this? Most of us are very ordinary people even when we turn Godward, we are not spiritual geniuses. We cannot for long keep up worship or mystical communion or even the inner strength that laughs at the outer hardships one has often to go through. Deep disappointment is bound to invade us and a bitter resentment against life. One's sister nuns may, and usually do, have many petty traits, for they too are not supernormal folk. A religious bent of mind or an impetuous turn towards the cloister does not transmute people into superhuman beings. And unless a St. Teresa or a St. Catherine is there to guide a nun and help her and uplift her by their very presence and make all her travails and tribulations as worth while as they can be made, the aspirant will not attain her genuine goal—God-union and God-expression. The point is that we must find the Guru who is God-realised; and in a merely moral and pious life which is all that there is in organised religion at its best, whether Christian or Hindu or any other, we have not much hope of being truly illuminated. To sit at the feet of a living Saint or Yogi who embodies the Divine and is with us as a constant spiritual presence in very flesh and blood is the only right and reliable and fruitful way of mysticism.

Lastly, in regard to a person who has passed beyond our own level of consciousness and whose life has not lacked in trials and heroisms, we must remember the opening para of the Mother's talks to which I have already referred, where she says that we must never sit in crude judgment on what we imagine to be shortcomings. The Divine, when It manifests for earth-work, seems often to act very ordinarily, but we do not know what is the magnificent meaning of Its action. To take an instance from another sphere, suppose an average matric student reads a poem and says, "It's beautiful." What would be the meaning of this statement? Will it put the stamp of merit on the poem? Now suppose a man like Coleridge or Matthew Arnold makes the same remark, "It's beautiful." The words will have come from an entirely different source: they will have sprung from a mind quick to the revelatory impact of poetic inspiration and the

significance they will carry for whoever is able to recognise their source will be momentous. The two utterances were identical and yet worlds apart. In a like manner, a spiritual person may act in several respects like a non-spiritual one, but the whole fount of consciousness, the whole aim and objective are altogether different.

People used to question why Sri Aurobindo was staying in one room and not coming out and lecturing or guiding political conferences at Delhi or doing social service. They passed judgment on him for not acting as they imagined a spiritual person should have. The conclusion they drew was that Sri Aurobindo was wasting his time and that his spirituality was dubious. But how could we dictate to a person who had been for years at the job of spirituality, how could we tell what spirituality consists in? Can you dictate to a poet what he should do in poetry? He may not be good at cooking or at mending clothes, but he knows something about poetry and he should not be compelled to act according to the wishes of those who are not so experienced in the art of writing poems. Similarly, how could we know what Sri Aurobindo, with the aim he had in view, should have done or not done? He knew his job best. We could, of course, have offered suggestions to him, but if he persisted in his own line of living, we should have to concede to him that he knew better than we the art and science of being spiritual and doing the Divine's work. The Mother too knows her work best and is better aware than we of the right way to embody and express the spiritual realisation and to lead others to it. Of course, doubts and questions are not unnatural, but in our search for the Spirit we must not erect our ordinary conceptions into absolute canons. Especially when a new path of spirituality is trod, which, for all its discipline and detachment, tries to take into its sweep the whole essential life-movement of the world and bring about its transformation by the power of what Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have called the Supermind, a power that has never before been completely compassed or directly manifested, such criticisms from a standpoint based on old identifications of spirituality with a stress on poverty and bareness and external abstentions are all the more invalid.

I quite understand that even if you grasp with your mind my contention, some sub-mental impulse may still trouble you. But if the mind grasps a truth, the chances are that this impulse may weaken gradually. The final blow to it, however, can come only by actual living contact with the Mother and with the truth, the radiance, the beauty, the bliss, the love, the compassion that she embodies. In front of her, if the soul in you is open even a little bit, your whole being will be flooded with light and everything she does will strike you as the rightest possible and even the things one may most criticise from an outsider's conventional standpoint will become part and parcel of the divinity that is in her smile—for here is

The Light whose smile kindles the universe.

Sri Aurobindo's Letters —Continued from page 2

(Lowes Dickinson obtained mystical experiences from music. He once told me that Beethoven's later quartettes and other chamber music seemed really to introduce one into some other world. Was he under a delusion?)

"There can be no doubt that Beethoven's music was often from another world; so it is quite possible for it to give the key to an inwardly sensitive hearer or to one who is seeking or ready for the connection to be made. But I think it is very few who get beyond being aesthetically moved by a sense of greater things; to lay the hand on the key and use it is rare."

(What would you say on the contrast between Lowes Dickinson's *Modern Symposium* (1905)—especially the fine passage on page 75—and his post-war Dialogue, *On the Discovery of Good*?)

"The pre-war and the post-war Dickinson are indeed a contrast. This appreciation of human life is not without the force of a half-truth, but it is

just the other half that he misses when he sweeps idealism out of the field. Man's utopias may be the projection of his hopes and desires, but he has to go on building them on pain of death, decline or collapse. As for the gospel of pleasure, it has been tried before and always failed—Life and Nature after a time weary of it and reject it, as if after a surfeit of cheap sweets. Man has to rush from his pursuit of pleasure, with all its accompaniment of petrifying shallowness, cynicism, hardness, frayed nerves, *ennui*, dissatisfaction and fatigue, to a new idealism or else sink towards a dull or catastrophic decadence. Even if the Absolute Good were a high spiritual or ideal chimera, the pursuit of it is rooted in the very make of humanity and it is one of the main sources of the perennial life of the race. And that it is so would seem to indicate that it is not a chimera—something still beyond man, no doubt, but into which or towards which he is called by Nature to grow."

The SPIRITUAL LIFE & WORLD-RENUNCIATION

A LETTER TO ONE ATTRACTED BY THE CLOISTER

By K. D. SETHNA

I read your letter with great interest and my mind went back to my own early days of groping and struggling. When the hunger for the Divine first awoke in me, it was something devastating no less than uplifting. The devastating part of it was to a considerable extent unavoidable, because so much of my ordinary movement of consciousness was contrary to the Godward urge of the inmost soul. I turned with disgust from my way of life, and I yearned to sit alone on some Himalayan height and lose myself in *samadhi*. Not only was common living a matter of repugnance, but even the common mental self-awareness that is ours was a continual pain. I wanted annihilation of my normal being, a submergence of my small self in the Infinite, a forgetfulness of the world and an oblivion of my own existence.

Somehow, things of beauty which to a man of my temperament had a special appeal were to me a special pang. They brought an excruciating exquisiteness or a shattering splendour, and in my intense response to them and enjoyment of them I felt that they at the same time opened a window upon eternity and held me back from that sweetness and glory by their own limited alluring perfection. Always there was the cry in me to transcend everything and be lost in some sort of formless and nameless, spaceless and timeless tranquillity.

I was very young—not even twenty-four. The conflict, therefore, between what is called the flesh and what is termed the Spirit was acute. That is often how the mystical turn starts. But that is not the essence of mysticism. The conflict is due to the difficulty our true soul finds in coming to the surface through the thick crust of our ignorance and our attachments. As I have said before, the devastating conflict cannot altogether be avoided; but, when the soul succeeds in coming up, the terrible tension goes. The soul is spontaneous communion with the Divine. It does not talk of renunciation, because to renounce implies that one is attached to ordinary things and the soul has no attachment to them. The soul does not think in terms of sacrifice, because to give up hankering after superficial objects it has to make no effort at all—it is most naturally free from the hankering. And when we grow aware of its blissful inherent freedom, we too lose the fear we have of the flesh, the recoil we have from the world. To the soul the earth is not a devil's trap. No doubt, a lot of ugliness is about us, but that is because the earth has not been made the soul's luminously built abode. The earth too is God's own creation and all the power and diversity, colour and complexity that are Nature are secretly God's and are in existence not in order to be hated and dreaded and shunned and escaped from but in order to be converted into channels and instruments and moulds of God. As the Upanishad puts it: "The Eternal is before us and the Eternal is behind us and to the south and to the north of us and above and below and extended everywhere. All this magnificent universe is nothing but the Eternal." To seek the transcendent Godhead and forget the cosmic divinity—to suppose that the cosmos is a fruitless nullity and has no purpose—is to fly against God's own being and God's own will. There are those superb words of Allah in the Koran: "Dost thou think I have made this whole world in a jest?" Surely the long march of time has some aim and if the soul has come into the world and passes from birth to birth, it is not for kicking off everything and leaving unfulfilled the poor dust out of which we are made.

