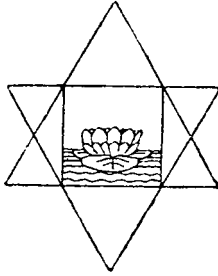


MOTHER INDIA

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

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

SRI AUROBINDO

* * *

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

Sri Aurobindo

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

MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"

Managing Editor
K. R. PODDAR

Editor
K. D. SETHNA

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OUR IDEAL

K. D. Sethna

Mother India begins today its fourth year of publication. And the fourth birthday is marked by a change from Fortnightly to Monthly and from newspaper size to magazine form. There will be no decrease in quantity of reading matter: there will be no cessation of effort to make the quality ever more luminous.

To be luminous has been the ideal of *Mother India* from the very start. Without that ideal we would never have launched into publication. Cleverness, however penetrating, and vividness, however stimulating, were not deemed sufficient. The world is not lacking in Reviews in which the grey cells are active, much less does it lack in those where the nerves are a-tingle. Of course, even genuine brain-stuff is a rare commodity and the real life-force is not found at every street-corner. But we aimed at something more. We wanted the intellect to be an instrument and the vitality a channel of the deepest powers of man's being—the powers of the evolving God in him.

"The evolving God"—a highly suggestive phrase, but open to the suspicion of being no more than a brilliant metaphor. We know that poets have had sudden moments of

Solitary thinkings such as dodge

Conception to the very bourne of heaven.

But these moments are a flaming and a fading at almost the same time, and the poets seem to be far-away witnesses of what may be superhuman glories but may as well be shining chimeras. We know also that philosophers have attempted a comprehensive and synthetic sweep of thought in which the pluralities and diversities of the world have been caught up into some mysterious ultimate category that appears to be the Existence of all existences, the Life of all lives. But the philosophers move in such a remote air and their messages are such attenuated abstractions that one never gets a convincing sense of reality: besides, there are so many philosophies and their method is a logic-spinning that creates the impression of being capable of leading anywhere and therefore nowhere. Finally, we know that idealists of action have initiated great movements of individual freedom and social reform, fought and died at barricades and on

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battle-fields for an ethical principle, devoted whole life-times to convictions that are to them absolute imperatives. But here are often a narrowness and fanaticism, often a mixture of custom with conscience, often a masterfully driving will which either maims one part of the nature for the profit of another part or ignores the call of the complexity that we are and keeps on striking a single too-easily-simplifying note. In the poet, the philosopher and the active idealist some stir in the consciousness points beyond mere man: a God in the making is felt. Yet a cloud is about them all and we are never quite certain whether we are perceiving a lofty reality or only responding to a high imagination.

If that phrase—"the evolving God"—is to be more than a brilliant metaphor and if actually powers beyond the intellect and the vitality are to be brought into play with the object of being "luminous" in the deepest sense, we must take our stand on direct experience of the Superhuman, the Divine. Neither art nor philosophy, not even ethics and what is commonly called religion can suffice. All of them are important and indispensable; but none of them nor just a combination of them can serve in its own right as the luminousness we desire.

Here the title we have chosen for our Review may illustrate the point we are trying to make. India is a country whose very birth-cry, so to speak, was for the Superhuman, the Divine in concrete experience. The Vedas and the Upanishads are not primarily artistic creations, structures of speculative thought or manuals of morality and religious injunction. No doubt, they are masterpieces of poetic beauty and sublimity, embalm enormous audacities of the thinking mind, fountain forth a myriad wisdom of noble living. But, first and foremost, they are scriptures of God-realisation, word-embodiments of mysticism and spirituality, testimonies of union with the Infinite and the Eternal. India, therefore, essentially represents the luminousness that is the Truths of truths. As symbolic of that Truth and not in any limited and competitive nationalistic sense we take the name of India: in fact, Indian Nationalism is of genuine value only in so far as it is a plastic, diversified yet harmonious expression of this Truth, this Light—it is a falsity and void of real Indianness if it subserves merely some obstreperous ideological slogan or faddist moral formula.

Yes, the name of India is on our lips to sum up the history of man the spiritual seeker, man the mystic. But if India essentially represents concrete God-realisation down the ages, if India focuses the Infinite and the Eternal as experienced by humanity in the long process of history that is not yet ended, then surely to speak of India without infusing into that name the full sense of the concreteness, the living actuality, the immense Being that is God is to fall short of the complete symbolisation

OUR IDEAL

of the Truth we attempt to serve. The Divine is Being and Consciousness and Bliss, the Maker and Manifester of the universe, the Super-person who is our one Source and unifying Spirit. The India that is the country of the God-realising soul, the home of the mystic, the inmost Vastness in which the human secretly knows itself as divine, must be envisaged and felt as a mighty creative Face and Figure, Originator of the world and its Fosterer towards the Truth whose ultimate prevailing is the goal of evolution. The full *mantra* of spiritual luminousness is "Mother India".

A *mantra*, however, cannot deliver all its content of revelatory energy unless it is caught from the mouth of one who is himself a master of mysticism. Spiritual luminousness cannot be shed except by being in vibrant touch with a God-realised individual: not our own mental constructions about the Truth but his vivid communications of it are what we have to give or expound or, after assimilation, re-create. And behind this transmissive action there must be some effort to share directly in his experience. The cultural review we call *Mother India* is the organ of spreading the vision of life born of the immense and many-sided spiritual realisation that is Sri Aurobindo's.

This realisation is indeed a culture in itself—it covers the whole domain of earth-existence. All that in the terms of art and philosophy and dynamic idealism has sought to express the evolving Godhead finds here not only its pure original substance independent of those terms but also its finest expression in them. For Sri Aurobindo the Yogi is at the same time the poet of the epic *Savitri*, the philosopher of the massive *Life Divine*, the sociological and political thinker of *The Human Cycle* and *The Ideal of Human Unity* and behind this thinker is the dynamic idealist doubled with the Yogi, who for eight years before withdrawing to Pondicherry fought in the very forefront of India's renaissance, laid the foundation of a spiritual politics and made the concept of "Mother India" a flame of feeling and a glow of insight by attuning the nationalist struggle for the country's freedom to the spiritual inspiration of Bankimchandra's anthem, *Vande Mataram*—"I bow to Thee, O Mother!"

But the Aurobindoman spiritual realisation and its drive to make earth-existence a luminous play of the Divine Mother cannot be served without a keen and ever-present sense of the concentrated work that has been going on in the Ashram of Integral Yoga founded by Sri Aurobindo. This Ashram came into being in a recognisable organised form in 1926. Its function can best be understood by quoting the words spoken by Sri Aurobindo himself on the occasion of his birthday on August 15 of the same year—words that are being published below for the first time

"The object of our Yoga is the bringing down of a Consciousness.

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a Power, a Light, a Reality that is other than the consciousness which satisfies the ordinary being upon the earth—a Consciousness, a Power and a Light of Truth, a divine Reality which is destined to raise the earth-consciousness and transform everything here.

“Remember that what are the objects of other Yogas are for us only the first stages or first conditions. In the former days of Yoga men were content if they could feel the Brahmic Consciousness or the Cosmic Consciousness or some descent of Light and Power, some intimations of the Infinite. It was thought sufficient if the mind got certain spiritual experiences and if the vital being was in contact with the mind. They sought for a static condition and considered that as the final goal and release as the final aim.

“To realise this, to be open to the infinite and universal Power, to receive its intimations and to have experiences, to go completely beyond the ego, to realise the Universal Mind, the Universal Soul, the universal Spirit—that is only the first condition.

“We have to call down this greater Consciousness directly into the vital being and the physical being, so that the supreme calm and universality may be there in all its fulness from top to bottom. If this cannot be done, then the first condition of transformation is not fulfilled.

“The mind cannot be transformed unless the vital being is transformed. And if the vital being is not transformed, then nothing can be realised because it is the vital being that realises.

“The whole change of the vital being cannot be done unless the physical being also is open and changed, for the divine Vital cannot realise itself in an unfitting environmental life.

“And it is not possible for the inner physical being to be changed if the external being, the external man, is not transformed. In this process of Yoga there is a whole totality and each part depends upon the other. Therefore, to stop short may be a preparation for another life but it is not the victory.

“All has to be changed before anything permanently can be changed.”

These words, forthright and uncompromising, carry home two points first, the Aurobindonian Yoga is something dynamically new and, second, it envisages in the most literal sense a total divinisation of man's being and nature. The newness and the totality or integrality of its sweep spring from Sri Aurobindo's complete realisation of a special “poise” of the Divine—the poise which he terms Supermind and explains to be the Consciousness in which the truths implicit in the Absolute are brought into a

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harmonious balance or interfusion of One and Many and constituted as the perfect creative and supporting original of all that is being evolved on earth from a nether pole, as it were: the Supermind holds the secret of manifesting in the evolute that is man a divine mentality, a divine vitality, a divine physicality. The Supermind is the full reality and significance of what has been conceived so far as God. Always, in the spirituality of the past, even when the stress was not openly on other-worldliness, there remained a final feeling that our world, for all the field it provides for Godlike action and manifestation, is yet not meant to be the scene of man's entire fulfilment: the mind, the life-force and most glaringly the body contain elements resistant and impervious to the Divine Light and must ultimately be shed: entire fulfilment is elsewhere, is in the Beyond. Even the Gita, that most dynamic and this-worldly of spiritual scriptures, cannot avoid a note of pessimism as regards earth's perfectibility, earth's capacity for the ever-blissful and the permanent. In the eyes of the old spirituality, it is not of the essence of God to remove the last shadow of limitation and mortality from man's embodied existence, individual and collective. But the God who is Supermind is inherently the conqueror of all obstacles, the establisher of a perfect super-humanity: the whole of earth's evolutionary labour finds in and by that divinity its justification on earth itself.

The integral union, here and now, of all the terms of the human with their Supramental counterparts descending for manifestation is the Aurobindonian Yoga. And a triple movement is necessary for ultimately achieving this union: awareness, constant and in every part, of the Divine Mother's presence and power — unquestioning and unobstructing plasticity to the touch of Her wide and varied and subtle working—unreserved surrender of the inner and outer being to Her Love and Light. But such a triple movement through which the Supermind will create in earth-evolution a new grade of embodied existence is too difficult for man without supreme spiritual leadership by the Divine's own person: whenever a new evolutionary grade is to be created there must be in the van of the movement the Divine's incarnate presence in the figure of the human, guiding by Yogic example and direct illuminating grace. And those who would serve Sri Aurobindo by a keen sense of the concentrated experiment going on in his Ashram in an organised form since 1926 must keep kindled in their minds and hearts the central spiritual truth he put forth on the day on which he withdrew into comparative seclusion for the purpose of accelerating his work: the truth that his work revolves round his partner in the Supramental transformation, the radiant and gracious personality who in the Ashram is known as the Mother.

It is on the occasion of her birthday—February 21—that *Mother India* commenced its career. It is on the same occasion that now it is turning

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from a Fortnightly into a Monthly. Aspirants from many parts of the country will visit the Ashram on this day to take her blessing: we too seek her blessing on our capacities of vision and execution so that, in all that we think and feel and express, she may be luminous to the world

•

Magnificat

I love thee for the scented rumour clinging
 To thy pure limbs, of amaranthine peaks --
O luminous form whose every line goes singing
 The immortality which void earth seeks.

Unto my shadow-calm thy beauty's passion
 Glowes like an inward-surgingspirit-force.
Over thy body's rhythm of adoration
 My floating eyes attain eternal shores

K. D. SETHNA

SRI AUROBINDO AND WORLD-MOVEMENTS

(From a Message)

On this day* I can watch almost all the world-movements which I hoped to see fulfilled in my lifetime, though then they looked like impracticable dreams, arriving at fruition or on their way to achievement .

The first of these dreams was a revolutionary movement which would create a free and united India . .

Another dream was for the resurgence and liberation of the peoples of Asia and her return to her great role in the progress of human civilisation .

The third dream was a world-union forming the outer basis of a fairer, brighter and nobler life for all mankind . That unification of the human world is under way; there is an imperfect initiation organised but struggling against tremendous difficulties. But the momentum is there and it must inevitably increase and conquer . . .

A catastrophe may intervene and interrupt or destroy what is being done, but even then the final result is sure. For unification is a necessity of Nature, an inevitable movement . Its necessity for nations is also clear, for without it the freedom of the small nations may be at any moment in peril and the life even of the large and powerful nations insecure. The unification is therefore to the interests of all, and only human imbecility and stupid selfishness can prevent it; but these cannot stand for ever against the necessity of Nature and the Divine Will. But an outward basis is not enough; there must grow up an international spirit and outlook, international forms and institutions must appear, perhaps such developments as dual or multilateral citizenship, willed interchange or voluntary fusion of cultures. Nationalism will have fulfilled itself and lost its militancy and would no longer find these things incompatible with self-preservation and the integrity of its outlook. A new spirit of oneness will take hold of the human race.

Another dream, the spiritual gift of India to the world, has already begun. India's spirituality is entering Europe and America in an ever increasing measure . That movement will grow; amid the disasters of

* August 15, 1947—India's Independence Day and Sri Aurobindo's seventy-seventh birthday.—(EDITOR)

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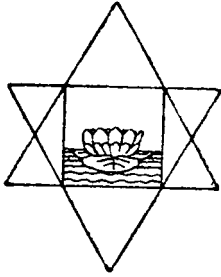
the time more and more eyes are turning towards her with hope and there is even an increasing resort not only to her teachings, but to her psychic and spiritual practice.

The final dream was a step in evolution which would raise man to a higher and larger consciousness and begin the solution of the problems which have perplexed and vexed him since he first began to think and to dream of individual perfection and a perfect society. This is still a personal hope and an idea, an ideal which has begun to take hold both in India and in the West on forward-looking minds. The difficulties in the way are more formidable than in any other field of endeavour, but difficulties were made to be overcome and if the Supreme Will is there, they will be overcome. Here too, if this evolution is to take place, since it must proceed through a growth of the spirit and the inner consciousness, the initiative can come from India and, although the scope must be universal, the central movement may be hers.

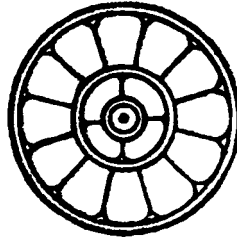
Such is the content which I put into this date of India's liberation. whether or how far this hope will be justified depends upon the new and free India.

Sri Aurobindo





SRI AUROBINDO'S SYMBOL



THE MOTHER'S SYMBOL.

The descending triangle represents Sat-Chit-Ananda.

The ascending triangle represents the aspiring answer from matter under the form of life, light and love.

The junction of both (the central square) is the perfect manifestation having at its centre the Avatar of the Supreme (the lotus).

The water (inside the square) represents the multiplicity, the creation.

*

The central circle represents the Divine Consciousness.

The four petals represent the four powers of the Mother.

The twelve petals represent the twelve powers of the Mother manifested for Her work.

CONVERSATIONS WITH SRI AUROBINDO

Nirodbaran

This is a series of talks which took place day after day. In the course of them, light is thrown on various subjects from various angles. Certain pronouncements of one day are expanded or completed on another when new aspects are brought up or new facts presented. Some opinions in an instalment, therefore, need to be taken in conjunction with those expressed later. An example is the remarks on Tagore. (EDITOR)

The eve of November Darshan, 1938. The Ashram humming with the arrival of visitors. On every face signs of joy, in every look calm expectation and happiness. Everybody has retired early; all lights have gone out: great occasion demands greater preparation. The Ashram is bathed in an atmosphere of serene repose. Only one light keeps on burning in the corner room like a midnight vigil. Sri Aurobindo at work as usual. A sudden noise! A rush and hurry of feet breaking the sweet sleep. 2 a.m. . . Then an urgent call to Sri Aurobindo's room. . . There, lying on the floor with the right knee flexed is He, clad in white dhoti, upper body bare, the Golden Purusha. The Mother, dressed in saree, is sitting beside him. Presently others come, Dr Manilal who has fortunately arrived for the Darshan begins to examine him. Yes, a fracture and of a serious type. All necessary first aid given, a specialist from Madras is sent for.

Meanwhile a deep gloom has overshadowed the Ashram. Darshan has to be abandoned. The visitors leave, one by one, with a heavy heart and with an ardent prayer for the speedy recovery of their beloved Master and Friend.

There on the bed he was laid for an indefinite period by the rigorous command of the doctors, attended on by a few disciples. The conversations that followed were with those disciples who were given the privilege of serving him from then onwards for twelve years. There was not a subject that was not touched, not a mystery that he did not illumine, not a

phenomenon that passed unnoticed, humorous or serious, superficial or profound, mundane or mystic. Reminiscences, stories, talks on art and culture, on world-problems poured down in abundant streams from an otherwise silent and reticent vastitude of knowledge and love and bliss. It was an unforgettable reward he accorded to us for our service. "The Divine gives himself to those who give themselves" Those anxious days called out our best and noblest and we received in return his fathomless compassion, freely and divinely. All the talks could not be recorded, some have to be kept back, but the rest are as far as possible authentic, though the words and expressions cannot be his own in all places.

In the early period, the conversations took place in the evenings. Some five or six of us used to sit by his bed and wait for his signal. The Mother's presence was an occasional feature that added a lively interest to our talks. Latterly, however, her own work kept her away.

"Why did you choose Pondicherry as the place of your sadhana?" This question was the first shot from one of us in the dim evening light

"Because of an *adesh*," he replied. "A very commanding Voice asked me to come here and I could not but obey."

Our interest was at once awakened and we came a little closer. "When I was leaving Bombay for Calcutta," he continued, "I asked Lele how I should proceed as regards my sadhana. He kept silent a while—probably to hear a Voice from within—and said, 'Meditate at a fixed time and try to hear the Voice in the heart.' I did so, but began to hear a quite different Voice, not the kind he spoke of. The Voice came from above. Afterwards, I dropped observing a fixed time for meditation: meditation was going on all the time, so there was no necessity of specially sitting for it. When Lele came to Calcutta and heard about all this, he was very much perplexed and displeased. He said, 'The devil has caught hold of you.' I replied, 'Well, if it is the devil, I would rather follow him.' He could not understand my inner condition nor had he any idea about the Voice from above. He was accustomed to listen to only one kind of Voice."

As he paused, the next question followed, but bearing no relation to the subject. That was the general trend of our talks: among such a group and in such a milieu a methodical discussion of any subject was not always possible nor very much worth-while.

"People say that *Yogic Sadhan* was written through you by the being of Keshav Sen. Is it true?"

"Keshav Sen?" he said with surprise. "When I was writing it, every time at the start and at the end the image of Ram Mohan Roy came and stood before me, not Keshav Sen. Ram Mohan Roy has by some inventive genius been changed into Keshav Sen. Do you know the origin of the name 'Uttara Yogi'?" he asked after a while.

"No, sir."

"You know that the book bears the name of 'Uttara Yogi' as its author. Do you know how it came to have that name?"

"No, sir."

"Well, in the South there was a famous Yogi. While he was dying, he said to his disciples that a Purna Yogi from the North would come down to the South and he would be known by three sayings. They are those I have mentioned in *Mrinalinir Patra*. A Zamindar disciple of that Yogi found me out and bore the cost of the book. That is why the author has been so named."

The next question went of at a tangent. Some one blurted out "Did Tagore have any spiritual experience?"