An utter inner detachment from all objects of desire must be there—progressively, of course, and not attained at one shot. But when we are in love with God alone we have to take heed of God calling out to us from every corner and every particle of His creation. This, mind you, is not just a gospel of doing one's duty and being "good" to people. Duty and goodness are not negligible, but the spiritual life does not stop with them or even basically consist of them. It consists essentially in increasing union with the Divine and increasing expression of the Divine as a result of that union. In whatever we do we must seek to serve God. If you give a dying man some water and save his life, you do a fine thing, but it is not in itself a spiritual act unless you remember intensely that you are offering the saving cup to the Divine within the man. A conscious self-consecration, a conscious self-offering are requisite, for then alone all activity becomes a means of uniting with God, participating in God's sinless nature and doing God's perfect will. Of course, until we get the full illumination, we have to go by our own lights, but while doing the best we can we have to keep asking for the higher guidance and we have to think not of duty towards anyone or service to a human being but only of serving the Supreme Lord and Lover, the Supreme Shakti and Mother of the worlds, seated in all things and beings and exceeding them and drawing them to an ever greater perfection. "Remember and offer"—this is the essence of spiritual work.

To come back to my point: spirituality does not imply a spurning of the earth and its calls. To flee from them is the exact opposite pole of the error of remaining enmeshed in them, and has the same partiality, the same incompleteness, the same lopsided extremism. If a choice has to be made between only these extremes, the flight is definitely preferable—it is an absorption in light and not an engrossment in darkness. But this does not change the fact that God's manifestation has been refused by us and that we have spat on God just because He has taken the form of com-

mon clay. The monastic or cloistered life, the hermit's ascetic seclusion, are far greater than rotting in the sty of Epicurus, but they do not solve the problem posed by God. They intensely bypass the entire riddle of the universe.

And once we accept the principle of bypassing it, the most logical thing is not to retire merely into the cloister where at least we have the company of other human beings and a roof above our heads and some common comforts, however meagre. The most logical thing is to cut ourselves off from everyone, deny ourselves everything—live in a dismal cave, wear next to nothing, face the inclemencies of the weather, create hardships where there is the least creeping in of creature comfort, sleep on stones and sharp ones at that, practise terrible austerities, mortify the flesh till it bleeds and faints, reduce life to bare subsistence, grow old as quickly as possible in order to avoid the slightest chance of self-love or vanity, invite diseases in order to make the flesh loathsome, pray for early death in order that the world may be no more. Perhaps even suicide would not be out of place. If life is to be renounced, why not go the whole hog?

Besides, all these methods of being spiritual are artificial and they are signs that somehow the inner detachment is not complete. If one is not attached to earthly things, the feverish urge to throw them away cannot come. They trouble us no longer and do not seem to us hell's own handiwork. Of course, a certain discipline is necessary, but its use is made only for acquiring an inner detachment and not as an end in itself. Merely the reduction of our life to the hard and bare minimum does not lead to spiritual freedom from the grip of things. Do you know the story of King Janaka? He was the lord of a huge empire, he had possessions in plenty and wore beautiful clothes and had hundreds who did his bidding. But he had been initiated by a rishi into God-knowledge and he sought ever to do God's will. The wealth he had, the power he commanded, the people who served him—all these became the tremendous means of an activity in tune with the highest consciousness. If what he possessed had been given up into the hands of somebody who was not an initiate, it would have been utilised for purposes dark and devious. In King Janaka's hands it became not a denial but an affirmation of God's presence. And mark now what happened when a sannyasi who had left home and belongings and kept only a loin-cloth came to Janaka. The King invited him to his bathing pool and they were both splashing about in the water when a cry arose from the house that a fire had broken out. In a few seconds the King's great palace was all in flames and his finest tapestries and treasures were being licked up by the fire's relentless tongue. Down to the very edge of the bathing pool the conflagration spread. Janaka swam on, undisturbed. But the sannyasi gave a heart-rending shout and rushed from the water, with the words: "Oh my loin-cloth! It will get burnt!"

Inner freedom has nothing essentially to do with poverty or hardship. Self-indulgence is certainly an obstacle and a certain amount of *tapasya* and self-control is necessary, but to go to God by the way of extreme austerity is to maim oneself and to miss that paramount liberty of the Spirit which is attached to neither plenty nor poverty, neither ease nor hardship, but remains the same through all conditions and circumstances and gladly accepts life's abundance as it accepts life's rigours. When this sort of inner freedom is there, the spiritual life grows at the end a conquest of the world's powers for the sake of the Divine. Art is encouraged and transfigured. Beauty plays in every heart-beat and every movement. And if beauty demands a certain fine organisation of externals, that organisation is accepted. This does not put a premium on what the Mother, of Sri Aurobindo's Ashram, calls in her talks the physical consciousness. One must get out of this narrow superficial mode of being and as long as one has not got out of it one cannot give up a degree of outer discipline, but even here the important thing is, as the Mother says, not to keep oneself *attached* to one's physical needs and enjoyments. One must get rid of attachment to good clothes, good food, comfort and happy social relationships, and to an extent the riddance is helped by discipline, by doing away with many matters which one cherishes. But an impoverishment is not asked for and in any case the inner attachment is what is to be broken. The sign of this breaking is not so much the outer living without conveniences as the inner independence of them which feels no loss at all if they are lacking. To live a particularly hard life, as if any virtue resided in such a life itself, is not necessary to spiritual growth. The error of many a religion is to make too much of austerity and sorrow. This casts a shadow upon the forces of nature in oneself and makes one miss the goal of God in the world. God does not come on the cheap: that is true, and yet it is also true that God is infinite bliss and endless creativity and life abounding. The goal of evolution is not the martyr's crown of thorns but the wreath of the conqueror. However, I may add that the wreath is never deserved unless one is not afraid of martyrdom and it has to be put on one's brows by only the Guru's hands.

Yes, the Guru is an important part of the higher life. Without the Guru one is likely to go astray in the sense that one may ultimately feed one's ego by subtle means and end up in spiritual pride. One may also

Continued on opposite page

THE INTEGRAL YOGA

By RISHAB

CHAPTER VIII: THE EGO

We have seen that the integral surrender of the human being is an essential pre-requisite of his complete union with the Divine and the total transformation of his nature. We have also seen that, paradoxical as it may appear, it is the ego that at once initiates and impedes this surrender. In order that our surrender may be sincere and integral, we must now try to understand what this ego is—its origin, purpose, characteristic function, growth and end—and how we can proceed to deal with it in the light of a true knowledge, instead of rushing to grapple with it in the dimness of our half-baked ethical or religious mind, eager to achieve spiritual release by the sheer violence of drastic repressions and renunciations. Nothing is more helpful to a spiritual seeker than a clear and steady light in the consciousness revealing the goal to be attained and the tangled working of his complex nature with and through which he has to advance. Lack of knowledge is lack of power, and most of the difficulties and failures in the spiritual life can be safely attributed to a lack of knowledge and to the perfervid precipitancy and summary methods of our aspiring ignorance. Human nature is bafflingly intricate, and it is only by a patient and perspicacious dealing with it under the direct guidance of the divine Light that we can hope to purify it in all its parts and workings, and help its transformation into its divine counterpart, the Super-nature or Para Prakriti. An impatient and panicky violence can only maim or cripple it.

There are two philosophical theories in regard to the ego. One postulates the ego as the creator of the universe and credits it with the power of fashioning all phenomenal forms and weaving the network of unsubstantial relativities. The individual egos are, according to this view, microcosmic centres of the one universal ego. There being no eternal existence or substance sustaining and supporting the ego, when the individual consciousness attains to spiritual emancipation (Mukti), the ego-creation ceases to exist for it, or exists only as a fleeting panorama of phantom forms. The liberated individual loses the very principle of individuation and retains no centre of its cosmic self-expression in the world—it dissolves in the Eternal by the disappearance of the individualising ego or Avidya. The other theory considers the ego as a temporary, teleological construction of the evolutionary ignorance. According to it, the ego reflects—and invariably deflects and distorts while reflecting—the real spiritual individual behind; and when it is dissolved, there is no dissolution of all individuality and individual existence, but only of the artificial, separative ego-formation on the surface. The ego is a transitional construction of Nature in her evolutionary self-unfolding and represents, as best it can in the conditions of the Ignorance, the immortal soul of love and delight which is, in man, the spiritual centre and channel of God's manifestation in the world.

The Genesis And Growth Of The Ego

For tracing the birth of the ego we have to go back to the beginning of creation itself. It is said in the Upanishads that the Absolute, the One, willed to become many for the sheer delight of multiple self-expression. This primal Will of the Divine is the starting point of His self-multiplication. But it has a double working—one from above downwards, from the creative Vijnana above towards a complete involution in the Inconscience below, and another from below upwards, from the emergence of Matter, Life and Mind, by an ascensive process of evolution, towards the supernal glory of the Vijnana or the Supermind above. In the present essay we are concerned with the realisation of the divine Will in the evolution, which is posterior to the involution of the Superconscient in a complete negation of Himself, in the Inconscience; and it must be borne in mind that this Will is a Will to the progressive formation of multiple divine individualities, temporal self-figurings of the eternal One.

When Matter is created, its first movement is a self-splitting into infinitesimal atoms, which can be called the first insentient images or symbols of the forthcoming individualities. The One has, indeed, become many in these minute particles of Matter, and the work of self-multiplication progresses by the creation of the material world and peopling it with suns and moons and stars and planets. The dual principle of automatic attraction and repulsion, making for aggregation and disaggregation among the atoms, weaves the many-coloured marvel of the material creation. But these "many" are apparently inanimate, dumb, mechanically driven. They are only the first inchoate outline, the initial draft of the ultimate object of evolution.

Next evolves life, pulsing with an awaking animation, and betraying a very elementary emergence of consciousness in the form of faint sensation. It garments the earth in the splendour of green. Numberless varieties of plant-life register the formation of organic, biological individualities. What was before mere masses or whirls or more or less stable or fugitive structures of atoms, almost indistinguishable from each other and characterised by little perceptible individuality, has now been supplemented by living organisms with pronounced individual features and functions. There has evidently been formed in the heart of trees and plants a centralising and co-ordinating agency, something that disengages itself from the mass of inconscient Matter and grows and develops by mutation and self-adaptation. But it is subconscious, dimly awake only to a very limited gamut of sense-tremors. It has not yet evolved the ego, the conscious, centralising "I"; its germinating individuality is generic rather than specific. But that

it is proceeding towards a greater, a more trenchant principle of individuation is evidenced by the growing complexity of its organism, on the one hand, and the more efficient co-ordination of its functionings, on the other. The plants sleep and awake, feel pleasure and pain, and react to all external stimuli, as has been demonstrated by Sir Jagadishchandra Bose, and display a certain sense of self-preservation and self-defence. No doubt the central being is shaking off its drowse and coming forward to assert itself and possess its nature.

Then evolves mind, at first in its most elementary form of instinct in the animalcules and the lower animals, and next as a life-mind of hungers, and even a rudimentary, incipient reason. It shows a greater emergence of consciousness, a replacement of blind impulsions by more or less defined appetites and a much more pronounced and expressive individuality. The animals possess developed instincts, operating in wider areas of experience; their sensations are more alert and definite than in the plants; they have emotions and feelings—love, affection, hatred, anger, jealousy, etc.—and, in some advanced types, even a flicker of the reasoning mind. Here, for the first time, we get a distinct centralising agency, a primary crystallisation of the individuality, a *subconscious ego*. This ego takes its stand upon the separateness of its existence, and, though the generic and gregarious habits and tendencies predominate in it, displays enough specific traits and characteristics and variable psychological contours to justify the hypothesis of a clear-cut ego with sharp edges and outlines, physical and psychological, as the eventual fulfilment of the principle of individualisation in the Ignorance. The animal foreshadows the full-fledged human ego.

When man appears on the scene of terrestrial evolution with his developing mind of reason and imagination, the ego-building tends to become coherent and complete. In him the sense of separateness reaches its most rigid fixity, and an egoistic self-affirmation of the individuality becomes a dominant and governing factor. The human ego is not a subconscious but a *conscious ego*, asserting itself at every step of its life, imposing itself and encroaching upon others and demanding the subservience of everything to its personal ends. But its consciousness is a mental consciousness, floating like an isolated iceberg among other icebergs upon the waters of the encompassing Subconscient and, more often than not, moved and tossed by them, though it has always the delusive sense of its free will and independent initiative. It is in man that the work of individualisation seems to reach a climax, and that there is even a semblance of the fulfilment of the primordial Will of the Divine to conscious, multiple self-reproduction; but it is only a deceptive semblance, and not a fact. The normal human consciousness is an ignorant consciousness, seeking but not possessing knowledge,—it is not a representative of the divine Consciousness. The human being, therefore, though a developed individual, is not the perfect, divine individual, which it is his destiny to become. His is a cramped and clouded, a seeking and struggling and suffering individuality, dragging out a labouring and precarious existence

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O Lord, Thou hast decided to
and to pass our sincerity on
we come out greater an

OF SRI AUROBINDO

CHAND

—THE DESIRE-SOUL

in the rushlight of its mental reason. The Divine cannot yet announce in him, "Here am I, become many, and yet remaining myself, the eternal and indivisible One." The separative ego in man has no experience of the unity of the universal, nor of the absoluteness of the transcendent Existence—it lives imprisoned in the dim shell of its limited personality.

It will have been clear from the above description that the ego-principle has created distinct individualities in human beings, multiple centres of mentally conscious existence, but not divine centres of luminous self-awareness and self-expression. Even having become many, the Divine has not yet become divinely many, which was His primal Will. For that supreme consummation and the ultimate goal of terrestrial evolution, man has to get beyond the ego and widen into infinity. The ego's work of separative individualisation done, it has to fade away, giving place to the true individual, the soul of man, that lives in the indivisible unity of existence and yet reveals a facet and aspect of the infinite Person.

The Purpose And Utility Of The Ego

Our rapid survey of the birth and growth of the ego has shown us that it is a temporary device, a phenomenal construction of Nature for constituting conscious and separate individualities in the Ignorance. In the midst of the amorphous flux of universal elements, the shifting intermixture of forces and energies, something was needed to serve as a centralising and co-ordinating agency, otherwise no individualities could have been formed. The soul, the true individual, could not certainly come forward at the very start and be the overt pilot of its evolution in Nature; the start from the Inconscience precluded such an abrupt intervention. Evolution, commencing from the Inconscient, has perforce to pass through the transitional stage of Ignorance, in which ego-centric division and discord inevitably predominate, before it culminates in the Knowledge and unity of the Superconscient. It is true that the soul directs its evolution even from the start, but from behind a thick veil of ignorance,—it has to purify and prepare its nature, its instrument of divine self-expression, through long and chequered stages of slow and gradual progress. In the stone and the mineral, it is hidden in distant depths and throws out no hints of its occult presence, save in certain automatic reactions to external stimuli. In the plant it has been able to release just enough of its consciousness to react by sensation to the impacts of the outside world and register some of its subjective affections in its objective form and organic functioning. In the animal it has liberated a little more of its consciousness, always in the teeth of an unceasing gravitational pull towards the inert inconscience of its terrestrial origin, changed the blind urge of Nature into subconscious desire, accentuated and enlarged the action of the instinct and initiated the play of emotions. Sentience, mobility, subconscious volition and emotions are the outstanding innovation effected by the indirect influence of the slowly emergent soul. Another innovation, the greatest from the standpoint of the aim of evolution, is the incipient formation of the ego in

the animal, particularly in the higher types of it. The ego stands as a nucleus, a point of concentration and cohesion, tending to clench the reflected individuality of the soul and impart to it a provisional definiteness and permanence against the shapeless drift and diffusion of the universal elements. In man the soul has succeeded in making the ego his conscious representative, endowing it with reason, imagination, conscious volition, developed and articulate emotions, even tentative flashes of intuition, and—this is its signal achievement—an increasing urge towards self-transcendence. This urge is the harbinger of the soul's perfect emergence in Nature and spells an eventual extinction of the ego. But the human ego is a chained and convulsed representative of the soul,—chained to the dualities and convulsed by desires and passions—and has no perception of the Will of God, which the soul is commissioned here to fulfil. Besides, it lives in limitations, and reasons and reflects and acts in the semi-darkness of a mental consciousness. It proceeds on the basis of division and can only imperfectly imagine and conceive, but never realise and live, the unity and harmony of existence. But whatever its defects and drawbacks, it can justifiably claim to be the immediate architect of individualities in the domains of evolving ignorance and even a puny and clouded precursor of the veiled if self-revealing Person. In spite of its inveterate insistence on division and difference, it hews the road to the coming unity; in spite of its attachments to its own desires and interests, it orientates towards a state of desirelessness and disinterestedness; and in spite of its smug complacency in its habitual avenues, its fenced, familiar pastures and bounded horizons, it strains after the Unknown and thirsts for the Infinite. It is a bridge between the blind mechanism of the material life and the luminous dynamism of the superconscient Spirit. Even if it be a fiction, as some hold, it is according to Sri Aurobindo, "a practical and effective fiction." If it is a shadow cast by the soul upon the canvas of evolving ignorance, it is progressively penetrated and suffused with the soul-substance in the concentrated light of which it finally vanishes for ever.