"As far as I know, nothing of a high order. Neither did he claim to have any. The Mother meditated with him and saw that he had achieved some mental and physical quietude."

As the Mother happened to come in at this time, she inquired what the talk was about. "About Tagore," said Sri Aurobindo and added, "They are asking if he had any spiritual experience."

"I knew him and spent some weeks in his company. But when he came here, he could not recognise me!" said the Mother.

"At one time he was going to be the leader of the Swadeshi movement," said Sri Aurobindo, "because of his exceedingly fine speeches in Bengali. But Bepin Pal told me that he could never be the leader since he would not be able to suffer hardships and inconveniences. He related how on a rainy day they had gone out in muddy streets for the sake of the work. Tagore began picking his way cautiously and pulling up his clothes, thereby trying to avoid as much soiling as possible. Pal got thoroughly disgusted. Tagore is too refined and aesthetic; he would not have remained long in the movement."

"How is it that he never spoke of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda till very recently? That was also in a very half-hearted way rather than out of genuine admiration. He wrote an ordinary poem on Ramakrishna during his birth centenary. It seems he used to tell his women-friends that Ramakrishna had no deep respect for women because he very often used the expression *kamini* while referring to women and advised young men to keep away from them. 'And still women worship him!' was Tagore's comment."

"But I understand," interrupted Sri Aurobindo, "that he did not utter that expression. When after his death there was division in his group, one party said that he used the word *Kamakanchan* and not *Kaminikanchan*."

"What is your opinion about Brahma Samaj? Was there any one in it with spiritual realisation?"

"I don't know, not at any rate anybody who had attained a very high level. Dwijendranath had something Shivanath too and perhaps Keshav Sen. Bejoy Goswami who achieved a high status ceased to be a Brahmo."

"Had Lele any realisation?"

"Of course," said Sri Aurobindo with emphasis, "but I saw that he had ambition and ego."

"It is said that Christ used to heal people simply by a touch. Is it possible?" was the next unconnected question.

"Why not? There are many such instances of cure. Of course faith is necessary. Christ himself has said, 'Thy faith has made thee whole'."

"But is faith always necessary for cure?"

"No, not always; it can be done without faith especially when one does not know what is being done. Faith is above mind so that any discussion or dispute spoils the action of faith."

"Yes, I know of such instances of cure or help by virtue of faith. In fact, I have personal experience," said someone with an assured tone. "When I came to you for the first time, you asked me to remember you in any difficulty. I followed your advice and passed through many troubles unscathed. But on my next visit here, unfortunately I lost that faith."

"How is that?" asked Sri Aurobindo.

"I came into contact with various sorts of people. One said one thing, another something else and thus many things poured into my ears, some of which took root in the mind. I did not get the same result. I thought that perhaps I could not open myself to you any more."

"Yours was what is known as simple faith. Some call it blind faith. When Ramakrishna was asked about the nature of faith, he replied, 'All faith is blind; otherwise it is not faith.' And he was quite right."

"Is it because there is something in our nature or in the environmental atmosphere that faith gets shaken?"

"For both reasons. The physical mind has doubts inherent in it, at one time or another they come up. An unfavourable contact may help to bring it up. I know of one or two shocking instances in the Ashram itself. Once a truthful man came to pay a visit. A sadhak told him that this habit of always speaking the truth was nothing but a blind superstition and that one must be free from it! There is another instance of a sadhak who advocated sex-indulgence. He said that it was not a hindrance to Yoga and that every one must have his *shakti*! When such ideas are prevalent, it is no wonder that they should cast a bad influence on people."

"But why should such people be tolerated at all?" came an indignant voice: "they ought to be quarantined." A burst of laughter was evoked by this hygienic word from the mouth of the medical officer.

“Yes, I thought of that,” said Sri Aurobindo, smiling. “But it is not possible. The Mother tried at one time to impose some restrictions, it did not work. One has to change from within. There are of course other Yogic systems which enforce strict disciplines. Buddhism is unique in that respect. In France also, there is such a school (Labratte?) which enjoins rigorous silence.”

“Is exterior imposition good?”

“It can be, provided one sincerely keeps to it. In that school, for example, people who enter know what they want and keep that always in view. Therefore they observe all the regulations meant to help their object. Here the object is different. We are not concerned with individual salvation alone. Ours is a world-problem and people here are an epitome of the world, each one representing a type of humanity. If one type is conquered, it means a victory for all who belong to that type and thus a great achievement for the work. For such a change, a constant will is required. If that is there, lots of things can be done for the individual.”

“We gather that sadhana in the Ashram was going on very well in the beginning and that things became sluggish only afterwards.”

“Yes, it is when the sadhana came down into the physical and the subconscious that things became very difficult. I myself had to struggle for two years. For, the subconscious is absolutely inert—like stone. Though my mind was quite awake above, it could not exert any influence down below. It is a Herculean labour. If I had been made to see it before, I would probably have been less enthusiastic about it. There is the virtue of blind faith,” he said with a smile. “When one enters into the subconscious it is like stepping upon a vast unexplored continent. Previous Yogis came down to the vital, they did not descend farther; they were quite sensible. But if I too had left it there, the real work would have remained undone. Once it is done and the subconscious conquered, things will become easy for those who come after. That is what is meant by ‘realisation of one in all.’”

“Then why should we take so much trouble?” said an easy-goer. “We can wait for that victory.”

“You want an easy path?” asked Sri Aurobindo.

“Not only easy, we want to be carried about like a baby.”

All-round laughter hailed the baby. When it died down, Sri Aurobindo inquired, “And who is the baby here?” Another burst of laughter followed.

“Not possible, sir?” put forth Dr Manilal, our superior.

“Possible, but one has to be actually a baby, a genuine one.”

We all looked at Dr. Manilal for a reply. But as he had nothing to say someone else brought up a different question:

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“Ramakrishna has said that one need not be always like a drawn bow.”

“Where has he said that?” was Sri Aurobindo’s surprised query. “A Yogi has to be always vigilant, especially in the early part of his sadhana. Otherwise all one has gained can come down with a thud. Sadhaks don’t usually make sadhana the one thing of their life. They have two parts: one internal, and the other external which goes on with its ordinary movements, social contacts, etc. No, sadhana must be made the one central thing.”

“You once spoke about the brilliant period of the Ashram.”

“Yes, when the sadhana was going on in the vital everything was joy, peace, ananda. And if we had stopped there, we could have started a big religion or a vast organisation. But the goal to be achieved would have stayed unattempted.”

“Is it for that you have retired?”

“Not exactly, rather to withdraw from the physical atmosphere. If I had to do what the Mother is doing, I would have hardly found time to do my own work; it would have entailed a tremendous labour.”

“The Mother’s coming must have greatly helped you in your work and in your sadhana.”

“Of course, of course,” said Sri Aurobindo with visible warmth. “All my realisations were theoretical. It was she who showed the way and gave them a practical form. Otherwise nothing would have been done. In fact, she has been doing this sadhana since her very childhood.”

“Yes, we find in the Mother’s *Prayers and Meditations* a striking resemblance between your ideas and hers.”

10-12-38

PROBLEMS OF INTEGRAL YOGA

The Unpublished Correspondence of Sri Aurobindo

COMPILER'S INTRODUCTION

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

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

It is hoped this presentation will be of help not only to the ashramites, but to all followers of Sri Aurobindo both in India and abroad. Our thanks are due to the sadhaks who are helping us in the compilation of this Series—without their kind co-operation its publishing would not have been possible.

"Synergist"

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THE DESCENT OF THE SUPERMIND

The one question that has always intrigued the disciples of Sri Aurobindo has been that of the descent of the Supermind—the date of its coming, its action on the total being for its transformation, and its effect on the outside world. All sorts of questions have been put to Sri Aurobindo about it by those who have either had a chance to talk to him or to carry on with him a regular correspondence. Now that the Supramental Force is working on the earth-consciousness more directly and intensely than before, Sri Aurobindo's answers to the questions asked have gathered an added value and significance. A few of these questions are collected here with Sri Aurobindo's replies.

In 1935, one of the disciples named NK made the following remark about the Supermind: "The present preparation is going on to bring down the Supermind into the physical of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo." Another disciple, who used to correspond with Sri Aurobindo regularly, wrote to him about it. In reply, Sri Aurobindo put a part of the sentence into brackets. "The present preparation is going on to bring down the Supermind into the physical", leaving out the words "of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo", and then made the following comment on NK's statement: "Not quite correct in all points. The things to be brought down were in us no doubt but not all outwardly manifested from the beginning. Of course, NK's statement is altogether true only as far as the bracket goes." (14-9-35)

The disciple wrote back: "But, have you not noticed that you have cut off the last much-emphasised part of NK's statement?"

Sri Aurobindo replied: "Yes, of course. What is being done is meant to prepare the manifestation of the Supermind in the earth-consciousness down to Matter itself, so it can't be for the physical of myself and the Mother alone." (15-9-35)

The disciple wrote again: "We know the Supermind is to be brought down into the physical, at least most of us do, but what NK means is that the preparation is going on for bringing down the Supermind not into our physical but into yours and Mother's"

In reply to this Sri Aurobindo made an extremely important statement one that throws light on the relation between the transformation of the sadhaks and the bringing down of the Supermind into his own physical and that of the Mother. He wrote back: "If it comes down into our physical it would mean that it has come down to matter and so there is no reason why it should not manifest in the sadhaks" (15-9-35)

After two days Sri Aurobindo was asked a question about the action of the Supramental Force. "At 'Pranam' time, after returning from the

Mother, K felt an immense pressure on the head. Does this mean that a direct Supramental Force has started working and that our nature is now trying to accommodate itself to that action?"

Sri Aurobindo replied: "Direct Supermind Force is not possible at this stage. It is only when the whole being down to the physical has accepted and assimilated the higher consciousness that it can come."
(17-9-35)

The disciple then asked: "I understand that the transformation of the lower nature is not possible without the Supramental Force coming down and preparing the vessel for the complete perfection. Am I right?"

Sri Aurobindo wrote back in answer: "Complete perfection is another matter. What must first be done is the fullness of the higher consciousness between human mind and Supermind."

The next day the disciple sent another letter saying. "When I wrote to you about a direct supramental action I took help from your own statement; for when I had previously asked you, 'Is it not true that at present a direct Supermind Force is acting in the Ashram?' you had replied, as far as I remember, 'I suppose so, but it should not be an excuse for a passive acquiescence (inertia, etc.). Another reason for my thinking that it may be the direct Supermind Force was that the force felt after the Pranam was overwhelmingly powerful and fiery-keen'."

Sri Aurobindo replied: "Acting in the Ashram means only acting in the earth-consciousness to prepare its own possibility. The forces above the human mind, especially Overmind, Intuition, Illumined Mind can be very intense and fiery. They have divine powers in them." (18-9-35)

Two months after this, some very interesting letters on the subject of the descent of the Supermind were exchanged. The questions and answers are given below:

Disciple. "You said that 'the Supermind descent into Matter is what is being attempted.'" In that case, has the Supermind already conquered the mental plane, the vital plane and the physical that now it is attempting to conquer Matter?"

Sri Aurobindo "There can be no conquest of the other planes by the Supermind but only an influence, so long as the physical is not ready. Besides the Supermind did not attempt—it is we who are attempting."
(7-11-35)

Disciple. "Unless the mind and the vital are perfectly prepared how is it possible to bring the Supermind down into the physical or Matter?"

Sri Aurobindo "And how is it possible to perfect the mind and vital unless the physical is prepared—for there is such a thing as the mental and vital physical and mind and vital cannot be said to be perfectly prepared until these are ready." (7-11-35)

Disciple, "Why cannot the Supramental be brought down stage by stage—that is, first into the mind and the vital till the physical is ready?"

Sri Aurobindo. "It cannot be brought down to the mind and vital without being brought down into the physical—also one can feel its influence or get something of it but bringing down means much more than that.

"The Supermind is a luminous whole—it is not a mixture of light and ignorance. If the physical mind is not supramentalised, then there will be in mind a mixture of ignorance, but then it will not be Supermind there, but something else—so also with the vital. All that can manifest in the mind separately is a partly supramentalised Overmind.

"If the supramental can stand in the mind and vital, then it must stand in the physical also. If it does not stand in the physical, it cannot stand in the mind and vital also; it will be something else, not the supramental."

Disciple. "You are at present trying to bring down the Supermind into the physical—when it has come there, will it be found in the mind and vital simultaneously, or will another effort be necessary for them?"

Sri Aurobindo. "I have already said that the Supermind cannot be brought down like that separately in one part with nothing in the rest."
(11-2-36)

In order to give the reader a fuller understanding of this particular problem it is necessary to insert here a letter which Sri Aurobindo wrote three months later.

"A touch or influence of the supramental is not the same thing as the supramentalisation. To suppose that the physical can be supramentalised before the mental and vital is an absolute absurdity. What I said was that the mind and vital could not be supramentalised so long as the physical was left as it was, untouched by the supramental descent." (17-5-36)

Disciple "Does your bringing down the Supermind into the physical depend upon the sadhaks here?"

Sri Aurobindo. "No, except that they can act as obstacles." (11-2-36)

Disciple. "I think that though the descent has to a large extent to do with the progress of the Ashram, yet mostly it deals with the physical consciousness in general."

To this Sri Aurobindo replied "Yes" and underlined it.

Disciple. "And therefore I feel that when it has come down once every sadhak's physical will not be automatically supramentalised. Its first descent will only make our sadhana less difficult and the path clearer; but our personal share will be necessary to bring it into our physical."

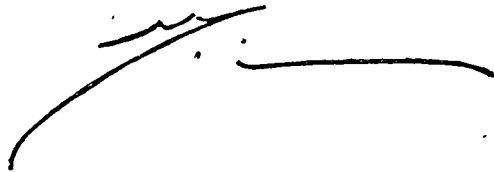
Sri Aurobindo. "No part of the sadhaks will be automatically supramentalised,"

THE PRESENT NEED OF OUR YOGA

An Unpublished Letter of The Mother

20-11-47

The force was acting chiefly in the mind, the vital and, through it, in the physical... It has come further down in its action and now it is at work not only in the material but also in the subconscious and even in the inconscient. Unless you follow this descending movement and allow the force to act in your body and the material regions of the consciousness, you will find yourself stranded on the road without being able to advance any further. And to allow this working of the force, it is a detailed surrender of all movements, habits, tastes, preferences, sense of necessities, etc., that is urgently required.



From

‘‘PRAYERS AND MEDITATIONS’’

Each time that a heart leaps at the touch of Thy Divine breath, a little more beauty seems to be born upon the earth, the air is embalmed with a sweet perfume, all becomes more friendly

How great is Thy power, O Lord of all existences, that an atom of Thy Joy is sufficient to efface so much darkness, so many sorrows, and a single ray of Thy glory can light up thus the dullest pebble, illumine the blackest consciousness!

Thou hast heaped Thy favours upon me, Thou hast unveiled to me many secrets, Thou hast made me taste many unexpected and unhopéd for joys, but no grace of Thine can be equal to this Thou grantest to me when a heart leaps at the touch of Thy Divine breath

At these blessed hours all earth sings a hymn of gladness, the grasses shudder with pleasure, the air is vibrant with light, the trees lift towards heaven their most ardent prayer, the chant of the birds becomes a canticle, the waves of the sea billow with love, the smile of children tells of the infinite and the souls of men appear in their eyes

Tell me, wilt Thou grant me the marvellous power to give birth to this dawn in expectant hearts, to awaken the consciousness of men to Thy sublime Presence, and in this bare and sorrowful world awaken a little of Thy true Paradise? What happiness, what riches, what terrestrial powers can equal this wonderful gift?

O Lord, never have I implored Thee in vain, for that which speaks to Thee is Thyself in me.

Drop by drop Thou allowest to fall in a fertilising rain the living and redeeming flame of Thy almighty love. When these drops of eternal light descend softly on our world of obscure ignorance, one would say a rain upon earth of golden stars one by one from a sombre firmament.

All kneels in mute devotion before this ever renewed miracle.

March 31, 1917.

The Mother

THE SADHANA OF SRI AUROBINDO'S YOGA

COMPILER'S INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

For the benefit of the general reader it must be mentioned here that the written comments by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother on the queries of the sadhaks act only as the outer means of guidance and explain to the mind the rationale of the spiritual process; the real effective help which resolves the difficulty comes directly through an inner contact. Sri Aurobindo himself has written about this in one of his letters: "What I write usually

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helps only the mind and that too very little... The inner help is quite different... it reaches the substance of the consciousness, not the mind only."

"Synergist".

MY SADHANA WITH THE MOTHER

by "AB"

16-3-35.

AB. I now feel as if the Mother were taking into Herself all the parts of my being, leaving behind only a projection of Her own Force which works for Her in me.

Sri Aurobindo. That was what was needed—on one side the dwelling in the Mother, on the other the consciousness of Her Force working in the physical.

AB. These days my actions are beginning to be felt (not merely thought to be) as being carried but by the Mother's Force while I remain merged in Her Satchchidananda consciousness.

Sri Aurobindo. It is very good. That was what was needed.

18-3-35.

A.B. I feel myself totally far from the ignorance and falsehood and very close to the Mother. Not that the ordinary nature and its movements are gone for ever, but due to my separateness their reactions do not touch me.

Sri Aurobindo. It is the true Yogic consciousness in which one feels that oneness and lives in it, not touched by the outer being and its inferior movements, but looking on them with a smile at their ignorance and smallness. It will become much more possible to deal with these outer things if that separateness is maintained always.

AB. I feel even the inertia as something detached from me.

Sri Aurobindo. That is good. Inertia or anything else must be felt as separate, not part of one's real self which is one with the Divine.

AB. In the midst of physical or even mental occupation I cannot forget the Mother.

Sri Aurobindo. That is very good.

AB. Now I feel that my consciousness has an effortless and clear understanding of what is Mother's and what is not Hers.

THE SADHANA OF SRI AUROBINDO'S YOGA

Sri Aurobindo. That is the right thing—a certain effortless intuitive discrimination.

19-3-35.

AB. I feel that my sadhana goes on during the work also.

Sri Aurobindo. It is a stage of detachment and separation which is necessary in yoga. It is only so that freedom in the work can come.

AB. My concentration does not stick on anything. It wants to remain "spread out".

Sri Aurobindo. I presume you mean that you are living in the consciousness of the self which is everywhere spread out throughout existence. That is how one usually experiences it.

AB. In the midst of work I feel myself at full rest. Even the body consciousness does not feel that it is working.

Sri Aurobindo. That is right. It is so that it must be felt.
20-3-35.

AB. Now that I live more on the positive side of the sadhana I do not like to look much at the negative things or to write about them to You, if You would kindly permit it.

Sri Aurobindo. Yes, certainly—that is the best.

AB. All the inner and spiritual experiences, realisations etc come no doubt from the Mother. But that truth was accepted by us before only on faith and without personal proof, for we could not perceive their source then. Now I clearly see and feel these things coming down from Her, even as one sees the Ganges flowing down from the Himalayas.

Sri Aurobindo. It is very good indeed. It was what was lacking in the former realisation of self and of peace—Now with this realisation you have the foundation of the dynamic as well as the static side of the truth.

AB. It is certain that my mind and vital are merged in the Mother but I feel that my physical also has begun to rest now on the lap of the Mother.