The Triple Strand Of The Ego

The three qualitative modes of the lower nature, Sattwa, Rajas and Tamas, interfuse in the ego in varying combinations and give it its distinctive stamp. The ego can be predominantly tamasic, rajasic or sattwic. The tamasic ego is burdened with the inertia and incapacity of the physical nature. It is obsessed with its weakness and insignificance and is averse to any sustained effort and high ambition. The rajasic ego is drunk with its own importance and proud of its power and possessions. It exults in violent self-assertion and the strenuous pursuit of its multiplying desires. It counts no costs to achieve its ends and is daunted by no difficulties. If it is crude and gross in its self-expression, it is nevertheless more evolved than the tamasic ego, which is dull and heavy and supine. The sattwic ego achieves a poise and purity, so far as they are possible in the comparative calm and clarity of the mind, but is attached to and secretly proud of them. It is obsessed with its virtues as the rajasic ego is obsessed with its desires and passions and the tamasic ego with its incapacity. The ego of the altruist or the humanitarian, of the callow religionist or the shallow puritan is a subtly magnified ego, all the more difficult to detect and renounce, because it is masked in apparent selflessness and buttressed with its ethical or religious principles. When the humanitarian says that he is ready to lay down even his life for the welfare of mankind or the vindication of his lofty principles, or, when the spiritual seeker seeks God not for God's own sake, but for the achievement of some spiritual end, unless it is their own soul speaking or seeking in them, it is unmistakably their glorified ego. In many self-justifying religious or spiritual lives one can often trace the subtle working of the sattwic ego. But sattwic or rajasic, the ego is the ego, as a chain is a chain, whether it is of iron or gold; and so long as the ego persists, spiritual liberation is a far cry, let alone the divine Life, which is the aim of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga.

The Tentacles Of The Ego

The tentacles of the ego are spread out in every part of human nature. They pervade our body, our life parts, our sensations, our heart of emotions, our understanding and intellect, and determine and direct every action and reaction of our complex organism. It is not an easy thing to sweep them away at a stroke or even at many strokes from the entire nature. And unless the ego is completely blotted out, there is no possibility of the dynamic divine Presence being installed in our being for manifesting its glory upon earth. There is no greater enemy of spiritual liberation and perfection than the ego, "the lynch-pin of the wheel of ignorance," as Sri Aurobindo calls it. It has to be expunged from the whole being—from each of its fibres and each of its energies with which it is securely entwined. The immaculate soul of love and delight cannot live with the insatiable desire-soul in the same temple created for the service of the self-manifesting Divine. The shadow must depart, so that the substance, the psychic entity, may reign in its place. The end of the ego is the beginning of the manifest Divine in man.

In the next article we shall try to understand the means and methods Sri Aurobindo advocates for the complete elimination of the ego from our entire being and consciousness.

To be concluded

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test the quality of our faith
Thy touchstone. Grant that
d purer from the ordeal.

“SAVITRI” AN EPIC

BY A. B. PURANI

Continued from the issue of December 5

We have said in the beginning that Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri* in its origin and in the realm of experience with which it deals—and even in some of its expressions—is comparable to the highest spiritual poetry of the world, the Vedas and the Upanishads. Some passages have already been cited in the Introduction* showing the deep spiritual affinity between *Savitri* and the Vedas. We shall pursue the subject a little further to show that the epic height and manner of expression which is native to the Vedas and the Upanishads is in *Savitri* the most sustained element giving to the whole poem the most sublime throb of an organic spiritual creation. This is so because Sri Aurobindo's life-work comes naturally in a line with that of the Rishis of the Vedas and the Upanishads. His work in fact adds to the rich spiritual treasures of the past by giving to mankind his great vision of the Supermind,—the divine gnosis,—and by his insistence that life must be related to the Divine if man wants to arrive at the true solution of his problems. Besides, his mode of poetical creation is akin to that of the ancient seers. This is not to say that he takes them as models for imitation, but in him the Goddess of speech seems to act — under conditions of full awareness on his side — from above the plane of human mind and is constantly bringing in currents—and torrents even of Light from higher planes which have been touched or tapped occasionally but are far from being the normal possession of even the highest genius of poetical expression. When Sri Aurobindo speaks of “a torrent of rapid lightnings” which represents the irresistible current of illuminating inspiration or says,

*Missioned voices drive to me from God's doorway
Words that live not, save upon Nature's summits,
Ecstasy's chariots,”*

he is not using merely figures of speech but is expressing his own personal experience. It is by such an onrush from above the mental level that, as K.D. Sethna puts it, “knowledge of the Deathless Divine leaps on the human consciousness and by its thronged and glittering invasion the revelatory speech of the Overhead spiritual is born.”

It is because Sri Aurobindo derives his poetical inspiration from the higher worlds known to the ancient Rishis that his poem bears a kinship to the creation of the ancient sages. In the Gita, the eleventh chapter giving the vision of the Vishwarupa, the Cosmic Divine, bears a resemblance to some portions of *Savitri*. The student may compare the utterances of Arjuna in his exaltation of the vision, and of Vishwarupa, as the Destroyer of the World, with the colloquy of Aswapathy and the Divine Mother in the third Book.

Savitri has the intense directness, vastness and comprehensiveness of the Vedas and the Upanishads. The Vedas and the Upanishads speak of the One, the Divine, the Supreme Ineffable. It is That which finds expression in a myriad forms in the cosmic dance. In the seer's vision, the shadows of the lower planes of being of the cosmos are shot through with the Light of this Eternal Reality and to him, therefore, the whole of Nature seems to be bathed in an ether of Delight. This experience seems so far from the ordinary human that one would have thought that its expression in poetry would lack the sense of a convincing Reality. But the most miraculous power of the Goddess of poetry is that the expression of this experience by the ancient sages carries with it a very intense sense of concreteness, what Mr. Sethna calls “a burning throb of realisation.” This power of expression comes to them, not from the realms of mere mind but from Overhead regions of intuition, inspiration, revelation and even beyond it from the Overmind. It is the spiritual alchemy of this Overhead poetical expression that renders this immeasurably remote realm of experiences intimately near to us, and carries a sense of their reality to our most outward mind. While reading those inspired utterances one feels opening before him altogether a new world of experiences, a world of beings, “more real than living man,” for in it breathe and move “nurslings of immortality.” Like the Vedas and the Upanishads, *Savitri* also opens us to this realm of the Eternal. It is not merely a reproduction of the experience of the past, for, Sri Aurobindo has discovered new realms of the spirit. *Savitri*, therefore, is charged with a similar inspirational afflatus but is also at the same time, “a springing forward.” We are not here concerned with the difference of spiritual content,—which could take us far,—but with the similarities in their content and mode of expression.

In the Katha Upanishad, there is a situation which is apparently similar to the one we find in *Savitri*. There the boy Nachiketa like *Savitri* confronts Yama, the God of Death. But the similarity is only apparent because Death does not meet his challenge, neither is Nachiketa faced with the inevitability of death. The precocious boy seeks the acquaintance of Death and turns Death into his instructor and learns from him the way to reach the immortal Self. The question of the world-existence does not arise there. The question of man struggling on earth, subject to ignorance and his possible emancipation from seemingly eternal bonds during his earth-life, is not in the picture. But apart from the dissimilarity of content one can see that there are passages where the expression of the Upanishad rises to a plane of impersonality of Illumined Mind which sees life in large compact masses and is at the same time itself suffused with a wide and intense emotion of the tragedy of the ignorant human life. It is a very effective and direct poetical utterance. When he reaches the house of

Death, Nachiketa thinks within himself,—

Like grain a mortal ripens!

Like grain he is born hither again,

and when the God of Death dissuades him from seeking knowledge of the Self and offers him temptations instead, he replies,—

Ephemeral things!

That which is a mortal's, O end-maker,

Even the vigour of all the senses, they wear away.

Even a whole life is slight indeed . . .

Not with wealth is a man to be satisfied.

Shall we take wealth—if we have seen thee?

Shall we live so long as Thou shalt rule?

There are many passages in *Savitri* that convey a similar inspiration. We choose one in which the insignificance of man, the inconsequential nature of all his works, and the ephemeral nature of all his enjoyments is brought out effectively:—

An inconsequence dogs every effort made,

A chaos waits on every cosmos formed;

In each success a seed of failure lurks.

Man is

A thinking being in an unthinking world,

An island in the sea of the Unknown,

He is a smallness trying to be great,

An animal with some instincts of a god,

His life a story too common to be told,

His deeds a number summing up to naught,

His hope a star above a cradle and grave. (p. 72)

The tragedy of human life subject to ignorance is intensely brought home to us. And yet there is much more than that in these lines. And about the nature of man's enjoyments, Sri Aurobindo says,

Here even the highest rapture time can give

Is a mimicry of ungrasped beatitudes,

A mutilated statue of ecstasy,

A wounded happiness that cannot live,

A brief felicity of mind or sense,

Thrown by the World-Power to her body-slave,

Or a simulacrum of enforced delight

In the seraglios of Ignorance. (p. 71)

These lines indicate to our minds that there exists an unchanging delight, an unwounded happiness and ecstasy somewhere towards which are directed all the pathetic strivings of the ignorant human soul. “A statue mutilated,” “a happiness” mortally “wounded” or the “enforced delights” of the harems “of Ignorance” are marvellously vivid images.

Throughout *Savitri* one feels the pulsating presence of the One, the Perfect, the Divine, and there are moments when the inspired utterance expresses this presence:—

Then by a touch, a presence or a voice

The world is turned into a temple ground

And all discloses the unknown Beloved. (p. 254)

The Immanent lives in may as in his house. (p. 61)

The opening verse of the Isha Upanishad runs:—“All this visible universe is for habitation by the Lord.” The world becomes a holy place when we enter into this vision. It is the same truth we find in the expression of the Gita: “All is Vasudeva,—the Divine Being”—*Vasudevah Sarvam*.

Take another passage from the Isha reconciling the static and the dynamic aspects of the ultimate Reality in a powerful image:—“That moves, and That moves not; That is far and the same is near; That is within all this and That is outside all this.” It is akin to a passage of the Katha Upanishad which says:

Sitting, He proceeds far;

Lying, He goes everywhere.

The Seer of *Savitri* gives us a similar vision in his own inspired utterance:

Near, it retreated; far, it called him still. (p. 277)

or

Hidden by its own works, it seemed far off. (p. 277)

The Rishi in the Isha speaks symbolically of the necessity of breaking out of the limitations of the mind in order to reach the highest Truth which is beyond. He says: “The face of Truth is covered with a brilliant golden lid; that do thou remove, O fosterer, for the law of the Truth, for sight.”

Sri Aurobindo in *Savitri* speaks too in a language of living symbolism. Describing Aswapathy's spiritual achievement, he says:

And broken the intellect's hard and lustrous lid. (p. 25)

In another context recounting the limitations of the mental being which remains satisfied and self-complacent he says:—

There comes no breaking of the walls of mind. (p. 229)

The basic idea both in the Isha and *Savitri* in these expressions is that the highest Truth is above the plane of the mind which acts as a barrier to that Truth, and it is attained by breaking the obstruction of the mind and ascending beyond.

SRI AUROBINDO AND MAN'S SOCIO-POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT

By C. C. DUTT

Continued from previous issue

Socialism is the great challenge of the future. If it gets hold of the leading nations of the world, it would undoubtedly impose itself on the others. In that case, the function of the World-State would be to combine the different socialisms into one great system. Uniformity is becoming, more and more every day, the law of the world, and uniformity is bound to lead to centralisation. In actual practice, socialism has undergone many different developments—National Socialism in Germany, Fascism in Italy and Marxian Socialism in Russia. But all these are equally antagonistic to individualism. There is one obstacle in the path of a World-State which should be taken note of and that is race-sense. Though irrational, it is a very strong feeling. But it is bound to vanish, ultimately, with increased intercourse—cultural, intellectual and physical. It is a legacy left to us by past history—history of a period when men were not guided by reason.

The extreme form of the World-State, as dreamed of by the modern thinkers, is then "a strict unification, a vast uniformity, a regulated socialisation of united mankind." It might seem a chimerical Utopia, to the unthinking mind, but the speculations of the political philosopher are the logical conclusion, the inevitable end of the secret urge towards human unity. It is, however, necessary for us to appraise the gain and loss of the State principle. Must we accept it? Sri Aurobindo describes how in Asia the state idea, though it was affirmed, could not advance beyond a certain point. "The state machine existed only for a restricted and superficial action; the real life of the people was determined by other powers with which it could not meddle. Its principal function was to preserve and protect the national culture and to maintain sufficient political, social and administrative order—as far as possible an immutable order—for the real life of the people to function undisturbed in its own way and according to its own innate tendencies." Some such unity for mankind might be brought about, instead of a centralised World-State, if the important nations could keep intact their nationalistic instinct and resist the domination of the international State idea. The result would be not a single State, but a single human race with a free association of its nation-units.

Which of the two would be preferable? What is the World-State going to give us? How long is it going to endure? The results of such a state would, making due allowances, be much the same as those of the ancient Roman Empire,—assured peace of the world, great development of ease and well-being, the solution of important problems of life by the united intelligence of man, a marked cultural and intellectual uplift, the rise of a common language. But all this is on the credit side. On the debit side, there would be, after a time, a dying down of force, a static condition of the human mind and human life, a stagnation, decay, disintegration. The soul of man would begin to wither in the midst of his acquisitions. The reasons for the disintegration would be much the same as in the Roman analogy. It may be argued that the World-Government is going to be a free, democratic organism where liberty and progress would not be hampered in any way. But, really speaking, there is no such guarantee. To begin with, democracy in the future international State may be quite different from what we have known it to be. As a matter of fact, has not Sri Aurobindo made it amply clear that Socialism, the antithesis of individual liberty, may be the key-stone of the future State? The rule—even perhaps the tyranny—of the majority is a concomitant of all democratic forms of Government. But, says Sri Aurobindo, "What the future promises us is something more formidable still, the tyranny of the whole, of the self-hypnotised mass over its constituent groups and units."

Originally, individual freedom was the ideal of the democratic movement, but what has actually come about is that a huge mechanism, a gigantic group-being, a leviathan, has taken the place of the monarch and the aristocracy. The legislators and administrators represent this leviathan and not their electors. The individual is helpless against its usurpations, and his only remedy is a retreat into the freedom of his soul or the freedom of his intellectual being. But is there any assurance of either kind of freedom in the new State? Freedom of thought and speech no longer exists in Russia. They had certainly vanished from Germany and Italy too, during the Axis regime. As to religious liberty, it is being slowly and steadily ground out in Soviet Russia, just as it had been in Nazi Germany, by State pressure. If the individual is stifled, society becomes stagnant, "the free individual is the conscious progressive; it is only when he is able to impart his own creative and mobile consciousness to the mass that a progressive society becomes possible."

In the next chapter, Sri Aurobindo explains how in the course of progress both oneness and diversity are equally necessary. Unity is undoubtedly the very basis of life. The race is moving steadily towards it and must one day realise it. But uniformity is not the law, life exists by diversity. Each individual, each group, though one with the others in its

universality, must retain its own unique character. This rules out over-centralisation and insistence on uniformity. "Therefore the unity of the human race to be entirely sound and in consonance with the deepest laws of life must be founded on free groupings, and the groupings again must be the natural association of free individuals." This ideal may or may not be attainable in the near future, but we must keep it always before us. The division of humanity into natural groups may be taken as intended by Nature, and one great principle of this division is the diversity of language. At one time, not very long ago, there was a strong feeling in favour of a common language and the Esperantist movement made considerable headway. But that feeling has lost all its intensity and rightly so. For to run after the chimera of one language means a failure to understand the principle of unity in diversity. Sri Aurobindo sums up the point thus: "It is of the utmost value to a nation, a human group-soul, to preserve its language and to make of it a strong and living cultural instrument. A nation, race or people which loses its language cannot live its whole life." We have said already that uniformity is not what man seeks. His goal is the unity of the race in spite of the diversity of language and culture and religion. To give human life its full play, there must be diversity of culture and "differentiation of soul-groups." Diversity of language is inextricably mixed up with variety of culture and with national variation. If man sacrifices this national variation and forms a single uniform humanity, very probably he would be a gainer in many directions,—peace, economic well-being, efficient administrative machinery and so forth—as happened in the Roman unity in the olden days. "But," asks Sri Aurobindo, "to what eventual good if it leads also to an uncreative sterilisation of the mind and the stagnation of the soul of the race?" Various instances are cited including that of India, but in view of the establishment of a republic in India and the growth of the British Commonwealth of nations Sri Aurobindo's remarks here have, in part, lost their precise point. With regard to the elimination of linguistic diversity, some new principle has to be found by which unity of the entire race can be achieved without sacrifice of the richness and completeness of life aimed at, and often achieved by the nation-groups.