Sri Aurobindo. Yes.

AB. I am afraid, I wrote to You rather too much on the 19th about my feeling separate from the outer Prakriti in work.

Sri Aurobindo. No, it was all right—a very clear and precise statement.

AB. When X went to the Mother for Pranam, and She put Her hand on his head I felt the touch of Her hand on my own head. How did this happen?

Sri Aurobindo. It shows that the subtle physical is growing conscious and felt touch and blessings of the Mother which is always there.

AB. When the Mother was throwing a last glance at us while returning from the Pranam, some tears and a profound feeling came out from

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the heart.

Sri Aurobindo. It is the natural psychic movement of love and bhakti deep down in the being.

To be continued

Prayer

Make my heart's fire feel that Thou art the Divine
Embodied here, kindle the seeing Flame
Of knowledge unextinguishable within
Where hides the mystic treasures of Thy Name.

I am a half-blind pilgrim before Thee —
My senses clinging still to the old past
Veil with their dire and darkening memory
My sight and my soul's star-ray overcast.

Reveal in my heart's glass Thy fathomless
Beauty; dispel the mist of ignorance
That hangs over my human consciousness
With the sun-gaze of Thy unborn radiance

This weight of deadly hush I cannot bear,
Lift me to Thy Light on diamond wings of prayer.

NIRODBARAN

THE WORLD CRISIS AND INDIA
and
SRI AUROBINDO, THE LEADER OF THE EVOLUTION
A RESUMÉ

BY "Synergist"

- (a) *The Problem*
- (b) *The Solution—Sri Aurobindo and the Supermind*

(a) THE PROBLEM

The essays published under the titles *The World Crisis and India* and *Sri Aurobindo, the Leader of the Evolution*, have been appearing regularly in this Journal since its inception in February 1949. For the first six months they appeared under the first title, and after August 15, 1949, under the second. These two groups of essays are very closely connected and form the first and second parts of a larger work. As the scheme of writing is rather wide, having many divisions and sub-divisions, it is felt that some of our new readers may find difficult to follow the complete exposition. Therefore it is thought advisable, before proceeding further, to give a resumé of the previous essays and explain the scheme of writing ever since the Series was started in 1949.

In Part I, *The World Crisis and India*, several closely connected philosophical ideas concerning man, the universe, and the Ultimate Reality, and the three-termed ontological relation between them are brought to a focus. These ideas express three inter-related major themes. The first deals with the physical-vital-mental-spiritual evolution of man and attempts to show in what way his psycho-spiritual growth has been arrested and side-tracked, with a resulting conflict in his individual life and anarchy and chaos in his collective existence. It then indicates the direction in which his future evolution must proceed if he is to solve successfully the problem of existence and create for himself a better life.

The second theme shows how consciousness is the main determinant in the creation of the socio-cultural life of a people and how the inner basi-

cally determines the outer. This theme leads to the third, its antithesis—the impress of the outer on the inner. It stresses the importance of the cultural conditioning of man, especially the influence of the prevalent worldview upon his attitude towards life and upon his conduct. More than any other factor it emphasises the religio-metaphysical* in the growth of a culture, for it is this factor which determines the values that a particular culture inculcates, it is the basic element in the socio-cultural configuration which integrates its component parts and ensures its central unity. This theme recognises among other elements the influence of the sociological and economic factors, but not to the extent the Positivists and the Materialists do. The object of these essays is not to discuss all the factors that influence man's social and cultural life, nor to show the validity or invalidity of theories of culture. Almost all such theories contain very powerful truths and give an insight into important aspects of man's existence. The object is to stress the creative power that resides in the human consciousness and to show in what way it can be made effective in life. The influence of religio-metaphysical conceptions on the minds of men, and the effect of ideative elements subtly working in the stream of human consciousness are brought in only as far as they are relevant to the first and second themes and show how they have affected the cultural current of modern Western civilisation. Therefore, in these essays there is all the time an emphasis on consciousness as the man determining power, on its evolution from a lower status to a higher one, and on its capacity to create on each ascending level a more and more integrated organisation of life and a more enlightened culture—for the socio-cultural evolution of a collectivity and the particular character of its mode of life is determined by the psycho-spiritual evolution of its members.

This Part I contains more a grouping of closely related ideas than a complete philosophical exposition, it is in Part II, *Sri Aurobindo, the Leader of the Evolution*, that a systematisation of these ideas is taken in hand. Part I deals with the present world crisis and attempts to indicate the direction in which the solution lies. Part II concerns itself with the problem of the transformation of man's individual and collective life in the light of the highest spiritual experience; it attempts to show how a greater existence upon earth is not only a possibility for him, but is his ultimate destiny.

* * *

* It will be noticed from what follows that in the West during the last hundred years it has been more the metaphysico-scientific factor than the religio-metaphysical that has influenced its society and culture, because the authoritative power to answer the eternal questions regarding man's life and destiny on this earth passed in the 19th century from religion to science, and even metaphysics began to play a subservient role.

The Series began in 1949 with an essay on the true import of the crisis our civilisation is facing today, it pointed out that though the causes of this crisis overtly seem to be political, social and economic, they are in their inner significance psychological and have their roots in the deeper recesses of man's being. The materialistic ideas about the economic factor basically governing the entire gamut of human experience were shown to belong to an *erisatz* philosophy based upon a radically incorrect conception of man—upon a false metaphysic and a narrow and superficial psychology. It was then stated that the real causes of the ills of human life reside within man himself—that imperfection lies at the root of all human endeavour, and that this imperfection is imparted by him to all that he attempts to achieve, the malady is primarily in man himself and only secondarily in his institutions to which he transmits it. Consequently, the remedy must start with him and then spread outward to his socio-cultural life. It was found that this imperfection is the result of a limited consciousness, a consciousness restricted to particular modes and movements and canalised in an outward direction. A further examination revealed that this limitation of consciousness is the outcome of an ill-balanced psychological growth. Man's consciousness is so one-pointedly focussed in his outer mental-vital-physical being that he calls "I", his ego, that he is oblivious of his inner soul-being and the higher spiritual ranges of his personality, a widening and growth into which can alone give him a clearer truth-perception and a more luminous awareness, and greater knowledge and power to control and remould the external world. This limitation of consciousness and force is the real cause of man's imperfect nature, for its consequences are ignorance, insensibility, and lack of psychological integration resulting in disharmony and conflict. It is this inner disharmony that he projects in his social life.

Also, as the stress of the consciousness in the ego increases, his individuality becomes more and more pronounced, till he begins to feel utterly separate from all other beings, his consciousness becomes so centralised in his ego, that he feels himself detached from the rest of the world. This feeling of being quite apart from the rest creates in him a state of mind in which he finds it easy to become self-centred and self-assertive, the ultimate outcome of such an attitude on a wide social and political scale can easily be imagined. It is not very surprising therefore to see men pitting themselves against one another or one nation against another—it is a case either of the conflict of personal egos or of communal egos.

This limitation is but natural and had to be there in a gradual evolution proceeding from a lower to a higher level, but the faulty poise of the consciousness could have been avoided. At a certain stage, when man's individuality had been sufficiently affirmed through a gradual detachment of his consciousness from the subconsciousness of the mass, he could have become

aware of his inner soul-being, and a rapport could have been established between the inner and the outer man; this would have prevented his faulty one-sided psychological growth. A closer contact with his soul and higher self would have led him to the understanding that all beings have a secret spiritual bond between them because they are created out of the same Divine Reality, or rather, are emanatory projections of a single Divine Being, and that behind the veil of the outer consciousness are inextricably connected with one another and carry on a constant interchange of forces.

Therefore, the remedy must begin with man's psychological transformation, he must contact his inner soul, and then by growing into a wider and more luminous spiritual consciousness attain a higher level of being. Such a transformation can give him greater light by which to act and greater power by which to make higher truths effective in his life and thereby change it from a blundering growth into a true expression of the Spirit.

Now a broad statement can be made that the socio-cultural life of a people, its philosophy, religion, literature, art, science, politics and sociology, is the expression of its life-awareness and world-awareness—in the case of religion and spiritual philosophy, even God-awareness—formulated in different spheres of human activity, each formulation articulating a particular strain in man's consciousness; for example, philosophy and science are the expression of the mind's search for the highest Truth, and ethics for the highest Good, art and literature express the aesthetic strain, and sociology and politics the pragmatic. The unique character of these formulations is naturally determined by the nature and type of the formulating consciousness. Consequently, it follows that if man were to attain a higher level of being and possess a more enlightened consciousness than he possesses today he will create a superior type of culture—instead of his present rationalistic, utilitarian, and sensually hedonistic culture, he may create a spiritual, idealistic, and aesthetic one. That is why it was stated that the character of a people's social and cultural life is determined by its psycho-spiritual evolution.

There is really no valid reason to suppose that the mental being is the final term or the consummation of Nature's evolutionary endeavour. On the contrary, it can be seen that she is constantly attempting to create a higher type, whose forerunners have walked on this earth since the earliest times, the prophet and the saint, the seer, the mystic and the yogi—the men of God. The spiritual man—that is one who has contacted the Spirit and is under Its direct influence, not the moral man—is the intermediary between the evolved mental man and the completely divinised being of the future, to use a famous aphorism of Emerson's he "walks as the prophecy of the next age". The metaphysical ideas that would justify such a conception of human evolution are discussed in the essay which follows this:

The Solution—Sri Aurobindo and the Supermind.

The third theme, which deals with the influence of the outer on the inner, of the socio-cultural environment* on the consciousness of men, is not really antithetical to the second, the two describe the complementary movements of a single process; however, the main determining power is in the inner. There is in every individual consciousness a double action, a power of self-development from within, and the receiving of impacts of an external world which it adjusts to its own individuality and turns into material for its own development, it is capable of projecting itself outward and recreating and remoulding its environment in consonance with its own inner truth. As the individual learns to live and act from a higher spiritual consciousness, his capacity for self-determination increases and his mastery over outer circumstances becomes greater. He can then bring out steadily the higher forces of the Spirit into the outer instrumentation and make their power bear upon his external life—he can create new ranges of activities and new values for things that already exist. Once all this is understood, the importance of the cultural conditioning factors can be judged correctly with the necessary reservations. Then there is also no possibility of giving credence to those highly unrealistic ideas about creating Utopias and bringing in the millennium through social and economic adjustments,—ideas which can today be entertained only by minds that have no insight into the nature of man and the forces that govern his destiny.

The third theme, therefore, arises out of the first two, turns back upon them and appears, when superficially examined, to be the antithesis of the second, but is in reality its complementary. This theme, without denying the importance of other factors, stresses the fact that the really powerful influence in cultural conditioning is the prevailing world-view, for it is the contemporary philosophy of life with the particular values it emphasises that affects the general behaviour of men, both individually and collectively. Man's religion and philosophy are his answers to the Sphinx riddle, his answers to the eternal questions concerning his destiny, the world in which he lives and the purpose of existence, concerning his Divine Creator and his relation to Him and to the world, and it is on his beliefs and philosophical convictions about these, that he forms his conceptions of good and evil, right and wrong, justice and injustice, these conceptions ultimately affecting his conduct in life. Now, these beliefs will be conditioned by the nature of his consciousness, by the sum total of his experience—his instinctual, emotional, intellectual and intuitive experience—and by the ideas he absorbs

* The influence of the natural environment has also been discussed in Part I. As man is a nature organism, a natural being, in his outer instrumental personality made up of his mind, life and body, he is no doubt influenced by his natural environment, but here too the determining power of the inner can be made effective.

from his cultural environment; but even these ideas he imbibes will be greatly influenced by the nature of his consciousness. Then on a basis of these ideas he will create the superstructure of his civilisation. It is a historical fact that philosophical ideas and conceptions have played a major part in organising, or disrupting and reorganising, the social and cultural life of men, the influence of Platonism and Aristotelianism, Taoism and Buddhism, Positivism, with its side-growths Utilitarianism and Hedonism and Dialectical Materialism, cannot be under-rated by any means.

Then it was shown that the seeds of the present crisis were sown in the soil of Europe when it discarded the idea of a Divine Creator and embraced a materialistic interpretation of existence; it did not realise then that by discarding a theo-centric philosophy of life it was destroying the ultimate sanction behind ethical and spiritual values. The philosophies of life that have chiefly governed modern Western civilisation have been agnostic and materialistic. Positivism, with its various off-shoots, and Marxism, which is nothing but Materialism driven to its last consequence, have mostly influenced the intellect of Europe. Philosophy having become the handmaid of science, has sought for its basis the findings of physics, biology, and a narrow and superficial psychology, and these findings have helped Materialism to prevail*. The fact that they have a limited application and are valid in only a particular frame of reference,—for a certain order of reality, or on a particular level of organisation, or at a certain stage of man's evolution,—have by no means stopped thinkers from making their metaphysics depend upon them.

When Auguste Comte declared: "The whole effect of Positivist worship will be to make men feel clearly how far superior in every respect is the synthesis founded on the Love of Humanity to that founded on the Love of God," and many of the leading thinkers supported him and accepted his agnostic world-view, it was not realised that a philosophy of life which either denied the reality of God or made Him out to be an Entity unconnected with the universe and with the lives of men, would finally destroy the real sanction behind higher values and instead of glorifying man would ultimately degrade him by reducing him to the status of a rational animal and a social and economic unit in a large collectivity—and that his spiritual nature and his divine destiny would be denied. When Positivism triumphed, economic and material progress became the goal of Western civilisation which now took a definitely rationalistic-utilitarian-hedonistic

* The modern tendencies in Science which point towards Idealism have not been discussed, because they are too recent and have not yet affected the socio-cultural pattern of life to an appreciable extent. Only those tendencies which have contributed to the fall of higher values resulting in the cultural decadence of the West have been examined, for only they are relevant to our inquiry.

turn No doubt the advent of Positivism was a step needed for man's social evolution, for it encouraged the sciences and advocated their application to the right ordering of his external life, also, its emphasis on the great earthly future of humanity was a necessary corrective to the other-worldly attitude of the Church, but it unfortunately went to the opposite extreme—it saw a meaning in humanity, but none in its Divine Source. Francis Bacon began a scientific epoch, but had the wisdom not to make this mistake; he wrote: "It is true that a little philosophy inclineth man's mind to atheism; but depth in philosophy bringeth men's mind to religion . . . They that deny a God destroy man's nobility, for certainly man is of kin to the beasts by his body; and if he be not of kin to God by his Spirit, he is a base and ignoble creature."

It was then concluded that all such "little philosophies" which give no ultimate sanction to ethical and spiritual values are inadequate and must be abandoned, for they do not cover the whole range of human experience; Dr Broad, a representative intellectual who follows the metaphysical tradition and whose views no one would call extreme, writes: "It seems reasonable to suppose at the outset that the whole mass of mystical and religious experience brings us into contact with an aspect of Reality which is not revealed in ordinary sense-perception, and that any system of Speculative Philosophy which ignores it will be extremely one-sided" As a matter of fact, it is necessary to go one step further and realise that what is really needed today is a spiritual interpretation of life which has for its foundation, its *unterbau*, a metaphysic created out of the highest spiritual experience. out of a gnostic vision of Reality in both its static and dynamic aspects Only such a metaphysic can be said to be rooted in Reality and Truth, the usual logicising from premises which subserve the findings of science can no longer be deemed adequate, philosophy has once again to wake up from its slumber—this time in order to become revelatory and creative, and it can only do so if it proceeds from a direct apprehension of Reality The difference between an intellectual metaphysic and a spiritual one is really this, that whereas the first is created through intellection, the second is the outcome of illumination, the mind becoming only an instrument of a higher gnostic power; the first is based upon indirect, separative and mostly analytical knowledge, the second upon direct knowledge, and on a higher level, upon knowledge-by-identity in essence and dynamism—upon an immediate awareness of Reality and its Cosmic manifestation.* This spiritual metaphysic will not neglect scientific truths but will corre-

* How a change in the psycho-epistemic basis of knowledge-apprehension enables the individual to have a direct awareness of Reality and all its modes and manifestations is discussed at great length in Part II. "Sri Aurobindo, the Leader of the Evolution"

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late them in its larger schema, in which their right significance will be clearly seen; however, it will not take within its orbit only the world of outer fact, but also orders of Reality beyond sense perception and transcending normal human experience. The realm of values, ends, and purposes too, will be included within its framework.

Our civilisation is in a state of decadence mostly because of its ignorance of ends and purposes, and its consequent pursuit of false ends, and it cannot be denied that the cause of this ignorance is a lack of true vision. Only a knowledge of the underlying purpose of existence and the goal towards which the world is moving can guide the lives of men through the right channels. The philosophy of "purposelessness" encouraged by non-finalistic and non-teleological interpretations of existence based on the biological tenet, that the evolutionary force is blind and unconscious having neither any purpose in it nor any goal towards which it is proceeding, has given men a wrong conception of life. It is contended that it is man who reads purpose in a world whose processes are blind; but it can more effectively be argued the other way, that man reads "purposelessness" in a world which has a purpose in it because, owing to his human limitations, he cannot see it, however, if he possessed a spiritual vision that can see in larger spaces the cosmic totality and the working of universal processes he would be able to do so—it is man's ignorance that keeps the cosmic purpose veiled from his eyes and it is only an influx of some greater light into his mind that makes him think in spite of this ignorance that there is a purpose in this world.

If the spiritual metaphysic we are seeking is really created out of a gnostic vision of the Truth, it should be able to reveal this purpose. Only such a metaphysic can give rise to an ethic grounded in Reality, not a mere code of morals, but a living "dharma", a way of life, and become the foundation of a new and greater culture and social organisation. But a spiritual metaphysic and ethic are incomplete without a psychological discipline which can help to realise in experience the truths inculcated by them; therefore, a system of psycho-spiritual discipline is needed to show how a higher status of being can be attained by man and how his nature and life can be transformed by the power of the Spirit. With such a spiritual metaphysic, ethic, and psychology, it will be possible to understand the problem of collective living; on such a foundation of a spiritual vision it will be possible to create a just system of social relationships in which the individual can find his right place in the collectivity and work for its good, and in which the collectivity can realise itself through the spiritual development of the individual who will become the spearhead of its evolutionary movement.

(b) THE SOLUTION—SRI AUROBINDO AND THE SUPERMIND

This inquiry ultimately leads to the question: Is there such a spiritual philosophy of life? Besides, it presupposes the existence of a seer-philosopher who has a gnostic vision and the requisite scholarship and intellectual equipment to create a philosophy. Secondly, it is necessary to show, before such a philosophy can be widely accepted, that it can be lived, and that the truths it advocates can be actualised in life. This is where India comes in with her great spiritual heritage. No doubt, today she does not correctly represent herself, because she does not live according to her *swadharmā*, the true law of her being. But this is only a temporary state: her soul, the flame of the Godhead within her which has always made her stand fast by the Spirit through all vicissitudes, is sure to emerge soon and make her fulfil her spiritual destiny; for behind her unsettled outer political, social, and economic life, a spiritual force is silently gathering strength and radiating its light and power on the world. This force is that of Sri Aurobindo.