If, therefore, the natural diversity of the units is to be preserved and, at the same time, the unification of the race is to be accomplished, a free world-union, rather than a centralised World-State, is indicated as the means. Obviously, this would be a method, quite different from the one by which the Nation-State has been built up. Just before 1914, the ideal of this State seemed to be on the point of being crushed by the weight, on the one hand, of the huge world empires, and on the other, of the progress of the international ideal. If we wish to see national idealism not shattered and, at the same time, to give full chance to the growing ideal of human unity to develop we have to find a method of harmonising the two. Nature works by balancing opposite forces. She tries centralisation and decentralisation by turns. She may destroy the Nation-State as she has destroyed the tribal and city States in the past; or she may preserve the nation as a brake or a counterpoise against a too rapid trend towards unification. The most important development in the last half century has been the growth of huge monstrous empires which swallowed up small independent States, under one pretext or another—often without any pretext at all. Korea, Abyssinia, Morocco, the Boer republics and many others lost their individual existence. Then, fortunately for the lesser States, the robbers fell out. Korea saw the end of Japan's rule. Abyssinia shook off the yoke of Italy. England had to disgorge Ireland. The cataclysm of the two wars changed the face of the globe. Egypt, India, Ceylon, Burma, Indonesia came out of the tutelage of their erst-while masters. The Turkish empire disintegrated, giving birth to a number of free states—Iraq, Hedjaz, Syria, Israel &c., just as, a few decades before, Greece and the Balkan States had gone out of that empire. Turkey, however, lived on as a strong but well-knit nation state. It can be said definitely that the ideal of free nationalism has established itself all over, though some powers still lag behind in full recognition of it and some others hold it not so much in practice as in principle.

Anyhow, as things are today, the world is not going to be divided into a small handful of world-empires. First of all, we can safely bank on the probability of thieves falling out. Next, the world in general is not disposed to brook any preposterous claims like the White Man's Burden or the Nordic's right to dictate to others.

It is in this setting that we have to judge international bodies like the League of Nations. Today the U.N.O., has practically supplanted the older body. Even this august assembly is on its trial. Still man has to grope his way through the darkness in order to get to the light beyond. We shall have to revert to this subject when we deal with the last chapter.

To be continued

BOOKS in the BALANCE

NEW HOPES FOR A CHANGING WORLD

BY BERTRAND RUSSELL

(Allen & Unwin, 9s. 6d.)

Lucidity, it has been said, is a divine gift; and some benevolent god or goddess must have richly dowered this gift on Bertrand Russell at the auspicious moment of his nativity. For fifty years—or is it sixty?—Russell has tirelessly pursued the profession of letters, and the award of the Nobel Prize for Literature to him last year was a fitting recognition of his early won and long maintained eminence in letters.

Poetry, drama, and creative fiction are traditionally classed as the literature of power, while philosophy, history, and criticism are classed as the literature of knowledge, "applied" literature. It is a convenient, but not a wholly satisfying, classification; in great literature our prim categories are thrown into confusion, poetry leavens philosophy, fiction dazzles as resplendent truth, drama makes the dead past live again; and what matters most is the creative word itself, carrying within it a dance of life—the only antidote we can think of, that will effectively check the atomic race towards Death.

Russell's marvellous lucidity carries a necessary limitation as well: it holds little commerce with the movements of the Spirit. If all life were an expression or an extension of Euclidean mathematics, Russell's methods would yield the right—the only right—solutions to our problems. But there are imponderables in human life: hidden intensities, ardours, vanishings, transcendences: and caught in this non-Euclidean world, a mere mathematical approach to life's many difficult problems cannot really, or finally, meet the challenge. On the other hand, Reason is a splendid analytical instrument and, confined to its range, it can be a potent helper. Russell wields this instrument with considerable acuteness, and more often than not his surgical operations are only directed towards a renewal of life.

Like many other thinkers of the day, Russell too is pained by the polarization of forces in the world into the opposite camps of Stalinist Russia and all-powerful America. Total victory over Hitler has not been followed by the banishment of fear, progressive disarmament, the return of normalcy, and the building of the United Nations in fact as well as name. Guns before butter is the wild cry once again. Atomic piles are being planned, and two or three are taking shape. Humanity has taken fright, and the future is as dim as Erebus. It is not possible to "put the clock back"; and, besides, the Past had its uncertainties and evils no less than the present. To fare forward is best: but we are afraid. Somnambulistically as it were, we make agitated moments: we wax hot and wane cold by turns; we often behave like forward children, crying for—we know not what; and, as Russell puts it, man has now "forgotten how to smile".

Is there a hope for mankind? What can men and women of good will do to meet this crisis in civi-

lization? These are the questions which Russell tries to answer in his new book. Originally delivered as a series of broadcast talks under the caption "Living in an Atomic Age", the book still preserves the tone of conversational urgency and intimacy; and as one reads the twenty-one chapters of the present work, one feels that Russell's capacity for analytical thinking and lucid expression has rarely been more fully in evidence. The crisis concerns, not only generals, politicians, and scientists, but even the "common people"—perhaps it concerns these latter much more than the others. For so hard-headed a mathematician and scientist, Russell is—perhaps in spite of himself—very much of a humanist as well. This gives a colour to his writing, which makes it both delightful and forcible.

Fear, uncertainty, and apathy are apt to paralyze all constructive effort today. There is now neither constructive thinking—nor action on the basis of such thinking: there are only wayward movements of the mind,—followed by half-headed, half-hearted action. Russell grimly paints the situation thus: "A youth who finds scholastic education boring will say to himself: 'Why bother? I shall be killed in battle before long.' A young woman who might live constructively thinks to herself that she had better have a good time while she can since presently she will be raped by Russian soldiery till she dies. Parents wonder whether the sacrifices called for by their children's upbringing are worth while since they are likely to prove futile. Those who are lucky enough to possess capital are apt to spend it on riotous living, since they foresee a catastrophic depreciation in which it would become worthless. In this way uncertainty baulks the impulse to every irksome effort, and generates a tone of frivolous misery mistakenly thought to be pleasure, which turns outward and becomes hatred of those who are felt to be its cause. Through this hatred it brings daily nearer the catastrophe which it dreads. The nations seem caught in a tragic fate... Bewildered by mental fog, they march towards the precipice while they imagine that they are marching away from it".

What, then, can be done about it? Are we doomed to watch this tragic spectacle, much as we watch the purblind Oedipus marching to his doom? Only, this is not poetic drama, but life—and we are ourselves inextricably involved in it. It is clear that when fear ceases peace will return, when the prevalent discords are resolved a new harmony will prevail. But how are we to banish fear? How shall we untie the knots so that the current of life may flow freely—and flow on for ever? Russell enumerates three kinds of conflict—man and nature; man and man; and man and himself. This could be simplified yet further: an outer conflict between man and his environment, and an inner conflict between his "genius and mortal instruments". There is nothing new in this diagnosis: but as the malady of the present century is very acute, the dia-

gnosis is for us very important indeed. In a way the problem is a simple one—at any rate, it can be stated in apparently simple terms. Can man save himself—and by saving himself, save the world? Man is still the measure of everything. If he fails,—the whole adventure of evolution will have proved a ghastly fiasco. But he must not fail. If this resolution kindles faith in man, spurts him on to a new burst of creative endeavour, there is no doubt he will have saved civilization and given it a new power and glory, a new meaning, and a new life.

Always, from very early times, man's struggle has been the twofold struggle for living at all and for living well. Always man has had to bend Nature to his purposes, to regulate his relations with his fellow creatures, and, above all, to preserve something of a fair balance between the urges, ardours and passions within and the possibilities without. Man's state has thus always been a triumvirate made up of the scientific man, the social or political man, and the moral or spiritual man. Each stage in advance has had to be an integral advance. It is only during the last few centuries that this essential principle of evolution has been ignored—with the disastrous result that, while technological advance has taken phenomenal strides, and social and political organization has become terrifyingly complicated, human consciousness has halted as it were in mid-career and is frankly unable to size up, much less control, the march of events. Our generals are not cleverer men than Alexander, but they are able to use instruments of destruction a thousand or a million times more deadly than those the great Macedonian had. Our statesmen—even the best of them—are no whit wiser than was a Pericles or an Asoka or an Alfred: but the reserves of power to which they have the key are ominous in the extreme. Two or three mad men in vital positions can today destroy the entire world.

Russell devotes the first part of his book to the conflict between man and Nature. Western man would now appear to have largely mastered Nature: but scientific knowledge and technological processes, while they give him the means to combat effectively extra-human enemies, do not "give the means of combating the human enemy without, or the part of the individual soul which leads it towards death rather than towards life". Mastery of Nature is somewhat of an unending process: the more one masters, the more precarious one's mastery proves to be. Bullock carts give place to tongas; tongas to trams, trains, trolley-buses, motor-cars, and aeroplanes. Oil and electricity are required in ever increasing quantities: when the earth's store of one particular commodity is exhausted—as exhausted it must be if we waste our resources as we do—we need to manufacture synthetic products. Thus, even when the advantages of what passes for civilization are confined mainly to Europe, Australia and America,

there are serious raw material shortages and industrial bottlenecks. Were these "benefits" extended to the human race as a whole, these difficulties would be accentuated yet further. It is necessary therefore to remember that the mastery of Nature is more apparent than real: in so far as it is real, it has led to the polarization of the peoples of the world into the haves and the have-nots, the advanced and the primitive.

The Western races having multiplied abundantly in recent times, having not seldom exploited cheap Asiatic labour for raising the white man's standard of living, now chaste-ly feel horrified by the teeming and ever increasing populations of the Orient. This, of course, does not mean that the Orient should continue to propagate the species in the way it is now doing. Self-control where possible, artificial birth-control where necessary, would have to be accepted as one of the means employed to deal with the problems of poverty, starvation and overcrowding in India, China and other Oriental countries. But a no less important remedy will be to modernize our farming and agriculture, to link agriculture and industry in a healthy way, and to educate the people in what constitutes a full and free life in a modern society. All this is easier said than done: the underdeveloped nations are unable, by themselves, to modernize their agriculture and organize large-scale industries. Help from outside, even when it is both free and adequate, is suspect. Countries like Persia and Egypt seem to be ready to undergo privation rather than permit Western domination. Persian oil and the Suez canal are now of vital interest, not only to Persia and Britain, but also to the entire civilized world. Yet misunderstandings baulk cooperation, and the world is kept guessing what will happen next. Every local problem is also an international problem, partly because the world is now essentially one, and partly because every minor difference is exploited by the power blocs, each supposedly to its own advantage.

Thus man's mastery of Nature is seen to be a petty and precarious affair in the face of these conflicts—these conflicts between men and men, ranged on opposite sides racially, politically or otherwise. Ultimately we are driven to seek the solution of our problems in man,—not in men or in racial or religious or national aggregates. Men would change when man is capable of change: nations would be at peace with one another when individual man has learned to forge a lasting and purposive harmony within. This is the long and hard way, but this is also the only way. Not until man, striving inwardly, has been able to raise his consciousness to a supramental level—along the lines envisaged by Sri Aurobindo—will he be able to achieve this inner strength and inner peace, thereby creating conditions which will make a self-poised, self-conscious and self-realizing world a near and sure possibility.

K. R. SRINIVASA IYENGAR.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF INDIA

By SISIRKUMAR MITRA

Continued from previous issue

Growth of Integrity

The vision of India's oneness and territorial integrity came to her sages and seers almost at the very dawn of her history. Sanskrit literature preserves significant evidences of how this concept entered the thoughts of those early fathers of the race. We find in them dim but definite beginnings of India's national consciousness, of the love and adoration of her children for the Mother that India was and has ever been, the Infinite and Compassionate Mother of man, for that is how India has always been worshipped by her children as also by those of her devotees from outside who understood or sensed the secret meaning of her existence in history. In those early days when communications and transport were scanty, Indians conjured up to themselves a glorious picture of their vast and mighty land. The very name of their country, Bhārata-varsha (land of the Bharatas),—a single and common name for the whole of India, current all through the millenniums of her history—suggests the vividness of this picture in the mind and imagination of the people. The origin of the name is traced to the glorious House of the Bharatas of the Rig Veda who played a most important part in the Aryanisation of India. Reaffirming this immemorial tradition of the geographical unity of India, the Vishnu Purana, one of the oldest of the Puranas, says that the country which lies north of the ocean and south of the snowy mountains is called Bhārata, for there dwell the descendants of Bharata. But the origin of the word may also be traced to King Bharata, son of Dushyanta and Shakuntala of the Puranas, who was a *chakravarti* (sovereign) ruler and is said to have brought India under a unified political system. In the Satapatha Brahmana the word is associated with fire symbolising Aryan culture which marched along the courses of rivers and valleys disseminating its light. Bhārata is thus a most significant word implying the integrity of the country and also that of its state and culture. Etymologically it means the children of Bharata signifying nourisher.

There are prayers in the Rig Veda addressed to the principal rivers of north India, which indicate how the fertile land between them is their bounteous gift to man. There are other prayers too in later Sanskrit literature in which the seven chief rivers of India are invoked together. These are reverently uttered by every Hindu at his daily ablutions, and the rivers are implored to dwell in the water he is using. And how can the Hindu think of the rivers without thinking of the country watered by them? The sacred cities of India—of the North and of the South—are equally immortalised in hymns which are also part of the daily adoration of the Hindu. Each one of these hymns is associated with the life and activity of God-men and God-lovers by the touch of whose feet those cities were blessed. Nor are the rocks and mountains of India forgotten in this adoration of the country of whose physical formation they are the 'ribs and backbone'.

Not only these. Pilgrimage, another sacred institution of the Hindu, has ever served to accentuate and objectify this notion of India's integrity, giving it, through personal touch and experience, a still more intimate form. Every principal faith or sect of the Hindus has its holy places spread over the length and breadth of the country. Significantly enough, there is a holy city at each extreme point in the four directions of India. Pious devotees, as they visit them, passing through others in between, realise more concretely the oneness of their country, the singleness of its entity. And when they meet and mix with fellow-pilgrims, they feel a sense of comradeship with them fostered by their allegiance to the same ideals that are cherished by all. Religious fairs also play their part to the same end.

The Buddhist holy places, no less popular among the Hindus, are yet another means through which the whole of India has stamped itself on the consciousness of her children. There is scarcely a region, either in the North or in the South, which does not have at least one Asokan pillar or any other monument eighty-four thousand of which were erected in different parts of the country by that most humane of emperors for the moral welfare of his subjects. The cultural unity of India at this period—the third century B.C.—becomes evident from the fact that one language and one script, in which the edicts of Asoka were inscribed on those pillars, were used, or at least understood, by the common people all over India, for whom the edicts were expressly meant.

According to the Tantrik conception, the fifty-two sacred centres of Shakti-worship in India, covering the entire length and breadth of the country, from Jwalamukhi in the Himalaya to Kanyā Kumāri on the southern sea, from Hingraj in the west to Kamrup in the east, embody and symbolise the fifty-two aspects of the divine Shakti and represent in the experience of the Tantrik mystics the integrality of India as the Mother-Force of the world.

Vision of the Mother

In rapturous strain have the poets of India sung of their great Mother-Land, one and indivisible, of her entrancing beauty, her invincible power, her immeasurable wealth and her inner significance. The earliest song of this kind is the one in the Atharva Veda which, in language at once

fervent and striking, speaks of the Mother-country as "the land of the brave and the pious, of heroism and enterprise, of trade and commerce, of art and science, of greatness and virtue, of countless herbs and plants; the land girt by the ocean, and fertilised by rivers like the Sindhu, and rich in grain and foodstuffs; the land where our forefathers lived and worked, where the titans succumbed to the gods; the land which boasts of the highest mountain and the most beautiful forests; the land of sacrificial rites and sacred pleasures, of valour and renown, patriotism and self-sacrifice, of virtue and kindness." These words suggest a depth and intensity of feeling and show how true, profound and comprehensive was the conception the ancients had of their country's many-sided magnitude, how grand to them were its various aspects which constituted, in their totality, the Mother of their worship.

Of particular note is the reference in it to the victory of the gods over the demons, which is symbolic of the Vedic story that the forces of Light are ever at war with the forces of Darkness so that man may be liberated from his subjection to the latter and the Kingdom of God established on earth as the crown of that victory. This idea which has behind it an even deeper truth comes to be more expressly represented in the repeated mention in the Puranas—the Vishnu Purana and the Bhagavata Purana in particular—which declare Bhārata-varsha as the country where gods are eager to be born for the greater blessing of their final liberation. Indeed, in their birth in man and in man attaining his divine perfection envisaged by the Vedic seers lies their supreme liberation from their typical state. The liberation of the gods, who are typical beings, is possible if they choose to accept human birth and pass through the cycle of evolution of which earth alone is the divinely-created field.

In her sublime age of the Spirit the seers of India visioned this truth round which has grown the tradition of the spiritual quest that has been the high privilege of India to foster through the ages, thus becoming the holy land not only for man but also for the gods whose descent therein so many times has made it all the more sacred for the eventual and full manifestation of God's own light in man. This is the meaning of the gods' desire to be born in India. And this is why the Aryas have always regarded their country as *devabhumi* (the land of gods) greater even than heaven.