Having passed through the whole gamut of spiritual experience, and having united with the Divine Being in all His integrality, Sri Aurobindo has become a radiating centre of His Light and Power. It would not be an exaggeration to call him the culmination of the Godward endeavour of humanity and the leader of its evolutionary movement today, because he gathers in his all-embracing realisation all the strands of the Spirit's manifestation in this world since the earliest times—not in their outward forms but their inner fundamental realisations,—and shows them their right place in Its divine harmony; for example, he has the constant realisation of the Self of the Advaitists; he has had all the important experiences described in the Upanishads and the Gita; the *Satyam-Ritam-Brihat* (the True, the Right, the Vast) of the Vedas is not foreign to his spiritual life, the basic realisation of the Christian faith, of the Divine as a Person, is a permanent fact of his existence; and finally, the ultimate Tantra realisation of the Dynamic and Creative aspect of God—the Divine Shakti—is fundamental to his yogic work. All this became possible for Sri Aurobindo, because in his "retirement" from life's superficial activities he attained union with the Supreme not in one of His many aspects but in His integral Truth-Consciousness—the Supermind. This central realisation united him with all the aspects of God through which He manifests to the human consciousness. The Buddhist *Sunyam* or Nihil was to him no longer irreconcilable with Christ's Father in Heaven, the Impersonal Absolute was not incompatible with the Ishwara of the Vaishnavites or the Supreme Creatrix, the *Shakti* of the Tantrics; on the contrary, these great realisations were seen as the different aspects, particular frontal statuses of a Reality that is all these and yet exceeds them

Consequently, considering the wideness and catholicity of his spiritual experience, and the fact that he has assimilated the best elements in the cultures of Europe and Asia, it would not be inadvisable to accept his interpretation of human life; he is best suited to give a world-view that is grounded in Reality. His treatises on spiritual metaphysics, ethics, and psychology, and on man's socio-political evolution describe his views on the nature of the world, its relation to God, and man's position in Nature and society and his ultimate destiny.

All these are, no doubt, big claims to make, even on behalf of a great spiritual figure; perhaps the above remarks may sound to some people more like an encomium than a philosophical argument. Therefore, a little explaining will be necessary; but one must understand that in matters of the Spirit, the ultimate criterion must be experiential, for spiritual truths are truths of Being and Consciousness and not truths of thought; they may be ideatively imaged and intellectually expressed—as a matter of fact, without a mental form being given to them they would not be understood by those who have not attained a high degree of spiritual illumination; but that does not alter the fact that essentially these truths are not mental.

If the author were asked what is exactly the outstanding fact of Sri Aurobindo's life or work which makes his teaching so overwhelmingly true to him and his spiritual status so high in his estimation, he would give the simple reply: "You know a tree by its fruits. If an unknown man comes to me and gives me a very large sum of money, and then goes to more than a hundred friends of mine and does the same, I would be justified in thinking that he has money, for you cannot give away money to people freely without possessing a very large amount of it yourself; I would not be accused of irrationality if I came to this obvious conclusion. So also, no person can give spiritual experiences and realisations like that of Satchhidananda, or the descent of the Divine Light and Force, or of the Presence of the Lord and the Divine Mother, to other people, as Sri Aurobindo does, unless he himself has these experiences. As a matter of fact, every spiritual man knows that it is infinitely easier to have an experience than to give it to others; there have been many spiritual men who have had settled realisations but could not give them to others, or if some of them could, then only the particular realisation they themselves had—generally, that of the Silent and Immutable Self, or of Peace. This giving of different kinds of experiences to different disciples according to the truth of their nature and their inner need, is unheard of in the annals of spirituality and suggests a remarkable mastery in the field of the Spirit. This brute empirical fact and the obvious conclusions which follow from it lead the author to give such a high value to Sri Aurobindo's spiritual status. In reply to the question regarding his teaching he would say: "That teaching is best

which is as much as possible complete and takes into account all the sides of human existence; that which can be lived in our life, and that which shows results. Sri Aurobindo's teaching answers the fundamental questions of existence men have always been asking; those who come under his direct influence know how this teaching can be lived, and the results can be seen in the inner and outer life of the disciples in the Ashram."*

It was stated that the ultimate criterion must be experiential, but it is apparent that even by looking at the problem in a purely mental way and examining the teaching of Sri Aurobindo dispassionately and rationally, not rationalistically, one can have a fairly good idea of his spiritual calibre. It is too early yet to assess correctly the value of his work, but for those who practise his yoga and understand its implications and far-reaching consequences, the immensity of the task he has taken in hand is not difficult to see.

Now the one thing left to be done is to give here the necessary metaphysical ideas which will throw some light on the nature of his work. They are expounded in greater detail in Part II, but the brief account given here is sufficient for understanding its general character.

It was stated in the preceding essay that there is no valid reason to suppose that man is the final term of Nature's evolutionary endeavour, that he is a transitional being, who has to evolve further into a higher type—from a mental to a supramental being. Regarding this evolution Sri Aurobindo says: "We speak of the evolution of Life in Matter, the evolution of Mind in Matter; but evolution is a word which merely states the phenomenon without explaining it. For there seems to be no reason why Life should evolve out of material elements or Mind out of living form, unless we accept the Vedantic solution that Life is already involved in Matter and Mind in Life because in essence Matter is a form of veiled Life, Life a form of veiled consciousness. And then there seems to be little objection to a farther step in the series and the admission that mental consciousness may itself be only a form and a veil of higher states which are beyond Mind. In that case the unconquerable impulse of man towards God, Light, Bliss, Freedom, Immortality presents itself in its right place in the chain as simply the imperative impulse by which Nature is seeking to evolve beyond Mind. . . The animal is a living laboratory in which Nature has, it is said, worked out man. Man himself may well be a thinking and living laboratory in whom and with whose conscious cooperation she wills to work out the superman, the god. Or shall we not say, rather, to manifest God?"

"The material universe starts from the formal atom surcharged with energy instinct with the unformed stuff of a subconscious desire, will, intelli-

*In this connection, the reader would do well to refer to the feature "The Sadhana of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga," appearing in this issue

gence. Out of this Matter apparent Life manifests and it delivers out of itself by means of the living body the Mind it contains imprisoned within it; Mind also has still to deliver out of itself the Supermind concealed in its workings.”

“The animal prepares and imperfectly prefigures man and is itself prepared in the plant as that too is foreseen obscurely by all that precedes it in the terrestrial expansion. Man himself takes up the miraculous play of the electron and atom, draws up through the complex development of the protoplasm the chemical life of sub-vital things perfects the original nervous system of the plant in the physiology of the completed animal being, consummates and repeats rapidly in his embryonic growth the past evolution of the animal form into the human perfection and, once born rears himself from the earthward and downward animal proneness, to the erect figure of the spirit who is already looking up to his rather heavenward evolution.”

The next question then is: How is this evolutionary ascent to be made? Even if Sri Aurobindo's reading of the evolutionary process is correct, without finding ways and means of reaching this higher level of being, it would remain only of theoretical value as far as the general mass of men are concerned. Secondly, how is man going to reach this higher stage all by himself? From what we know of him it would be highly unrealistic to assume that he can. The second question needs to be answered first: man is not required to evolve into a higher type entirely by his own effort but with Sri Aurobindo's help. The answer to the first question given below explains in what way this help is given.

It can be said briefly that the already evolved principles of existence Matter, Life and Mind have their corresponding planes which are connected with our earth plane through these principles—the typical non-evolutionary planes of Mind, Life, and Subtle Matter. These three principles that have emerged in terrestrial existence from the Inconscient, the nether end of Being, have done so owing to a secret urge and impulsion in themselves and in response to a pressure put upon them from their respective typical planes. The last emergent was Mind; when a pressure from the Mind plane was exerted on its own principle lying latent in animated and vitalised matter, it responded and emerged and a linkage was formed, and Mind got established in the earth-field as an operative power, resulting in the creation of a race of physical-vital rational beings. Sri Aurobindo says that now similarly the Supermind has to emerge; all this time evolution had proceeded automatically because there was no self-conscious being who could actively cooperate with its *nisus*, its inner impulse. Man is exactly the type of being who can do so; by an intense effort he can quicken his evolution. It is the work of compressing evolution into a single life-time instead of it being a long drawn out process

spreading through centuries, and of making the divinisation of man an actuality today instead of it remaining a dim hope in some distant future, that has occupied Sri Aurobindo all these years and even made him sacrifice his body.

The different principles of Being are involved and buried deep in the dark and obscure regions of the Inconscient; in order to make the Supermind act on its own involute in the nether region and bring it out, someone who represents the earth-consciousness and humanity has first to attain to the Supermind above, and then reach with its light and power this involved principle in the Inconscient, thereby creating the necessary linkage between the two ends of the Spirit—its depths and its heights. This is exactly what Sri Aurobindo has done—in his own being he has made this bridging, which had to be done in himself before it could be attempted on a universal scale, and the violent reaction, the upsurge from the unreceptive earth on its being subjected to the pressure of the Divine Light, he has borne himself, making the path safer and the goal more secure for others connected with him. What he attempted and brought to a successful culmination was a very quick process, but a heavy price had to be paid for it. He brought down the essential nucleus of the Supramental Light into the earth-consciousness, and it became quite evident on 5th December, 1950, that matter can so pass through a modification as to hold the Divine Light. The condition of his body, which remained intact and glowing without any decomposition setting in for four and a half days, was only symptomatic of this. As the Mother, who has been working side by side with him for the last 30 years, declared in a statement she made two days after his withdrawal “... His body is charged with such a concentration of supramental light that there is no sign of decomposition...” obviously, the presence of the light in the very substance of the body prevented the decomposition. This pronouncement reminds one of a remark Sri Aurobindo made in 1935 about the descent of the Supermind—“If it comes down into our physical it would mean that it has come down to matter and so there is no reason why it should not manifest in the sadhaks.” The extracts from his letters given below also touch upon the same subject, the relation of Sri Aurobindo’s work to the evolution of men: “My point about my sadhana was that my sadhana was not done for myself but for the earth-consciousness as a showing of the way towards the Light, so that whatever I showed in it to be possible—inner growth, transformation, manifesting of new faculties, etc.—was not of no importance to anybody, but meant as an opening of lines and ways for what had to be done”—“We have not sought perfection for our own separate sake, but as part of a general change—creating a possibility of perfection for others. That could not have been done without our accepting and facing the difficulties of the

realisation and transformation and overcoming them for ourselves.”

Therefore it is clear that the one essential thing that had to be done before the complete divinisation of man could become possible, has been done by him. If ever Karma Yoga reached its peak it is in Sri Aurobindo—one can almost hear him say: “Attachment to the fruits of Karma is not right—whatever is necessary for the Divine Work must be done, even if it be the discarding of the body. The fulfilment of the Work is the one thing the Mother and I always have before us.”

Sri Aurobindo has made the gradual operation of the Supermind’s Power upon the earth possible, now what remains to be done is a working out of forces according to the Supramental Truth, so that the fuller Descent can become possible making the Supermind a stabilised power on the earth as Mind is today. The task of spreading its Divine Light and working out the actual transformation of the human being he has entrusted to the Mother, through whom now his force centrally works. It must be mentioned here that one must not come to the conclusion from the above remarks that an attempt is being made to transform the whole of humanity *en bloc*, the evolution of the race has not proceeded that way up to now, it is always a few first that reach the new stage—afterwards, whatever has been realised spreads to others. Sri Aurobindo explains this in his letters to a disciple. “Your statement about the supramental evolution is correct except that it does not follow that humanity as a whole will become supramental”—“What we propose just now is not to make the earth a Supramental world but to bring down the Supramental as a Power and established consciousness in the midst of the rest to let it work there and fulfil itself as Mind descend into life and matter has worked as a Power there to fulfil itself in the midst of the rest. This will be enough to change the world and to change Nature by breaking down her present limits.” Regarding the effects of the bringing down of this new Power he writes: “There will be a race of supramental beings on the earth just as now there is a race of mental beings.”

Therefore, it is apparent that the irradiation of the Supramental Light and Power in our earth consciousness is the real effective and lasting solution for the crisis of our civilisation. No economic and political panaceas can offer a permanent remedy for the ills of human life and rid it of ignorance, falsehood, suffering, and conflict. The remedy must go deep down to the root of the disease—in the subconscious and inconscient levels of man’s being and eradicate it from there; but no human power can successfully do this—it is only the Divine Light manifesting through Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and specifically directed to this one purpose of transforming earth existence that can do it. The real answer to our

human problems lies not in the mind, which, as we see, cannot cope with the complexity of human life and the anarchic forces that are let loose in the world—but in the Supermind. Man has to attain to a higher level of being through his transformation by the Supermind's power, it is only on this level that he will be able to find the solution for his problems and recreate his entire life.

Whether the world at large believes or disbelieves in all this is not of very great consequence; the tree will be judged by the fruits it bears—always a sure empirical and scientific criterion; the work of Sri Aurobindo will be judged by its effects, by what it achieves. What is important at present is that a few souls with their face turned Godward should aspire for the Light and surrender their beings to its action. Some may look upon Sri Aurobindo as a prophet or a saint, some as the very Incarnation of the Divine Light and Power, others, following the ancient tradition, as the Avatar of the Supermind; these are, after all, things which one has to decide for oneself according to one's truth-sense and feeling and personal experience. However, one preponderant fact clearly emerges—that there is a Divine Power working at Pondicherry today through Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and that this Power is recreating life in the image of the highest Truth.

Over a world torn by selfishness, petty egoism and conflict, rises the luminous and majestic figure of Sri Aurobindo symbolising mankind's deepest urge and highest aspiration for a Spiritual transfiguration—to the seeing eye, also symbolising the Grace from above leaning down to give the sanction to this aspiration—his very effort to bring down the Supramental Light for man's transformation reflects an intention in the Divine Will working in the universe.

Whilst a frustrated humanity waits and hopes day after day for a better world, unknown to them Sri Aurobindo silently presses down into the earth the Divine Light and Peace, and from behind the outer veil of life and through the Mother works for the complete manifestation of the Divine in human existence; and he has given us his assurance through her that he will continue to help till his goal is achieved

*“ . . . never can the mighty traveller rest
And never can the mystic voyage cease,
Till the nescient dusk is lifted from man's soul
And the morns of God have overtaken his night.”*

POLITICAL FAITH

A. L. Crampton Chalk

“Man is by nature a political animal”, Aristotle said, but the pressure of contemporary circumstances seems to indicate that he had better modify his nature if he wants his civilisation to survive. In the simple and slow-moving times before tele-communication, air travel, and remote controlled destruction, indulgence in political activity was no great concern for anyone outside the village, city, or local national boundaries. Nowadays, however, political faiths can be infernal (the adjective is used in its primary sense) nuisances to the civilised portion of mankind, however much diversion and opportunity they may provide for spiritually backward folk. Without modern aids the lie, as a basic political instrument, could not run very far or very fast and, with reasonable luck, would eventually be overtaken by a correcting truth. In our times, social issues are far too complex to be grasped by the mass of voters, so recourse is had by political organisations to what is politely called propaganda. This is defined by the Concise Oxford Dictionary as an “organised scheme for propagation of a doctrine” and is, at best, special pleading for a particular doctrine; at worst it is a lie, misrepresentation, or invention cynically designed to lead or mislead voters in a prearranged direction.

If men were so constituted that they insisted on changing their minds, or faiths, according to rules of reason—however crude or limited—a great safeguard would be provided against the building up of an overwhelming or dangerous power behind any one particular doctrine. It would prevent the manipulation, by people lacking spiritual scruples, of loyal masses in favour of the development of their own power or their own schemes, and would give the truth of things some chance to survive misrepresentation. But rules of reason only begin to apply when minds acquire strength and light, and at humbler human levels the vital nature holds the being in thrall by means of notions, of one sort and another, that serve to keep it stoked up with excitement. One of the most peculiar of the notions—developed into an artificial virtue by wrong thinking and wrong feeling—is that of the propriety of consistency in political faith and loyalty to political parties; in a word, the impropriety of changing one’s mind.

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Emerson's flashing perception that 'a foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds; with consistency a great soul has simply nothing to do,' is apt to the theme and particularly to the time. When humanity is moiling about in the toils of its own theories, revolutions, and violent aspirations, thoroughly bedevilled among its ethics, moralities, and inner convictions, and when men and women are forced by practical causes to take sides, it behoves them to take stock of their notions and see if and how they are related to realities of the moment and the immediate future.

Perhaps the most bewildering thing about humanity in the mass is the infinite variety of ideas which it can hold in detail, so that even mutually destructive conceptions can be passionately held not only within the same group of people but even within a single individual head. As one surveys the world now, it is as if crores of mad gods were fighting and scrambling among themselves for a share of the plunder of human life and that human beings, instead of resisting possession by these forces, adopted their blind vital powers as their own and then, to satisfy the qualms of conscience, proceeded to rationalise them with labels of theories, ethics, and principles.

The deep-seated race-worship of democracy as an idea adds to the general welter and confusion; even the tyrants of the slave states have to make formal obeisance to it and the ultimate symbol of the complete insincerity of their position is the comic supervised ballot which allows no alternative candidate to themselves. The feeling for equality, which is the *raison d'être* of democracy, is so deep in men's hearts that they feel "it must be true", even if it admittedly does not work out. Perhaps it is felt that even in that it is no worse than any other political, social, or moral theory, for none of them work out. In the teeth of the final failure of all schemes for arranging human life according to mental principles, how is it possible for even free-thinking people to be devoted to their faiths in their own pet systems? This is not merely a rhetorical question; the clue to this wonder is, of course, that there is a Divine light shining, however dimly, through mental consciousness and this carries the message of the oneness of life and the spiritual brotherhood of human souls. Nevertheless, the commonalty of men have not yet learned that they will find absolution from their troubles only at the source of the light, but never through the symbols that the light shines upon. It is a matter of actually reversing the direction in which men look, and of walking towards the light instead of turning one's back upon it to stumble among and clutch at the miscellany of objects which are temporarily shining in its rays.

To a spiritually enlightened person theories, systems and moral principles are by no means valueless, but they are seen to be ephemeral and mechanical devices to assist living and to make it possible for large

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numbers of human beings to exist more or less comfortably together in a perpetually self-expanding complexity of material invention. One must, of course, hold tight to the difference between a mental theory and a living experience, and one must not be led away by other people's passionate conviction of the absolute rightness of their own ideas. They may be seeing the lumber in their own souls illuminated for the first time by the pale beams of Light from above, but this does not mean that they are good guides to the source of the Light behind them. The practical mystic will see light everywhere, but he knows enough not to be led to give his whole allegiance to any particular cause because it shows some signs of illumination; he will make his total surrender only in one direction—to the Light itself which he faces and to whose source he presses forward. But wherever he sees the Light reflected he will pay his respects and give his support, if it is seemly and practical to do so. No man or cause is wholly bad, nor any wholly good—with only the isolated exceptions of super-genius in either direction. "To see the best in all" is more than a copy-book maxim, it is a yogic injunction at a stage of self-consciousness; "To see the Light in all" is an even better reading of the prescription.

This will lead a man largely to ignore labels and to discover the essentials beneath them. It takes no time at all to get beneath the labels if one stands in the Light streaming down from the Divine; it is a faultless X-ray which shows up the hard core of any disguise and goes behind any spurious labelling. No lying propaganda will stand up to a mind through which the light of spiritual sincerity shines. Political lies in particular only seem real if bolstered and padded up by their own circumlocutions and arbitrary theories and standpoints.