The epics of India are not without their beautiful descriptions of the various regions of the country and moving references to the sanctity and holiness of its integrity. The very name of the Mahabharata comes from that of the early father after whom the country is called. The Ramayana contains brilliant and charming accounts of the many regions—forests and mountains—in which Rama passed his years of exile. Classical Sanskrit literature has in it eloquent references to the glory that is India. Kalidasa's lines in his *Meghaduta* and in his other works on the wonder and beauty with which India is so gorgeously robed are ever memorable words of the king of poets depicting what to him his country is. In *Kavya-mimansa*, a famous work on the theory of poetics, Rajasekhara, himself a noted dramatist of the ninth century A.C., gives a vivid description of the geographical features of India and makes suggestive references to her seasons, and the winds, the birds, the flowers, the influences and the effects peculiar to each. He also says that the way classical poets had laid these natural facts and considerations under contribution passed into one of the virtual poetical conventions of their day. Speaking generally of the later and even of the more modern times, one might say that these factors, separately or collectively, cannot but have their natural impact on the general trend of thought and action of the land all the time.

In modern times the greatest singers of Bengal were also the mighty voices of the New Dawn that burst upon India in the beginning of this century through a resurgence of her soul into fresh cultural and political endeavours whose fruits are modern India's multiform contribution to the sum-total of human culture. The songs of the new awakening that these poets composed stirred their countrymen into an impassioned striving to win back their country's freedom and re-install the Mother in her own temple. Indeed every one of them had a vision of the Mother which expressed itself in fiery words of faith and love, worship and dedication, courage and determination; and the Eternal Mother stood revealed once more to the spiritual sight of her children.

In one of his finest national songs, Rabindranath Tagore invokes in his inimitable language the Dispenser and Guide of India's Destiny. In another he visualises his motherland as a country of incomparable beauty, an English rendering of which done in the same rhythm and rhyme-scheme by Dilip Kumar Roy is given below:

Heart-charmer of the universe!
O thou earth, bright with pure beams of the sun!
Our ancestors' Mother and Nurse!

The first dawn broke out in thy sky of love,
The first hymn rang out in thy mystic grove,
The sylvan arbours first proclaimed to man
The lore of light and parables of stars.

(Continued on page 12)

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF INDIA—Continued from page 11

O blessed Beauty, whose beauty sleeplessly
Feeds here and in far climes all who call to thee:
Whose rivers ripple forth, a liquid grace,

Thy breasts' inviolate milk no earth-touch mars!
The billows of blue oceans lave thy feet,
Winds quiver athrill thy green robe's hem to greet,
The brow of thy Himaloy, kissed by sky,
Gleams out, sun-crowned, a white that knows no scars.

In his famous and most popular national songs Dwijendralal Roy brings out in bolder relief India's spiritual heritage against the background of her wonderful physical beauty. The extracts quoted below from one such, rendered into English by Sri Aurobindo, convey what the poet's soul read in the soul of his motherland:

India, my India, where first human eyes awoke to heavenly light,
All Asia's holy place of pilgrimage, great Motherland of might!
World-mother, first giver to humankind of philosophy and sacred lore,
Knowledge thou gav'st to man, God-love, works, art, religion's open door.
Before us still there floats the ideal of those splendid days of gold:
A new world in our vision wakes, Love's India we shall rise to mould.

Then there is the sublime song, the inspired Word of dynamic nationalism, seen, heard and uttered by that great seer of modern India, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee. It is this song that 'converted a whole people in a single day to the religion of patriotism'. We give below Sri Aurobindo's soul-stirring translation of it:

BANDE MATARAM

Mother, I bow to thee!
Rich with thy hurrying streams,
Bright with thy orchard gleams,
Cool with thy winds of delight,
Dark fields waving, Mother of might,
Mother free.
Glory of moonlight dreams,
Over thy branches and lordly streams,
Clad in thy blossoming trees,
Mother, giver of ease,
Laughing low and sweet!
Mother, I kiss thy feet,
Speaker sweet and low!
Mother, to thee I bow.

Who hath said thou art weak in thy lands,
When the swords flash out in twice seventy million hands
And seventy million voices roar
Thy dreadful name from shore to shore?
With many strengths who art mighty and stored,
To thee I call, Mother and Lord!
Thou who savest, arise and save!
To her I cry who ever her foemen drave
Back from plain and sea
And shook herself free.

Thou art wisdom, thou art law,
Thou our heart, our soul, our breath,
Thou the love divine, the awe
In our hearts that conquers death.
Thine the strength that nerves the arm,
Every image made divine
In our temples is but thine.

Thou art Durga, Lady and Queen,
With her hands that strike and her swords of sheen,
Thou art Lakshmi lotus-throned,
And the Muse a hundred-toned.
Pure and perfect without peer,
Mother, lend thine ear.

Rich with thy hurrying streams,
Bright with thy orchard gleams,
Dark of hue, O candid-fair
In thy soul, with jewelled hair
And thy glorious smile divine,
Loveliest of all earthly lands,
Showering wealth from well-stored hands!
Mother, mother mine!
Mother sweet, I bow to thee,
Mother great and free!

The most striking feature in this song is that India with all her earthly and heavenly riches is shown here as the Mother, the divine Shakti, who sustains and nourishes her children both materially and spiritually. This hymn, sung and sanctified by scores of martyrs, is the true national anthem of India. In it the country is not merely the temple of the Mother but the Mother herself whom her children worship with all the passion of their heart. And when they do so, they worship the Power that shapes the destiny of India and guides her development through the ages, and this ever-expanding process forms the chequered story of India's unique achievements in the inner as in the outer court of life. This is how India's history becomes indissolubly bound up with her geography—a fact of which a glimpse was caught by a British Prime Minister, J. Ramsay MacDonald, when he said: "The Hindu, from his traditions and his religion, regards India not only as a political unit naturally the subject of one sovereignty, but as the outward embodiment, as the temple,—nay, even as the goddess mother—of his spiritual culture. India and Hinduism are organically related as body and soul." (R. K. Mookerji's *The Fundamental Unity of India*).

This concept of the Indian mind in which the homeland is adored as the Mother is rooted in the truth perceived by the ancients that all creation is the manifestation of the supreme Energy and that India is, at least in the present cycle of evolution, a special manifestation inasmuch as she is not only a beautiful and bountiful Mother lavishing upon her children all that they need for their material well-being and aesthetic and intellectual growth, but bestowing upon all mankind, since the dawn of human culture, the inestimable treasures of the Spirit, which have nourished the soul of many a nation and are still the only hope and haven of this distracted world. In the midst of the gloom that envelops the world today, India shows the path of Light, the path of man's liberation from his present imperfect life in Ignorance into the truth, bliss and perfection of a divine Life. Not only this. The cult of Shakti—divine Force—sees in the shapely form of India, so markedly singular, a conscious physical formation of Shakti, presiding over her destiny, and preparing her for participation in the coming age of the spirit when man will live a godlike life as the next stage of his evolution.

Even when Indians admire the matchless beauty of their country, the romance it outwardly is, they feel within them a kind of inner relationship not only with its material embodiment but also with her soul; and as the feeling deepens the externals fade off, and in their place emerges before their mind's eye, much more vividly, an idea, a dynamic concept, of which the land with all its charms becomes a symbol, an image, an object, as it were, of their love and veneration. Nothing indeed can more infallibly develop in us an abiding sense of our fellowship with others, with all, belonging to a common land of birth than when we are blessed with this exalting experience. And does not this sense invariably prove real enough as a wholesome and a strengthening factor in our collective life? In fact, this is its very bedrock. The physical merges itself in the ideal, and the ideal fulfils itself in the real, reconciling the apparent contradictions into a harmony, a multiple oneness built up of India's human and geographical factors. It is a force, an energy, inherent in its soil and pervading its space, that works this transforming miracle. India is that Force, that Spirit which makes its mystic appeal to the inmost being of her children. Sri Aurobindo once said that India had never been to him what was merely suggested by her outer vestures, attractive and gorgeous though they were. She was to him the Mother, the Eternal and Infinite Mother. The truth of India is revealed to those who respond to this appeal and so all the more easily know and grasp the secret, the supreme secret of her spiritual motherhood. To this vision of the Mother, India calls her children who realise in it their oneness that is for ever.

To be continued

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT

From February 21, 1952 "Mother India" will commence its fourth year, not as a Fortnightly but as a Monthly. The new edition will be in a handy though substantial magazine form.

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