So it seems that wise political living is essentially a matter of compromise, for blind allegiance to any particular theory of affairs is impossible for a living intelligence. The rather disconcerting rider to this proposition in the practical arena of life is that one's enemies of yesterday may well be one's friends of tomorrow; be it so—if they change their stance and, in one case, find some light or, in the other, lose it. I go towards the Light, says the mystic, and I will keep my eyes on it and find its source, no matter where it leads me to put my feet among the impedimenta of material life.

The remarkable article on "Chance" in *Words of the Mother* bears directly on the question of coherent action at the level of ordinary human life; ". . . in the lower Nature the supreme Truth is obscured: hence there is an absence of that divine unity of purpose and action which alone can constitute order. Lacking this unity, the domain of lower Nature is governed by what we may call chance—that is to say, it is a field in which various conflicting forces intermix, having no single definite aim. What-

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ever arises out of such a rushing together of forces is a result of confusion, dissonance, and falsehood—a product of chance.” So, as the “uncertain melée of lower Nature” churns about in this arena of egoistic energies, the pilgrim of the Light will make his alliances with the divine impulse wherever they may appear possible from time to time, and will neither become a slave to the consistencies of any mental system nor be hoodwinked by labels of causes, however ingeniously presented. His mission is to find the Light and to open himself to the power of its transformation; no membership ticket of whatever party will do this for him.

At The Northern Node

O hear me, hands are wondrous strange! When
They open out upon the Infinite
There generates at heart a cold white heat
That transmits messages from earth through man.

One night there rocketed, there meteored
Through me an offering; at the northern node
It passed, palming a prayer in mystic code,
When lo, into these upcupped hands there poured

A living rain! Down dense black velvet Night
A mighty shower of supernal Light!

ELEANOR MONTGOMERY

THE FUTURE POETRY

Sri Aurobindo

From the pages of Sri Aurobindo's philosophical monthly, "Arya", which ran from 1914 to 1921, we are republishing for the first time this series of essays on poetry in general, English poetry in particular and an important direction of its future development. Before letting the series appear in book-form, Sri Aurobindo had a mind to revise it in parts, fill in a few gaps and bring it up to date. He could not find time to carry out his idea, except for a few passages he dictated, and the essays will be printed as they stood more than thirty years ago. But they have all the same a roundedness of their own, not to speak of their brilliance and profundity. Certain omissions, too, are not a sign of defect or oversight, for Sri Aurobindo wrote in a letter when the names of some poets were suggested to him: "I did not deal with all these poets because it was not in the scope of my idea to review the whole literature, but to follow the main lines" The principal difficulty under which he laboured was, as he put it in the same letter: "At the time I had no books and could only write from memory." Considering this handicap, one is surprised at the accuracy and aptness achieved. (EDITOR).

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It is not often that we see published in India literary criticism which is of the first order, at once discerning and suggestive, criticism which forces us both to see and think. A book which recently I have read and more than once reperused with a yet unexhausted pleasure and fruitfulness, Mr James Cousins' *New Ways in English Literature*.* is eminently

* Ganesh and Co, Madras.

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of this kind. It raises thought which goes beyond the strict limits of the author's subject and suggests the whole question of the future of poetry in the age which is coming upon us, the higher functions open to it—as yet very imperfectly fulfilled,—and the part which English literature on the one side and the Indian mind and temperament on the other are likely to take in determining the new trend. The author is himself a poet, a writer of considerable force in the Irish movement which has given contemporary English literature its two greatest poets, and the book on every page attracts and satisfies by its living force of style, its almost perfect measure, its delicacy of touch, its fineness and depth of observation and insight, its just sympathy and appreciation.

For the purpose for which these essays have been, not indeed written, but put together, the criticism, fine and helpful as it is, suffers from one great fault,—there is too little of it. Mr. Cousins is satisfied with giving us the essential, just what is necessary for a trained mind to seize intimately the spirit and manner and poetic quality of the writers whose work he brings before us. This is done sometimes in such a masterly manner that even one touch more might well have been a touch in excess. The essay on Emerson is a masterpiece in this kind; it gives perfectly in a few pages all that should be said about Emerson's poetry and nothing that need not be said. But some of the essays, admirable in themselves, are too slight for our need. The book is not indeed intended to be exhaustive in its range. Mr. Cousins wisely takes for the most part,—there is one notable exception,—writers with whom he is in close poetical sympathy or for whom he has a strong appreciation; certain names which have come over to our ears with some flourish of the trumpets of renown, Thompson, Masfield, Hardy, do not occur at all or only in a passing allusion. But still the book deals among contemporary poets with Tagore, A.E. and Yeats, among recent poets with Stephen Phillips, Meredith, Carpenter, great names all of them, not to speak of lesser writers. This little book with its 135 short pages is almost too small a pedestal for the figures it has to support, not, be it understood, for the purpose of the English reader interested in poetry, but for ours in India who have on this subject a great ignorance and, most of us, a very poorly trained critical intelligence. We need something a little more ample to enchain our attention and fix in us a permanent interest; a fingerpost by the way is not enough for the Indian reader, you will have to carry him some miles on the road if you would have him follow it.

But Mr. Cousins has done a great service to the Indian mind by giving it at all a chance to follow this direction with such a guide to point out the way. The English language and literature is practically the only window the Indian mind, with the narrow and meagre and yet burdensome

education given to it, possesses into the world of European thought and culture; but, at least as possessed at present, it is a painfully small and insufficient opening. English poetry for all but a few of us stops short with Tennyson and Browning, when it does not stop with Byron and Shelley. A few have heard of some of the recent, fewer of some of the contemporary poets; their readers are hardly enough to make a number. In this matter of culture this huge peninsula, once one of the greatest centres of civilisation, has been for long the most provincial of provinces; it has been a patch of tilled fields round a lawyer's office and a Government cutcherry, a cross between a little district town and the most rural of villages, at its largest a dried-up bank far away from the great stream of the world's living thought and action, visited with no great force by occasional and belated waves, but for the rest a bare field for sluggish activities, the falsest possible education, a knowledge always twenty-five or fifty years behind the time. The awakening brought by the opening years of the twentieth century has chiefly taken the form of a revival of cultural patriotism, highly necessary for a nation which has a distinctive contribution to make to the human spirit in its future development, some new and great thing which it must evolve out of a magnificent past for the opening splendours of the future; but in order that this may evolve rapidly and surely, it needs a wide and sound information, a richer stuff to work upon, a more vital touch with the life and master tendencies of the world around it. Such books as this will be of invaluable help in creating what is now deficient.

The helpfulness of this suggestive work comes more home to me personally because I have shared to the full the state of mere blank which is the ordinary condition of the Indian mind with regard to its subject. Such touch as in the intellectual remoteness of India I have been able to keep up with the times, had been with contemporary continental rather than contemporary English literature. With the latter all vital connection came to a dead stop. With my departure from England quarter of a century ago it had for its last events the discovery of Meredith as a poet, in his *Modern Love*, and the perusal of *Christ in Hades*,—some years before its publication,—the latter an unforgettable date. I had long heard, standing aloof in giant ignorance, the great name of Yeats, but with no more than a fragmentary and mostly indirect acquaintance with some of his work; A.E. only lives for me in Mr. Cousins' pages; other poets of the day are still represented in my mind by scattered citations. In the things of culture such a state of ignorance is certainly an unholy state of sin; but in this immoral and imperfect world even sin has sometimes its rewards, and I get that now in the joy and light of a new world opening to me all in one view while I stand, Cortez-like, on the peak of the large

impression created for me by Mr. Cousins' book. For the light we get from a vital and illuminative criticism, from within by another mind can sometimes almost take the place of a direct knowledge.

There disengages itself from these essays not so much a special point of view as a distinctive critical and literary temperament, which may be perhaps not so much the whole mind of the critic as the response to his subject in a mind naturally in sympathy with it. Mr. Cousins is a little nervous about this in his preface; he is apprehensive of being labelled as an idealist. The cut and dried distinction between idealism and realism in literature has always seemed to me to be a little arbitrary and unreal, and whatever its value in drama and fiction, it has no legitimate place in poetry. What we find here is a self-identification with what is best and most characteristic of a new spirit in the age, a new developing aesthetic temper and outlook,—or should we rather say, inlook? Its mark is a greater (not exclusive) tendency to the spiritual rather than the merely earthly, to the inward and subjective than the outward and objective, to the life within and behind than to the life in front, and in its purest, which seems to be its Irish form, a preference of the lyrical to the dramatic and of the inwardly suggestive to the concrete method of poetical presentation. Every distinctive temperament has naturally the defect of an insufficient sympathy, often a pronounced and intolerant antipathy towards all that departs from its own motives. Moreover, contemporary criticism is beset with many dangers; there is the charm of new thought and feeling and expression of tendency which blinds us to the defects and misplaces or misproportions to our view the real merits of the expression itself; there are powerful cross-currents of immediate attraction and repulsion which carry us from the true track; especially, there is the inevitable want of perspective which prevents us from getting a right vision of things too near us in time. And if in addition one is oneself part of a creative movement with powerful tendencies and a pronounced ideal, it becomes difficult to get away from the standpoint it creates to a larger critical outlook. From these reefs and shallows Mr. Cousins' sense of measure and justice of appreciation largely, generally indeed, preserve him, though not, I think, quite invariably. But still it is not a passionless, quite disinterested criticism which we get or want from this book, but a much more helpful thing, an interpretation of work which embodies the creative tendencies of the time by one who has himself lived in them and helped both to direct and to form.

Mr. Cousins' positive criticism is almost always fine, just and inspired by a warm glow of sympathy and understanding tempered by discernment, restraint and measure; whatever the future critic, using his scales and balance, may have to take away from it, will be, one would imagine, only

by way of a slight alteration of stress here and there. His depreciations, though generally sound enough, are not, I think, invariably as just as his appreciations. Thus his essay on the work of J. M. Synge, "the Realist on the Stage", is, in sharp distinction from the rest of the book, an almost entirely negative and destructive criticism, strong and interesting, but written from the point of view of the ideals and aims of the Irish literary movement against a principle of work which seemed entirely to depart from them, yet we are allowed to get some glimpse of a positive side of dramatic power which the critic does not show us, but leaves us rather to guess at. Mr. Cousins seems to me to take the dramatist's theory of his own art more seriously than it should be taken, for the creator can seldom be accepted—there may of course be exceptions, rare instances of clairvoyant self-sight—as a sound exponent of his own creative impulse. He is in his central inspiration the instrument of a light and power not his own, and his account of it is usually vitiated, out of focus, an attempt to explain the workings of this impersonal power by motives which were the contribution of his own personal effort, but which are often quite subordinate or even accidental side-lights of the lower brain-mind, not the central moving force.

Mr. Cousins has pointed out clearly enough that art can never be a copy of life. But it is also true, I think, that that is not the secret object of most realism, whatever it may say about itself; realism is in fact a sort of nether idealism, or, perhaps more correctly, sometimes an inverse, sometimes a perverse romanticism which tries to get a revelation of creative truth by an effective force of presentation, by an intensity, often an exaggeration at the opposite side of the complex phenomenon of life. All art starts from the sensuous and sensible, or takes it as a continual point of reference or, at the lowest, uses it as a symbol and a fount of images; even when it soars into invisible worlds, it is from the earth that it soars; but equally all art worth the name must go beyond the visible, must reveal, must show us something that is hidden, and in its total effect not reproduce but create. We may say that the artist creates an ideal world of his own, not necessarily in the sense of ideal perfection, but a world that exists in the idea, the imagination and vision of the creator. More truly, he throws into significant form a truth he has seen, which may be truth of hell or truth of heaven or an immediate truth behind things terrestrial or any other, but is never merely the external truth of earth. By that ideative truth and the power, the perfection and the beauty of his presentation and utterance of it, his work must be judged.

Some occasional utterances in this book seem to spring from very pronounced idiosyncrasies of its distinctive literary temperament or standpoint and cannot always be accepted without reservation. I do not myself

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share its rather disparaging attitude towards the dramatic form and motive or its comparative coldness towards the architectural faculty and impulse in poetry. When Mr. Cousins tells us that "its poetry and not its drama will be the thing of life" in Shakespeare's work, I feel that the distinction is not sound all through, that there is a truth behind it, but it is overstated. Or when still more vivaciously he dismisses Shakespeare the dramatist "to a dusty and reverent immortality in the libraries" or speaks of the "monstrous net of his life's work" which but for certain buoys of line and speech "might sink in the ocean of forgetfulness," I cannot help feeling that this can only be at most the mood of the hour born of the effort to get rid of the burden of its past and move more freely towards its future, and not the definitive verdict of the poetic and aesthetic mind on what has been so long the object of its sincere admiration and a powerful presence and influence. Perhaps I am wrong, I may be too much influenced by my own settled idiosyncrasies of an aesthetic temperament and being impregnated with an early cult for the work of the great builders in Sanskrit and Greek, Italian and English poetry. At any rate, this is true that whatever relation we may keep with the great masters of the past, our present business is to go beyond and not to repeat them, and it must always be the lyrical motive and spirit which find a new secret and begin a new creation; for the lyrical is the primary poetical motive and spirit and the dramatic and epic must wait for it to open for them their new heaven and new earth.

I have referred to these points which are only side issues or occasional touches in Mr. Cousins' book, because they are germane to the question which it most strongly raises, the future of English poetry and the world's poetry. It is still uncertain how that future will deal with the old quarrel between idealism and realism, for the two tendencies these names roughly represent are still present in the tendencies of recent work. More generally, poetry always sways between two opposite trends, towards predominance of subjective vision and towards an emphasis on objective presentation, and it can rise too beyond these to a spiritual plane where the distinction is exceeded, the divergence reconciled. Again, it is not likely that the poetic imagination will ever give up the narrative and dramatic form of its creative impulse; a new spirit in poetry, even though primarily lyrical, is moved always to seize upon and do what it can with them,—as we see in the impulsion which has driven Maeterlinck, Yeats, Rabindranath to take hold of the dramatic form for self-expression as well as the lyrical in spite of their dominant subjectivity. We may perhaps think that this was not the proper form for their spirit, that they cannot get there a full or flawless success; but who shall lay down rules for creative genius or say what it shall or shall not attempt? It follows its own course and makes its own

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shaping experiments. And it is interesting to speculate whether the new spirit in poetry will take and use with modifications the old dramatic and narrative forms, as did Rabindranath in his earlier dramatic attempts, or quite transform them to its own ends, as he has attempted in his later work. But after all these are subordinate issues.

It will be more fruitful to take the main substance of the matter for which the body of Mr. Cousins' criticism gives a good material. Taking the impression it creates for a starting-point and the trend of English poetry for our main text, but casting our view farther back into the past, we may try to sound what the future has to give us through the medium of the poetic mind and its power for creation and interpretation. The issues of recent activity are still doubtful and it would be rash to make any confident prediction; but there is one possibility which this book strongly suggests and which it is at least interesting and may be fruitful to search and consider. That possibility is the discovery of a closer approximation to what we might call the *mantra* in poetry, that rhythmic speech which, as the Veda puts it, rises at once from the heart of the seer and from the distant home of the Truth,—the discovery of the word, the divine movement, the form of thought proper to the reality which, as Mr. Cousins' excellently says, "lies in the apprehension of a something stable behind the instability of word and deed, something that is a reflection of the fundamental passion of humanity for something beyond itself, something that is a dim foreshadowing of the divine urge which is prompting all creation to unfold itself and to rise out of its limitations towards its Godlike possibilities." Poetry in the past has done that in moments of supreme elevation in the future there seems to be some chance of its making it a more conscious aim and steadfast endeavour.

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THE ESSENCE OF POETRY

In order to get a firm clue which we can follow fruitfully in the retrospect and prospect we have proposed to ourselves, it will not be amiss to enquire what is the highest power we demand from poetry; or,—let us put it more largely and get nearer the root of the matter,—what may be the nature of poetry, its essential law, and how out of that arises the possibility of its use as the *mantra* of the Real. Not that we need spend a vain effort in labouring to define anything so profound, elusive and undefinable as the breath of poetic creation; to take the myriad-stringed harp of Saraswati to pieces for the purpose of scientific analysis must always be a narrow and rather barren amusement. But we do stand in need of some guiding intuitions, some helpful descriptions which will serve to enlighten our search; and to fix in that way, not by definition, but by description, the essential things in poetry is neither an impossible, nor an unprofitable endeavour.

We meet here two common enough errors, to one of which the ordinary un instructed mind is most liable, to the other the too instructed critic or the too intellectually conscientious artist or craftsman. To the ordinary mind, judging poetry without really entering into it, it looks as if it were nothing more than an aesthetic pleasure of the imagination, the intellect and the ear, a sort of elevated pastime. If that were all, we need not have wasted time in seeking for its spirit, its inner aim, its deeper law. Anything pretty, pleasant and melodious with a beautiful idea in it would serve our turn; a song of Anacreon or a plaint of Mimnermus would be as good as the *Oedipus*, *Agamemnon* or *Odyssey*, for from this point of view they might well strike us as equally and even, one might contend, more perfect in their light, but exquisite unity and brevity. Pleasure, certainly, we expect from poetry as from all art; but the external sensible and even the inner imaginative pleasure are only first elements; refined in order to meet the highest requirements of the intelligence, the imagination and the ear, they have to be still farther heightened and in their nature raised beyond even their own noblest levels.

For neither the intelligence, the imagination nor the ear are the true recipients of the poetic delight, even as they are not its true creators; they are only its channels and instruments: the true creator, the true hearer is the soul. The more rapidly and transparently the rest do their work of transmission, the less they make of their separate claim to satisfaction, the more directly the work reaches and sinks deep into the soul, the greater the poetry. Therefore poetry has not really done its work,

at least its highest work, until it has raised the pleasure of the instrument and transmuted it into the deeper delight of the soul. A divine Ananda, a delight interpretative, creative, revealing, formative,—one might almost say, an inverse reflection of the joy which the universal Soul has felt in its great release of energy when it rang out into the rhythmic forms of the universe the spiritual truth, the large interpretative idea, the life, the power, the emotion of things packed into its original creative vision,—such spiritual joy is that which the soul of the poet feels and which, when he can conquer the human difficulties of his task, he succeeds in pouring also into all those who are prepared to receive it. And this delight is not merely a godlike pastime; it is a great formative and illuminative power.

The critic—of a certain type—or the intellectually conscientious artist will, on the other hand, often talk as if poetry were mainly a matter of a faultlessly correct or at most an exquisite technique. Certainly, in all art good technique is the first step towards perfection, but there are so many other steps, there is a whole world beyond before you can get near to what you seek; so much so that even a deficient correctness of execution will not prevent an intense and gifted soul from creating great poetry which keeps its hold on the centuries. Moreover, technique, however indispensable, occupies a smaller field perhaps in poetry than in any other art,—first, because its instrument, the rhythmic word, is fuller of subtle and immaterial elements; then because, the most complex, flexible, variously suggestive of all the instruments of the artistic creator, it has more infinite possibilities in many directions than any other. The rhythmic word has a subtly sensible element, its sound value, a quite immaterial element, its significance or thought-value, and both of these again, its sound and its sense, have separately and together a soul value, a direct spiritual power, which is infinitely the most important thing about them. And though this comes to birth with a small element subject to the laws of technique, yet almost immediately, almost at the beginning of its flight, its power soars up beyond the province of any laws of mechanical construction.

Rather it determines itself its own form. The poet least of all artists needs to create with his eye fixed anxiously on the technique of his art. He has to possess it, no doubt; but in the heat of creation the intellectual sense of it becomes a subordinate action or even a mere undertone in his mind, and in his best moments he is permitted, in a way, to forget it altogether. For then the perfection of his sound-movement and style come entirely as the spontaneous form of his soul: that utters itself in an inspired rhythm and an innate, a revealed word, even as the universal Soul created the harmonies of the universe out of the power of the word secret and eternal within him, leaving the mechanical work to be done in a surge of hidden spiritual excitement by the subconscious part of his Nature.

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It is this highest speech which is the supreme poetic utterance, the immortal element in his poetry, and a little of it is enough to save the rest of his work from oblivion. *Swalpam apyasya dharmasya!*

This power makes the rhythmic word of the poet the highest form of speech available to man for the expression whether of his self-vision or of his world-vision. It is noticeable that even the highest experience, the pure spiritual which enters into things that can never be wholly expressed, still, when it does try to express them and not merely to explain them intellectually, tends instinctively to use, often the rhythmic forms, almost always the manner of speech characteristic of poetry. But poetry attempts to extend this manner of vision and utterance to all experience, even the most objective, and therefore it has a natural urge towards the expression of something in the object beyond its mere appearances, even when those seem outwardly to be all that it is enjoying.

We may usefully cast a glance, not at the last inexpressible secret but at the first elements of this heightening and intensity peculiar to poetic utterance. Ordinary speech uses language mostly for a limited practical utility of communication; it uses it for life and for the expression of ideas and feelings necessary or useful to life. In doing so, we treat words as conventional signs for ideas with nothing but a perfunctory attention to their natural force, much as we use any kind of common machine or simple implement; we treat them as if, though useful for life, they were themselves without life. When we wish to put a more vital power into them, we have to lend it to them out of ourselves, by marked intonations of the voice, by the emotional force or vital energy we throw into the sound so as to infuse into the conventional word-sign something which is not inherent in itself. But if we go back earlier in the history of language and still more if we look into its origins, we shall, I think, find that it was not always so with human speech. Words had not only a real and vivid life of their own, but the speaker was more conscious of it than we can possibly be with our mechanised and sophisticated intellects. This arose from the primitive nature of language which, probably, in its first movement was not intended,—or shall we say, did not intend,—so much to stand for distinct ideas of the intelligence as for feelings, sensations, broad indefinite mental impressions with minute shades of quality in them which we do not now care to pursue. The intellectual sense in its precision must have been a secondary element which grew more dominant as language evolved.

For the reason why sound came to express fixed ideas, lies not in any natural and inherent equivalence between the sound and its intellectual sense, for there is none,—intellectually any sound might express any sense, if men were agreed on a conventional equivalence between them; it started from an indefinable quality or property in the sound to raise certain

vibrations in the life-soul of the human creature, in his sensational, his emotional, his crude mental being. An example may indicate more clearly what I mean. The word wolf, the origin of which is no longer present to our minds, denotes to our intelligence a certain living object and that is all, the rest we have to do for ourselves: the Sanskrit word *vrika*, "tearer", came in the end to do the same thing, but originally it expressed the sensational relation between the wolf and man which most affected the man's life, and it did so by a certain quality in the sound which readily associated it with the sensation of tearing. This must have given early language a powerful life, a concrete vigour, in one direction a natural poetic force which it has lost, however greatly it has gained in precision, clarity, utility.

Now, poetry goes back in a way and recovers, though in another fashion, as much as it can of this original element. It does this partly by a stress on the image replacing the old sensational concreteness, partly by a greater attention to the suggestive force of the sound, its life, its power, the mental impression it carries. It associates this with the definitive thought value contributed by the intelligence and increases both by each other. In that way it succeeds at the same time in carrying up the power of speech to the direct expression of a higher reach of experience than the intellectual or vital. For it brings out not only the definitive intellectual value of the word, not only its power of emotion and sensation, its vital suggestion, but through and beyond these its soul-suggestion, its spirit. So poetry arrives at the indication of infinite meanings beyond the finite intellectual meaning the word carries. It expresses not only the life-soul of man as did the primitive word, not only the ideas of his intelligence for which speech now usually serves, but the experience, the vision, the ideas, as we may say, of the higher and wider soul in him. Making them real to our life-soul as well as present to our intellect, it opens to us by the word the doors of the Spirit.

Prose style carries speech to a much higher power than its ordinary use, but it differs from poetry in not making this yet greater attempt. For it takes its stand firmly on the intellectual value of the word. It uses rhythms which ordinary speech neglects, and aims at a general fluid harmony of movement. It seeks to associate words agreeably and luminously so as at once to please and to clarify the intelligence. It strives after a more accurate, subtle, flexible and satisfying expression than the rough methods of ordinary speech care to compass. A higher adequacy of speech is its first object. Beyond this adequacy it may aim at a greater forcefulness and effectiveness by various devices of speech which are so many rhetorical means for heightening its force of intellectual appeal. Passing beyond this first limit, this just or strong, but always restraining

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measure, it may admit a more emphatic rhythm, more directly and powerfully stimulate the emotion, appeal to a more vivid aesthetic sense. It may even make such a free or rich use of images as to suggest an outward approximation to the manner of poetry; but it employs them decoratively, as ornaments, *alankara*, or for their effective value in giving a stronger intellectual vision of the thing or the thought it describes or defines; it does not use the image for that profounder and more living vision for which the poet is always seeking. And always it has its eye on its chief hearer and judge, the intelligence, and calls in other powers only as important aids to capture his suffrage. Reason and taste, two powers of the intelligence, are rightly the supremæ gods of the prose stylist, while to the poet they are only minor deities.

If it goes beyond these limits, approaches in its measures a more striking rhythmic balance, uses images for sheer vision, opens itself to a mightier breath of speech, prose style passes beyond its province and approaches or even enters the confines of poetry. It becomes a poetical prose or even poetry itself using the apparent forms of prose as a disguise or a loose apparel. A high or a fine adequacy, effectivity, intellectual illuminativeness and a carefully tempered aesthetic satisfaction are the natural and normal powers of its speech. But the privilege of the poet is to go beyond and discover that more intense illumination of speech, that inspired word and supreme inevitable utterance, in which there meets the unity of a divine rhythmic movement with a depth of sense and a power of infinite suggestion welling up directly from the fountain-heads of the spirit within us. He may not always or often find it, but to seek for it is the law of his utterance, and when he can not only find it, but cast into it some deeply revealed truth of the spirit itself, he utters the *mantra*.

But always, whether in the search or the finding, the whole style and rhythm of poetry are the expression and movement which come from us out of a certain spiritual excitement caused by a vision in the soul of which it is eager to deliver itself. The vision may be of any thing in Nature or God or man or the life of creatures or the life of things; it may be a vision of force and action, or of sensible beauty, or of truth of thought, or of emotion and pleasure and pain, of this life or the life beyond. It is sufficient that it is the soul which sees and the eye, sense, heart and thought-mind become the passive instruments of the soul. Then we get the real, the high poetry. But if it is too much an excitement of the intellect, the imagination, the emotions, the vital activities seeking rhythmical and forceful expression which acts, without enough of the greater spiritual excitement embracing them, if all these are not sufficiently sunk into the soul, steeped in it, fused in it and the expression does not come out purified and uplifted by a sort of spiritual transmutation. then we fall to

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lower levels of poetry, and get work of a much more doubtful immortality. And when the appeal is altogether to the lower things in us, to the mere mind, we arrive outside the true domain of poetry; we approach the confines of prose or get prose itself masking in the apparent forms of poetry, and the work is distinguished from prose style only or mainly by its mechanical elements, a good verse form and perhaps a more compact, catching or energetic expression than the prose writer will ordinarily permit to the easier and looser balance of his speech. That is to say, it will not have at all or not sufficiently the true essence of poetry.

For in all things that speech can express there are two elements, the outward or instrumental and the real or spiritual. In thought, for instance, there is the intellectual idea, that which the intelligence makes precise and definite to us, and the soul-idea, that which exceeds the intellectual and brings us into nearness or identity with the whole reality of the thing expressed. Equally in emotion, it is not the mere emotion itself the poet seeks, but the soul of the emotion, that in it for the delight of which the soul in us and the world desires or accepts emotional experience. So too with the poetical sense of objects, the poet's attempt to embody in his speech truth of life or truth of Nature. It is this greater truth and its delight and beauty for which he is seeking, beauty which is truth and truth beauty and therefore a joy for ever, because it brings us the delight of the soul in the discovery of its own deeper realities. This greater element the more timid and temperate speech of prose can sometimes shadow out to us, but the heightened and fearless style of poetry makes it close and living and the higher cadences of poetry carry in on their wings what the style by itself could not bring. This is the source of that intensity which is the stamp of poetical speech and of the poetical movement. It comes from the stress of the soul-vision behind the word; it is the spiritual excitement of a rhythmic voyage of self-discovery among the magic islands of form and name in these inner and outer worlds.

Next Issue: Rhythm and Movement

TIME'S TRAVELLER

From Sri Aurobindo's "Savitri" : Book I, Canto IV

This is the sailor on the flow of Time,
This is World-Matter's slow discoverer,
Who, launched into this small corporeal birth,
Has learnt his craft in tiny bays of self,
But dares at last unplumbed infinitudes,
A voyager upon eternity's seas.
In his world-adventure's crude initial start
Behold him ignorant of his godhead's force,
Timid initiate of its vast design.
An expert captain of a fragile craft,
A trafficker in small impermanent wares,
At first he hugs the shore and shuns the breadths,
Dares not to affront the far-off perilous main
He in a petty coastal traffic plies,
His pay doled out from port to neighbour port,
Content with his safe round's unchanging course,
He hazards not the new and the unseen.
But now he hears the sound of larger seas.
A widening world calls him to distant scenes
And journeyings in a larger vision's arc
And peoples unknown and still unvisited shores.
On a commissioned keel his merchant hull
Serves the world's commerce in the riches of Time
Severing the foam of a great land-locked sea
To reach unknown harbour lights in distant climes
And open markets for life's opulent arts,
Rich bales, carved statuettes, hued canvasses,
And jewelled toys brought for an infant's play
And perishable products of hard toil
And transient splendours won and lost by the days
Or passing through a gate of pillar-rocks,
Venturing not yet to cross oceans unnamed
And journey into a dream of distances

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He travels close to unfamiliar coasts
And finds new haven in storm-troubled isles,
Or, guided by a sure compass in his thought,
He plunges through a bright haze that hides the stars,
Steering on the trade-routes of Ignorance.
His prow pushes towards undiscovered shores,
He chances on unimagined continents
A seeker of the islands of the Blest,
He leaves the last lands, crosses the ultimate seas,
He turns to eternal things his symbol quest;
Life changes for him its time-constructed scenes,
Its images veiling infinity
Earth's borders recede and the terrestrial air
Hangs round him no longer its translucent veil
He has crossed the limit of mortal thought and hope,
He has reached the world's end and stares beyond,
The eyes of mortal body plunge their gaze
Into Eyes that look upon eternity.
A greater world Time's traveller must explore.
At last he hears a chanting on the heights
And the far speaks and the unknown grows near:
He crosses the boundaries of the unseen
And passes over the edge of mortal sight
To a new vision of himself and things.
He is a spirit in an unfinished world
That knows him not and cannot know itself.
The surface symbol of his goalless quest
Takes deeper meanings to his inner view,
His is a search of darkness for the light,
Of mortal life for immortality.
In the vessel of an earthly embodiment
Over the narrow rails of limiting sense
He looks out on the magic waves of Time
Where mind like a moon illumines the world's dark.
There is limned ever retreating from the eyes,
As if in a tenuous misty dream-light drawn,
The outline of a dim mysterious shore
A sailor on the Inconscient's fathomless sea,
He voyages through a starry world of thought
On Matter's deck to a spiritual sun.
Across the noise and multitudinous cry,
Across the rapt unknowable silences,

TIME'S TRAVELLER

Through a strange mid-world under supernal skies,
Beyond earth's longitudes and latitudes,
His goal is fixed outside all present maps.
But none learns whither through the unknown he sails
Or what secret mission the great Mother gave.
In the hidden strength of her omnipotent Will,
Driven by her breath across life's tossing deep,
Through the thunder's roar and through the windless hush,
Through fog and mist where nothing more is seen,
He carries her sealed orders in his breast
Late will he know, opening the mystic script,
Whether to a blank port in the Unseen
He goes, or armed with her fiat, to discover
A new mind and body in the city of God
And enshrine the Immortal in his glory's house
And make the finite one with Infinity
Across the salt waste of the endless years
Her ocean winds impel his errant boat,
The cosmic waters plashing as he goes,
A rumour around him and danger and a call
Always he follows in her force's wake.
He sails through life and death and other life,
He travels on through waking and through sleep.
A power is on him from her occult force
That ties him to his own creation's fate,
And never can the mighty traveller rest
And never can the mystic voyage cease.
Till the nescient dusk is lifted from man's soul
And the morns of God have overtaken his night
As long as Nature lasts, he too is there,
For this is sure that he and she are one.
Even when he sleeps, he keeps her on his breast:
Whoever leaves her; he will not depart
To repose without her in the Unknowable
There is a truth to know, a work to do,
Her play is real, a Mystery he fulfils
There is a plan in the Mother's deep world-whim,
A purpose in her vast and random game.
This ever she meant since the first dawn of life,
This constant will she covered with her sport,
To evoke a person in the impersonal void,
With the Truth-Light strike earth's massive roots of trance,

MOTHER INDIA

Wake a dumb self in the inconscient depths
And raise a lost power from its python sleep
That the eyes of the Timeless might look out from Time
And the world manifest the unveiled Divine.
For this he left his white infinity
And laid on the Spirit the burden of the flesh,
That Godhead's seed might flower in mindless Space.

RENDERINGS FROM THE "RAMAYANA"

Sri Aurobindo

These pieces of vigorous yet sensitive blank verse are translations made during Sri Aurobindo's stay in Bengal in the later part of the period covering his political activity, some time between 1905-1910. Together with a number of other poems they were lost in the house-searches, trials, hasty displacements and other vicissitudes of those years. But much of the lost material has now been found in an old trunk whose contents were about to be sold away as waste paper when someone suddenly thought better of it and rescued them and put them in one corner of the Record Room of the Judge's Court at Alipore (Calcutta). The text of the translations is in a few places uncertain and the lines in which words or phrases are doubtful or whose connection with their context seems loose have been marked by us with asterisks. (EDITOR)

AN ARYAN CITY

Coshala by the Soroyou, a land
Smiling at heaven, of riches measureless
And corn abounding glad; in that great country
Ayodhya was, the city world-renowned,
Ayodhya by King Manou built, immense.
Twelve yojans long the mighty city lay
Grandiose, and wide three yojans. Grandly spaced
Ayodhya's streets were and the long high-road
Ran through it spaciouly with sweet cool flowers
Hourly new-paved and hourly watered wide.
Dussarutha in Ayodhya, as in heaven
Its natural lord, abode, those massive walls
Ruling, and a great people in his name
Felt greater,—door and wall and ponderous arch
And market places huge. Of every craft
Engines mechanical and tools there thronged,

MOTHER INDIA

And Craftsmen of each guild and manner. High rang
With heralds and sonorous eulogists
The beautiful bright city imperial.
High were her bannered edifices reared,
With theatres and dancing-halls for joy
Of her bright daughters, and sweet-scented parks
Were round and gardens cool High circling all
The city with disastrous engines stored
In hundreds, the great ramparts like a zone
Of iron spanned in her moated girth immense
Threatening with forts the ancient sky. Defiant
Ayodhya stood, armed, impregnable,
Inviolable in her virgin walls.
And in her streets was ever large turmoil,
Passing of elephants, the steed and ox,
Mules and rich-laden camels. / And through them drove
The powerful barons of the land, great wardens
Of taxes, and from countries near and far
The splendid merchants came much marvelling
To see those orgulous high builded homes
With jewels curiously fretted, topped
With summer houses for the joy of girls,
Like some proud city in heaven Without a gap
On either side as far as eye could reach
Mass upon serried mass the houses rose,
Seven-storied architectures metrical
Upon a level base, and made sublime.
Splendid Ayodhya octagonally built,
The mother of beautiful women and of gems
A world Large granaries of rice unhusked
She had and husked rice for the fire, and sweet
Her water, like the cane's delightful juice,
Cool down the throat. And a real voice throbbled of drums,*
The tabour and the tambourine, while ever
The lyre with softer rumours intervened.
Nor only was she grandiosely built,
A city without earthly peer,—her sons
Were noble, warriors whose arrows scorned to pierce
The isolated man from friends cut off
Or guided by a sound to smite the alarmed
And crouching fugitive, but with sharp steel
Sought out the lion in his den or grappling

RENDERINGS FROM THE "RAMAYANA"

Unarmed they murdered with their mighty hands
The tiger roaring in his trackless woods
Or the mad tusked boar. Even such strong arms
Of heroes kept that city and in her midst
Regnant king Dussaruth the nations ruled.

(*Bala Kanda. Sarga 5*)

**SPEECH OF DUSSARUTH TO THE ASSEMBLED
STATES-GENERAL OF HIS EMPIRE**

Then with a far reverberating sound
As of a cloud in heaven or war-drum's call
Deep-voiced to battle and with echoings
In the wide roof of his majestic voice
That like the resonant surges onward rolled
Moving men's hearts to joy, a King to Kings
He spoke and all they heard him

"It is known

To you, O princes, how this noblest realm
Was by my fathers ruled, the kings of old
Who went before me, even as one dearest son
Is by his parents cherished, therefore I too
Would happier leave than when my youth assumed
Their burden, mankind, my subjects, and this vast
World-empire of the old Ixvaacou kings
Lo I have trod in those imperial steps
My fathers left, guarding with sleepless toil
The people while strength was patient in this frame
O'erburdened with the large majestic world.
But now my body broken is and old,
Ageing beneath the shadow of the white
Canopy imperial and outworn with long
Labouring for the good of all mankind.
My people, Nature fails me' I have lived
Thousands of years and many lives of men
And all my worn heart wearies for repose.
Weary am I of bearing up this heavy
Burden austere of the great world, duties
Not sufferable by souls undisciplined.
O folk, to rest from greatness I desire.

MOTHER INDIA

Therefore with your august, assembled will,
O powers and O twice-born nations, I
Would share with Rama this great kingdom's crown,
Rama, my warrior son, son by kingly birth
And by gifts inherited confessed my son,
Rama, a mighty nation's joy. Less fair,
Yoked with his favouring constellation bright,
The regent moon shall be than Rama's face,
When morn upon his crowing smiles. O folk,
Say then shall Luxman's brother be your lord,
Glory's high favourite who empire breathes?
Yea, if the whole vast universe should own
My son for king, it would be kinged indeed
And regal. Lords, of such desirable
Fortune I would possess this mother of men;
Then would I be at peace, at last repose
Transferring to such shoulders Earth. Pronounce
If I have nobly planned, if counselled well;
Grant me your high permissive voices; People,
But if my narrower pleasure, private hope,*
Of welfare general the smooth disguise
Have in your censure donned, then let the folk*
Themselves advise their monarch or command.
For other is disinterested thought
And by the clash of minds dissimilar
Counsel increases."

Then with a deep sound
As when a cloud with rain and thunder armed
Invades the skies, the jewelled peacocks loud
Clamour, assembled monarchs praised their king.
And like a moving echo came the voice
Of the great commons answering them, a thunder
And one exultant roar. Earth seemed to rock
Beneath the noise. Thus by their Emperor high
Admitted to his will great conclave was
Of clergy and of captains and of kings
And of the people of the provinces
And of the people metropolitan. all these
Deliberated and became one mind.
Resolved, they answered then their aged king.

(Ayodhya Kanda: Sarga 2, ll. 1-20).

A MOTHER'S LAMENT

"Hadst thou been never born, Rama, my son,
 Born for my grief, I had not felt such pain,
 A childless woman. For the barren one
 Grief of the heart companions, only one,
 Complaining, "I am barren"; this she mourns,
 She has no cause for any deeper tears.
 But I am inexperienced in delight
 And never of my husband's masculine love
 Had pleasure,—still I lingered, still endured
 Hoping to be acquainted yet with joy.
 Therefore full many unlovely words that strove
 To break the suffering heart had I to hear
 From wives of my husband, I the Queen and highest,
 From lesser women. Ah, what greater pain
 Than this can women have who mourn on earth,
 Than this my grief and infinite lament?
 O Rama, even at thy side so much
 I have endured, and if thou goest hence,
 Death is my certain prospect, death alone.
 Cruelly neglected, grievously oppressed
 I have lived slighted in my husband's house
 As though Kaicayie's serving-woman,—nay,
 A lesser thing than these. If any honours,
 If any follows me, even that man
 Hushes when he beholds Kaicayie's son.
 How shall I in my misery endure
 That bitter mouth intolerable, bear
 Her ceaseless petulance. Oh, I have lived
 Seventeen years since thou wast born, my son,
 O Rama, seventeen long years have I lived,
 Wearily wishing for an end to grief;
 And now this mighty anguish without end!
 I have no strength to bear for ever pain;
 Nor this worn heart with suffering fatigued
 To satisfy the scorn of rivals yields
 More tears. Ah how shall I without thy face
 Miserably exist, without thy face,
 My moon of beauty, miserable days?
 Me wretched, who with fasts and weary toil
 And dedicated musings reared thee up,

MOTHER INDIA

Vainly Alas, the river's giant banks,
How great they are! and yet when violent rain
Has levelled their tops with water, they descend
In ruin, not like this heart which will not break.
But I perceive death was not made for me,
For me no room in those stupendous realms
Has been discovered; since not even today
As on a mourning hind the lion falls
Death seizes me or to his thicket bears
With his huge leap,—death ender of all pain.
How livest thou, O hard, O iron heart,
Unbroken, O body, tortured by such grief,
How sinkst thou not all shattered to the earth?
Therefore I know death comes not called—he waits
Inexorably his time. But this I mourn,
My useless vows, gifts, offerings, self-control.
And dire ascetic strenuousness perfected
In passion for a son,—yet all like seed
Fruitless and given to ungrateful soil.
But if death came before his season, if one
By anguish of unbearable heavy grief
Naturally might win him, then today
Would I have hurried to his distant worlds
Of thee deprived, O Rama, O my son.
Why should I vainly live without thine eyes,
Thou moonlight of my soul? No, let me toil
After thee to the savage woods where thou
Must harbour, I will trail these feeble limbs
Behind thy steps slow as the sick yearning dam
That follows still her ravished young." Thus she
Yearning upon her own beloved son,—
As over her offspring chained a centauress
Impatient of her anguish deep, so wailed
Cowshalya; for her heart with grief was loud.

(*Ayodhya Kanda: Sarga 20, ll. 36-55*).

THE WIFE

But Sita all the while, unhappy child,
 Worshipped propitious gods. Her mind in dreams
 August and splendid coronations dwelt
 And knew not of that woe. Royal she worshipped,
 A princess in her mind and mood, and sat
 With expectation thrilled. To whom there came
 Rama, downcast and sad, his forehead moist
 From inner anguish. Dark with thought and shaken
 He entered his august and jubilant halls.
 She started from her seat, transfixed, and trembled,
 For all the beauty of his face was marred,
 Who when he saw his young beloved wife
 Endured no longer, all his inner passion
 Of tortured pride was opened in his face
 And Sita, shaken, cried aloud, "What grief
 Comes in these eyes? Was not today thine hour
 When Jupiter, the imperial planet, joins
 With Pushya, that high constellation? Why
 Art thou then pale, disturbed? Where is thy pomp,
 Thy crowning where?"

No foam-white softness silk
 With hundred-shafted canopy o'erhues
 Thy kingly head, no fans o'erwave thy face
 Like birds that beat their bright wings near a flower;
 Minstrel nor orator attends thy steps
 To hymn thy greatness, nor are heralds heard
 Voicing high stanzas. Who has then forbade
 The honeyed curds that Brahmins Veda-wise
 Should pour on thy anointed brow,—the throngs
 That should behind thee in a glory surge —
 The ministers and leading citizens
 And peers and commons of the provinces
 And commons metropolitan? Where stays
 Thy chariot by four gold-clad horses drawn,
 Trampling, magnificent, wide-maned? thy huge
 High-omened elephant, a thunder-cloud
 Or moving mountain in thy front? thy seat
 Enriched with curious gold? Such are the high
 Symbols men lead before anointed kings

MOTHER INDIA

Through streets flower-crowned. But thou com'st careless,
dumb.

Alone. Or if thy coronation still,
Hero, prepares and nations for thee wait,
Wherefore comes this grey face not seen before
In which there is no joy." Trembling she hushed.
Then answered her the hope of Raghov's line
"Sita, my sire exiles me to the woods
O high-born soul, O firm religious mind,
Be strong and hear me. Dussaruth my sire,
Whose royal word stands as the mountains pledged
To Bharath's mother boons of old, her choice
In her selected time, who now prefers
Athwart the coronation's sacred pomp
Her just demand; me to the Dundac woods
For fourteen years exiled and in my stead
Bharath, my brother, royally elect
To this wide empire. Therefore I come, to visit
And clasp thee once, ere to far woods I go,
But thou before King Bharath speak my name
Seldom; thou knowest great and wealthy men
Are jealous and endure not others' praise.
Speak low and humbly of me when thou speakest,
Observing all his moods, for only thus
Shall man survive against a monarch's brow.
He is a king, therefore to be observed,
Holy, since by a monarch's sacred hands
Anointed to inviolable rule.
Be patient; thou art wise and good. For I
Today begin exile, Sita, today
Leave thee, O Sita. But when I am gone
Into the paths of the ascetics old
Do thou in vows and fasts spend blamelessly
Thy lonely seasons. With the dawn arise
And when thou hast adored the Gods, bow down
Before King Dussaruth, my father, then
Like a dear daughter tend religiously
Cowshalya, my afflicted mother old;
Nor her alone, but all my father's queens
Gratify with sweet love, smiles, blandishments
And filial claspings,—they my mothers are,
Nor than the breasts that suckled me less dear.

RENDERINGS FROM THE "RAMAYANA"

But mostly I would have thee show, beloved,
To Shatrughna and Bharath, my dear brothers,
More than my life-blood dear, a sister's love
And a maternal kindness. Cross not Bharath
Even slightly in his will. He is thy king,
Monarch of thee and monarch of our house
And all this nation. 'Tis by modest awe
And soft obedience and high toilsome service
That princes are appeased, but being crossed
Most dangerous grow the wrathful hearts of kings
And mischiefs mean. Monarchs incensed reject
The sons of their own loins who durst oppose
Their mighty policies, and raise, of birth
Though vile, the strong and serviceable man.
Here then obedient dwell unto the King,
Sita; but I into the woods depart."
He ended, but Videha's daughter, she
Whose words were ever soft like one whose life
Is lapped in sweets, now other answer made
In that exceeding anger born of love,
Fierce reprimand and high. "What words are these,
Rama, from thee? What frail unworthy spirit
Converses with me uttering thoughts depraved,
Inglorious, full of ignominy, unmeet
For armed heroical great sons of Kings?
With alien laughter and amazed today
I hear the noblest lips in all the world
Uttering baseness. For father, mother, son,
Brother or son's wife, all their separate deeds
Enjoying their own separate fates pursue
But the wife is the husband's and she has
Her husband's fate, not any private joy.
Have they said to thee 'Thou art exiled'? Me
That doom includes, me too exiles For neither
Father nor the sweet son of her own womb
Nor self, nor mother, nor companion dear
Is woman's sanctuary, only her husband
Whether in this world or beyond is hers.
If to the difficult dim forest then,
Rama, this day thou journeyest, I will walk
Before thee, treading down the thorns and sharp
Grasses, smoothing with my torn feet thy way,

MOTHER INDIA

And henceforth from my bosom as from a cup
Stale water, jealousy and wrath renounce
Trust me, take me; for, Rama, in this breast
Sin cannot harbour. Heaven, spacious terraces
Of mansions, the aerial gait of Gods
With leave to walk among those distant stars,
Man's wingèd aspiration or his earth
Of sensuous joys, tempt not a woman's heart:
She chooses at her husband's feet her home.
My father's lap, my mother's knees to me
Were school of morals, Rama; each human law
Of love and service there I learned, nor need
Thy lessons. All things else are wind; I choose
The inaccessible inhuman woods,
The deer's green walk or where the tigers roam,
Life savage with the multitude of beasts,
Dense thickets; there will I dwell in desert ways,
Happier than in my father's lordly house,
A pure-limbed hermitess. How I will tend thee

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(*Ayodhya Kanda. Sarga 26, l. 3—Sarga 27, l. 13*)



SRI AUROBINDO'S LETTERS

Interpretation of a Passage in Shakespeare

(THE QUESTIONS ARE PUT BEFORE THE ANSWERS)

(On that famous passage of Shakespeare's—

*Our revels now are ended; these our actors,
As I foretold you, were all spirits, and
Are melted into air, into thin air:
And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,
The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea, all which it inherit shall dissolve;
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff
As dreams are made on, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep —*

would it be legitimate to comment as follows?—"The meaning, on the surface, is that for each of us life will pass away as if it were a dream and what will remain is the sleep of death, an undetailed everlasting rest. But there is a deeper implication: just as the actor-spirits have not been destroyed and only their visible play has vanished while they themselves, seeming to melt into 'thin air', have returned to their unknown realm of consciousness, so too the sleep of death is but an annihilation in appearance—it is really an unknown state which is our original mode of existence. Nor is this all: from the fourth line onward the language and the rhythm serve to evoke by a certain large and deep suggestiveness an intuition of some transcendental God-self—a being, rapt and remote, who experiences through each individual life a dream-interlude between a divine peace and peace, an 'insubstantial pageant' conjured up for a while by its creative imagination between two states of self-absorbed superconsciousness. We are reminded of the Upanishad's description of the mystic trance in which the whole world fades like an illusion and the individual soul enters the supreme Spirit's unfeathered ecstasy of repose. Shakespeare's intuition is not pure Upanishad, the supreme Spirit is not clearly felt and whatever profundity is there is vague and unintentional,

still, a looming mystic light does appear, stay a little, find a suggestive contour before receding and falling away to a music sublimely defunctive.”)

“I don’t think Shakespeare had any such idea in his mind. What he is dwelling on is the insubstantiality of the world and of human existence ‘We are such stuff’ does not point to any God-self. ‘Dream’ and ‘sleep’ would properly imply Somebody who dreams and sleeps, but the two words are merely metaphors. Shakespeare is not an intellectual or philosophic thinker nor a mystic one. All that you can say is that there comes out here an impression or intimation of the illusion of Maya, the dream-character of life, but without any vision or intimation of what is behind the dream and the illusion. There is nothing in the passage that even hints vaguely the sense of something abiding—all is insubstantial, ‘into air, into thin air’, ‘baseless fabric’, ‘insubstantial pageant’, ‘we are such stuff as dreams are made on.’ ‘Stuff’ points to some inert material rather than a spirit dreamer or sleep. Of course one can always read things into it for one’s own pleasure, but...” (8-3-35)

(I admit that Shakespeare was not a philosophic or mystic thinker; also that he had no wish to mysticise in this passage. But is great poetry always a matter of one’s conscious intention?—do not unconscious or accidental effects occur which have implications beyond the poet’s personal aim or at least unrealised in full by him? A genuinely mystic accident of a high order is the quotation I sent you some days back—

the prophetic soul

Of the wide world dreaming on things to come.

If we take this in connection with Prospero’s lines we may have not only an intuition of the illusion of Maya but also that of an abiding something behind the illusory appearance: the word “dream” common to the two passages is extremely suggestive. But as Shakespeare was not a systematic thinker it might not be right to construct like this a philosophy of any sort. And in my essay I do not wish to do so. What, however, surprises me is your saying that there is not the vaguest hint of something abiding. In the magic performance which Prospero gave to Ferdinand and Miranda it was spirits that produced a simulacrum of material reality—a very convincing simulacrum and the young lovers must have been quite taken in, until Prospero reminded them of what he had said before—namely, that “these our actors... were all spirits.” They melt into thin air but do not disappear from existence, from conscious being of some character however unearthly: they just become invisible and what disappears is the visible pageant produced by them, a seemingly material construction which yet was a mere phantom. From this seeming, Prospero catches the suggestion that all that looks material is like a phantom, a dream, which

must vanish, leaving no trace. But as the actor-spirits are not destroyed with the fabric of their visionary pageant, the terms "baseless" and "insubstantial" assume a meaning not quite what you give them. They mean that the pageant has no basis in materiality, in substantiality as opposed to spirit-nature; and by "we are such stuff as dreams are made on" the outer human earthly personalities are regarded as dreamlike, as having no permanent basis of material reality. I may be going beyond the premises in speaking of a God-self, but, all things considered, what strikes me as *analogically* implicit in the passage is that "we" and earth-existence are projected as a visionary pageant by some immaterial being or beings. I can't exactly say whether spirits akin to Ariel and his crew are implied or some superconscious God-self, but a general implication of occult if not mystic reality responsible for the pageant of human life and earth-existence seems to me inescapable. If pressed to choose on the side either of occult or of mystic implication, I would incline towards the latter: the intuition of Maya is so strong that the implicit significance may very well be some vague shadow of its Upanishadic complement, and the word "sleep" may be a far hint of some rapt, remote, self-absorbed super-consciousness. The whole thing is vague and far-looming because in Shakespeare's case a mystic inspiration would be mostly accidental and his was not a mind as would transmit it easily. The difficulty would be increased since this inspiration was mystic rather in the Indian than the Christian way. Only in that line and a half about the prophetic soul did an ultra-Christian mystic intuition come out more or less explicit—a miracle not to be expected always.

I may be quite at fault in all this complex impression and if you tell me again after considering the points I have broached that it is absolutely off the mark I shall at once scrap it.)

"One can read anything into anything. But Shakespeare says nothing about the material world or there being a base somewhere else or of our being projected into a dream. He says, 'We are such stuff'. The spirits vanish into air, into thin air, as Shakespeare emphasises by repetition, which means to any plain interpretation that they too are unreal, only dream-stuff, he does not say that they disappear from view but are there behind all the time. The whole stress is on the unreality and insubstantiality of existence, whether of a pageant or of the spirits or of ourselves—there is no stress anywhere, no mention or hint of an eternal spiritual existence. Shakespeare's idea here as everywhere is the expression of a mood of the vital mind, it is not a reasoned philosophical conclusion. However, if you like to argue that, logically, this or that is the true philosophical consequence of what Shakespeare says and that therefore the Daemon who inspired him must have meant that, I have no objection.

MOTHER INDIA

I am simply interpreting the passage as Shakespeare's transcribing mind has put it." (9-3-35)

(Just a word more about that passage. If it is taken *in vacuo*, there is no internal justification for my idea which turns on the survival of the spirits after the pageant has faded. But almost immediately after the stage indication: " to a strange, hollow and confused noise, they heavily vanish", occurs this aside on the part of Prospero: (To the Spirits) "Well done; avoid, no more." The quoted passage follows a little later. Then again Prospero says after Ferdinand and Miranda are gone: "Come with a thought: — I thank you. — Ariel, come" Thereupon Ariel enters.

Ariel *Thy thoughts I cleave to What's thy pleasure?*

Prospero: *Spirit,*

We must prepare to meet with Caliban

What do you make of all this? And when Ariel reports how he has lured Prospero's enemies into a "foul lake", Prospero commends him:

This was well done, my bird

Thy shape invisible remain thou still

Still later, comes another stage-direction: "A noise of hunters heard. Enter divers Spirits, in shape of hounds. ; Prospero and Ariel setting them on." Even if this is taken to refer to Spirits other than those who produce that masque, the previous quotations are sufficient to prove that only the visible shapes and formations vanished—the entities themselves remained behind all the time

To echo Dilip: "*Qu'en dites vous?*")

"I don't see what all that has to do with the meaning of the passage in question which plainly insists that nothing endures. Obviously Ariel had an invisible shape—invisible to human eyes, but the point of the passage is that all shapes and substances and beings disappear into nothingness. We are concerned with Prospero's meaning, not with what actually happened to the spirits or for that matter to the pageant in total which we might conceive also of having an invisible source or material. He uses the disappearance of the pageant and the spirits as a base for the idea that all existence is an illusion—it is the idea of the illusion that he enforces. If he had wanted to say, 'We disappear, all disappears to view but the reality of us and of all things persists in a greater immaterial reality', he would surely have said so or at least not left it to be inferred or reasoned out by you in the twentieth century. I repeat, however, that this is my view of Shakespeare's meaning and does not affect any possibility of reading into it something that Shakespeare's outer mind did not receive or else did not express" (10-3-35)

THE BEGGAR PRINCESS

A DRAMA

Dilip Kumar Roy

PROLOGUE

SWAMI SWAYAMANANDA'S Yoga Ashram in Kashmir, in a little township called Dumel. On a full moon night, in the Ashram temple of Krishna, PADMINI a beautiful *sadhika* of twenty—is discovered in a *Padmasan* posture of meditation. ASIT—a *sadhaka* of about forty-five and a devotee of Krishna—is singing a mystic song, in ecstasy, his eyes rivetted on the moon:

In this hour of eve, when the heart's a-heave
Lo, the moon-boat sails in the sky:
Behold:
Fair moon plies her bark in the sky!
For what shore is she bound?—No pilgrim has found!
And who is her Pilot on high?
I marvel:
Who is her Pilot on high?

Compassionate Boatman, hie I pray
To our peaceless domain and come now to stay
Weaned from thy light, we cry in the night:
With thy mantra of rapture reply:
We call:
O Grace, with thy rapture reply.

Friend, I too fare far . . . far from the shore
Of bondage . . . the cravings can hold me no more
The dark I have shed, by His Flame-Flute led,
Though still for His Haven I sigh:
In din
For His Haven of music I sigh.

MOTHER INDIA

Even as thou quellest the glooms of the world,
Repeal our dusk like the dawn unfurled.
From thy starland of ruth rain . . . rain on our drouth
Thy nectar of Gleam . . . draw nigh:
O Love!

To waylost earth draw nigh.

In the middle of the song PADMINI goes into a trance (*samadhi*) and sees a Vision. A beautiful woman, in Rajput dress, stands immobile, a statuesque figure, looking intently at her. PADMINI recognises her at once as she has seen her quite a few times in her dreams. As she gazes back at her, fascinated, she is persuaded that the other is a devotee. A few seconds pass like this after which the WOMAN smiles tenderly at her. Then she takes a few steps forward and places her right palm on the crown of PADMINI'S head in token of blessing.

PADMINI

(quivering with emotion)

I feel a joy, a mystic thrill, a nameless
Ecstasy burgeons in my heart and flows
Through all my veins . . . A peace which is, withal,
Alien to what we know as peace. A quiver
Is coursing through my veins Benignant One!
Pray tell me who you are I feel as though
I have lived and loved in you from birth to birth . . .
Yet how can I claim what is beyond belief?
Can ever a lonely droplet swear to kinship
With the deep? You are endowed with a form so human
And yet I feel—your every particle
Is imbued with beauty which is stationed far
Beyond our world of line and heave and hue,
Far—far above our sphere of pain and tears
As the moon's above our cloud-impaling mountains.
Your smile is aureoled with a radiance
No human eye has glimpsed Your ivory brow
Gleams burnished with the essence of white fire
Scattering flakes of silver—ethereal
And yet material even as is thy outer
Envelope ashine like a sheath translucent,
Unable to conceal the Flame within.
Your gait is rhythmed not by what we, mortals,
Name footfalls, vested with a magic sway
Delivered from sound And then your touch that travels
Spontaneously through my body as a razor

THE BEGGAR PRINCESS

Passes through viscous matter! Oh tell me how
Can such a passing bliss, in a moment's span,
Have become my being's glorious heritage,
Incredible and yet so palpitating!
A throne of pearls presented to a pauper!
A crown of diamonds offered to an infant!
Oh tell me: who you are and who am I,
Marvelling at this radiant apparition?
Are you a phantom, a colour-flow of my fancy?
Or are you the substance of which stars are made?
A real conscient thing or a myth? I know not:
I only know I am, though from me slips
My name and form by which I am labelled here.
But no, my heart rebukes me: I will not doubt
For is not every spurt of my warm blood
Athrill with the presence of your living truth,
The truth that you are a million times more concrete
Than what is known on earth as certitude:
More real to me than the anguished throb of heart
Or waves of rapture pulsing through the blood!
But alas, we mortals strive in vain to behave
Consistently! So I doubt again my faith
In you and ask myself: perhaps you are
A resurrected thing from the world of sleep
A semblance, an offshoot of some bubbly brood
Incarnate for an hour in this our world
Of make-believe, a flotsam borne by tides
Of circumstance! Or can it be that I,
Diving into a world of inconscience
Have lost my bearing—in this riddling night?

SHE

(smiling)

The world from which I come is not a phantom
Nor myself a myth—a vagrant froth of fancy
Which might or might nor be and yet derived
From some strange impulse of a strange storm-raiser
Who fashions countless foams that clash to melt,
As pointless in their fury as in their death.
What your proud reason in your solid world
Of the senses dubs indubitable and real,
To ours appears as a thing of shimmer and shadow
And what it scoffs at in your world as fancy,

MOTHER INDIA

Is in our world the ground upon which rests
The plinth and peak of all that is: its name
Is consciousness, the primal origin
Of all that was or is or ever will be.
What to you looms as void, impalpable
And tenuous, to us seems as strong and solid
As the hidden submerged rock that wrecks the ship.
But I have come to you this night, my child,
Only to unveil to you what you are ripe
To glimpse if not to be cradled in as once
You were when lay your soul ensconced in light
Vex not your mind with futile questionings:
Only imbibe what I have come to impart.
I will show you three disparate scenes of rebirth
Without the bridge that can invest them with
Significance. I have come authorised
To waken in your yearning consciousness
A spark of vision truer than the one
Which helps us see the sun and moon and stars.

Padmini rises at her bidding when she enfolds her in a close embrace
after which SHE gazes lovingly into her eyes.

SHE

Come, rest your eyes on mine and stay awhile:
Nestle, relax, receive whatever may come.
I will reveal to you if you consent
To be divorced from what you call the present.
The past I shall evoke from the womb of what
Seems now withdrawn but which, withal, survives
Untarnished and a throb in the timeless crypt
Of memory—of the Everliving One.

Padmini holds Her eyes for a few seconds... Suddenly she visions a
strange old lady in the place where SHE was standing As she gazes on,
like one bewitched, the scene is transformed...

The ground under the old lady assumes the form of a mountain-peak
whitened with snow. The old lady is now discovered, immersed in *samadhī*,
seated on a stone slab. Snow begins to fall thickly on her snow-white
hair, white merging into white, but the woman remains immobile, rapt in
her trance... Presently a blue halo is seen shimmering round her head.

PADMINI

A Devi is she?—A face so calm and holy
Even as the full moon, balanced on a ridge,
So near and yet so far.. frail as a flower

THE BEGGAR PRINCESS

And strong as marble.

SHE

(nods)

She is Anasuya

The spouse and Shakti of the mighty Rishi
Atri, who sang high hymns to the Mystic Fire:
A Devi in human mask she came on earth,
The archetype of Truth and Chastity.
She flashed like a meteor in the Golden Age
But the light shed survives in the memory
Of the heart in this Dark Age as aspiration
For the power that transmutes lust into love.
How she once triumphed I will tell you now.

SHE pauses, rivets her gaze on the pole-star now risen in the sky and then resumes.

A mighty debate rang out once in Heaven:
Who was the first among the pure and chaste
In the universe? Then Narad smiling answered
The Goddesses: "None of you ever can
Claim the title. For the purest Anasuya
Indwells not Eden but the sorrowful earth."
So Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, the Trinity,
Disguised as Brahmans visited this our earth
To assay her purity. Her husband, Atri,
Had gone out on a twelve-month pilgrimage.
The guests came to her door soliciting
Her hospitality. They posed one dire
Condition: she must serve them food, disorbed.
The Truth of hospitality was now pitted
Against her hallowed vow of chastity.
Anguished, the Devi prayed to her absent Lord:
"If I have loved thee as my all in all,
If I have worshipped thee as the God of Gods,
Craving no boon save at thy gracious hands,
And if I have prayed to thee for but one boon:
To serve thee in pure and utter self-surrender,
Then these three be changed forthwith into babes."

Padmini shivers in joy and looks at her in adoration.

SHE

(smiling)

The trio were caught in their own toils, as they
Could not oppose the Truth they knew as true

MOTHER INDIA

Which acted as her armour and so, in a moment,
The stalwarts were translated into babes,
Whereafter, nude, she nursed them at her breast.

PADMINI

O mother! can such miracle come to pass—

SHE

Probe not the mystic lore beyond the mind
With the puny plummet of reason: open your soul
For then alone can one win Krishna's Light
And truly judge of His deep verities.
So if you'd truly know the ultimate Truth,
Ask for illumination deep within,
The light of faith and the compass of soul's guidance
Come, bow to the Devi and rise to blessedness.

Padmini bows to Anusuya who smiles with closed eyes. Then, as she looks at her, her radiant figure dislimns and in her place is seen a lovely young damsel who sings:

Oh, how can I say what I am?
Does one, Lord ever know?
I only know: I am the lamp
And thou my golden glow.

Thou art blue lotus: I'm the leaf,
Thou art the magic hue
And I am irised by thy gleam
Whom thou, in Grace, wilt woo

And yet I ask who am I, Radha,
With whom thou playest so?
But how can I say what I am?
Does one, Lord, ever know?

Thou art the rainbow cloud of love
Whose fleeting shadow I am,
Thou art my breath whose house, this body,
None but thou shall claim

In thy oceaned Dance I am a flitting
Bubble thou com'st to blow,
I know no more what I am, Radha
But can one every know?

Dark night am I and thou art the moon,
I'm slave—with thee for Master.

THE BEGGAR PRINCESS

However I shape I will stay thine
In life, death or disaster

What more I may be tell me, O mystic
Guest who com'st to go
I ask myself. what am I, Radha?
But can one ever know?

As the song progresses, out of Radha emerge a number of forms of beautiful damsels who join her in her singing till, on a sudden, Krishna appears playing His magic flute. .A little later Radha advances towards Him and they dance together girdled by the damsels dancing in the same rhythm. Gradually the others vanish leaving only Radha singing Krishna the last verse again and again

What more may I be tell me, O mystic
Guest who com'st to go
I ask myself: what am I, Radha?
But can one ever know?

PADMINI

(musingly)

Why... I have seen the face .she is

SHE

(smiles)

Sri Radha,

The soul of love divine and self-surrender

Padmini looks fixedly at the beautiful form till again it diminishes and SHE, the Rajput woman, is seen back again in her place singing:

His priestess, I, return to earth,
His deeds to recall and his glory to sing;
Let me enter the adytum of your heart.
I come to worship Him, my King.

Cool I have filched from the moon, from stars
The mystic gleam of purity.
Laughter from flowers, from rivers the ripple
From breezes the murmur of melody

And making a garland of my hands
His dawn-rose feet I will now entwine
And kindle the virgin lamp of my life
With the flickerless flame of His love hyaline

Oh, dateless is my devotion to Him
Who still my birth and death commands

MOTHER INDIA

I am a droplet and He's the Deep
He is music and I am a flute in His hands.

To surrender to Him, my All-in-all,
My body and soul at His altar I bring.
Hark back to Mira's lyrics of love
Of Him whose Grace she returns to sing.

PADMINI
(in joy)

So you are Mira?

MIRA
(smiles)

PADMINI

Oh, speak—are you she?

MIRA
(nods)

PADMINI
(eagerly)

Oh, tell me your life-story I have heard
Since my early childhood that you were born holy
And the only woman who in this dark age
Could dare consort with quintessential Light
Whose name is Krishna, the immaculate Evergreen!
You sacrificed all that we cherish on earth.
Do tell me everything you knew...

MIRA

I knew

But two things in my life: Love and Sri Krishna
The primal, All-pervading Ultimate

PADMINI

Is there aught else worth knowing here below?

MIRA
(smiling)

You are ripe at long last So I will recount
To you my ageless and unageing story.
My passion-play of love's insatiate yearning
Which, starting from a spark, grew into a mystic
And ruthless fire engulfing all I cherished
Till nothing could survive of the name and form
Of the one whom people knew as Mira, the Queen.

To be continued

THE EVOLUTIONARY IMPERATIVE

Nolini Kanta Gupta

Man will grow into superman—in spite of himself, if necessary. Has not the animal grown into man? And did the animal try for it or even wish for it? Just so, the plant grew into the animal, willy nilly, having no inkling of its destiny. Out of the plant the animal came: a sensory system, a nervous organisation tore, as it were, into the pulp of the vegetable substance and established itself there, almost like a cancerous growth, it might have looked in the beginning. And subsequently, ages after, the animal himself suffered a similar transmutation: a larger amount of brain substance and a more complicated configuration in it was implanted in the brain cavity of the animal. Whence and wherefore came these agents that wrought the miracle?

There can be but one reason. What came out existed already there essentially within what was. It is nothing but the quickening of the seed, the growth of the embryo and the birth out of the womb. Life was imbedded in Matter, Mind was imbedded in Life and therefore in Matter. Thus evolution is merely self-creation, the urge to bring out step by step all the degrees of potency involved in the being. The force of evolution is selective and directive, as has been pointed out by its latest exponent, Julian Huxley.

Now, the difference that presents itself at the present juncture is that man has acquired knowledge, the knowledge of the future, of his own destiny, unlike the animal or the plant. That is the characteristic mark of the stage of evolution now reached. And that will make a difference also in the manner in which the evolution will be worked out henceforth: it will be a conscious process. As man, because of his self-consciousness, has taken up many of nature's contrivances, refined and condensed them to be made immediately and more thoroughly effective without waste of time or material, even so, in the inner life too there has come the possibility of an intenser and quicker change, an evolution that is likely to be a revolution.

With man came also the sense of the beyond man, the superman, the divine man, the Divine. That is the true meaning of his appearance, that is the characteristic turn of consciousness which he brought with him. This self-consciousness, an inner perception and aspiration that he

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is to be something else, something other and greater than what he is, means the emergence of a spiritual soul in the world of matter. This prophetic or forward-looking consciousness is absent in the pre-human creation, although, as I have said, a secret blind unknowing urge forward has always been there as the original motive of all functioning in things and creatures upon earth.

The problem is whether man will take advantage of the privilege he has acquired. In one sense he has been trying as best he can since his very appearance, a million years ago perhaps: he has created wonderful cultures and civilisations all over the earth age after age, expressing not merely the human animal in him, nor solely even the human, but something higher and deeper still, the extra-human or superhuman, the Divine. India was particularly the country where the experiment was carried on consistently and more successfully than anywhere else. And yet what has been the net result, the real achievement in view of the supreme purpose and ideal? The achievement has been this that the purpose, the ideal has come to be known, it is now within the range of our vision; creation has revealed its core of mystery, if not the whole of it, at least the central theme: the key has been found, but in its own home, that is to say, behind and beyond the creation. That, however, is only half the battle or even less, the other half is to bring the truth out of its own *home* and spread abroad, make the universe its own home. In other words, man has learnt to accept or is capable of accepting the reality in his inner consciousness, but only a very faint shadow of it—if anything at all—he has succeeded in establishing as a concrete or physical reality. Man's life, even the life of the very best, is still that of a mortal creature, still subject to ignorance, incapacity, disease and death—so long at least as he lives in his material frame in a material world.

That is why certain seers and sages have asserted and assert even now that to be ignorant is human: to be born, to live and to decay and die—*sasyam va pachyate sasyam va jayate purah*—that is the inevitable course of earthly life. If you want to be superhuman, you must get beyond the human frame altogether, not here, not here, but elsewhere. That has been the burden more or less of all religions, all spiritual attempts and achievements so far.

We have said that this does not seem to lead to the right solution of the riddle: for it means merely a by-passing, an escape. The true solution must concern itself with here and now. and we have also said that the earth and human life are inevitably moving towards that solution, for it is that solution which the evolutionary urge is carrying within itself to offer to earth and human life, viz., to establish the Divine in the human frame, to incarnate the spirit-life in the manifest form of the earthly body.

The difficulty is enormous: we admitted that more than half the way

THE EVOLUTIONARY IMPERATIVE

—and the most arduous part of it—remains to be negotiated. Man is only half-willing: his will must be whole and entire, pointed towards that single consummation. All other preoccupations that divert, he must eschew—*anya vacho vimunchatha*. That is what is expected of him. If that will comes in, all is assured: things will move at a quick and yet smooth tempo. If, on the contrary, that fails or even delays too long, even then the thing will be done, for such is the fate decreed, the fiat of the inmost Divine at Nature's heart. Only, because of the outward resistance the path will be made harder and the travail more painful. A grim toll will be demanded, a violent eruption instead of a happy flowering. That is exactly how revolutions occur in human society and geological cataclysms in physical Nature. The hardening and contraction of the outer crust of earth increases in proportion to the inner heat and pressure. Likewise on the human level, the red seed of the French Revolution was planted the very day when the Valois autocrat declared his divine right of kingship. In Russia Lenin's antithesis was posited along with Peter the Great's thesis.

A similar fateful crisis—a much greater one—faces humanity today. Shall humanity yield totally and itself become the new being, through a travail more or less safe and happy? Or shall it be foolish and intransigent—in capable, in other words—and not do the right thing, thus inviting the catastrophe that might otherwise have been averted? For the New Being, the Superman, will be born, whether breaking the mould that humanity is or reshaping it into the new pattern

THE INTEGRAL YOGA OF SRI AUROBINDO

Rishabhchandra

CHAPTER VIII

THE EGO—THE DESIRE—SOUL

PART II

The destiny of the individual, according to Sri Aurobindo, is to unite with God, who is his own supreme eternal Self, by the recovery of his universal and transcendent existence, and make his whole being and nature—his entire individuality—a manifesting centre and medium of the divine Existence—Consciousness—Bliss. His essential individuality has not to abolish itself, but continue to reveal the glory of the Universal and Transcendent of which it is a delegate and representative in the material world. But this he cannot do so long as he is an ego, a limited separate being, wrapped up in his personal aims and interests and the superficial relations with others, which he establishes through his egoistic personality. Whatever the greatness of his personality in intelligence, power or position, whatever its eminence in humanitarian and altruistic pursuits, he lives in the Ignorance if he feels himself separate from others. The ego, in its self-enlargement, may come to perceive its unity with others, but, even at its best, this perception can be either a mental idea or a sentiment, not a fact of inner experience, not a dynamic stuff of consciousness. Even if it lives and acts only for others, it lives and acts according to its own ideas, its personal principles and ethical rules, which are invariably based on more or less subtle preferences and prejudgements of its ignorant or half-enlightened nature. It lives in a vicious circle and can never get out of it except by self-extinction, which, naturally enough, it dreads. Man's will to self-transcendence would be quenched for ever if he failed to break beyond the ego, and his imprisoned individuality would never breathe in the Infinite and soar in the Eternal. The limitless ranges of his own consciousness, the countless worlds of his own being, his own universal and transcendent existence with its unbarred knowledge and inconceivable power and bliss would remain sealed to him. If he ventured into spirituality, his

ego would seek to vitiate the integrity of the start by erecting an artificial opposition between being and becoming,—to divide is its inveterate habit—and enforce an exclusive orientation. In all its efforts at self-exceeding, the human soul has to dash against the barrage of the ego, which refuses to give way. Therefore it is essential for a spiritual seeker to avail himself of the most effective means possible for his liberation from the ego. His most vigilant care must be directed to the replacement of the ego by “the true being which feels itself, even though individual, yet one with all and one with the Divine”⁴

We shall now proceed to dwell upon the means Sri Aurobindo teaches for a complete expulsion of the ego from our entire being. We had better repeat here what we said in the beginning of this series that, unlike most spiritual teachers, Sri Aurobindo affirms the possibility of a complete elimination of the ego from our whole being, including even its active parts and its sub-terrestrial bases. It is absolutely incompatible with the aim and principle of his Yoga that the inner being of man should be free from the ego and able to unite with the Divine and the outer and lower remain irretrievably in the grip of the ego. Liberation, according to him, has a double aspect: liberation of the soul and liberation of nature; and so long as there is the slightest lingering trace of the ego in any part of the nature, liberation is not integral, and no supramental perfection can be built upon it.

Opening and Surrender to the Mother's Force

The first and greatest means of release from the ego, as of achieving anything substantial in the Integral Yoga, is a constant and exclusive opening to the Mother's Force. This cannot be too much insisted upon. The very basic principle of this Yoga is an entire reliance upon the Mother's Force and an ungrudging surrender to her guidance. Only those who know how to open to her and make her do the sadhana in them, know the secret of progress in this Yoga; for the tremendous difficulty of not only purifying and liberating, but of converting and transforming the entire being by a descent of the supramental force, cannot be overcome by the unaided strength of any human being. To open to the Mother is to let her infinite Force enter into us and work in the light of its infallible, if to us inscrutable, knowledge. But what is opening? How should one open? These are questions that are usually asked. The analogy of a closed room will best clarify the point. Each one of us is like a closed room, something like Leibniz's “window-less” monad, into which the light of the Divine or His power can hardly enter. To open to the Mother is to turn our

* Letters of Sri Aurobindo, Vol. IV

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consciousness to her, to open windows, so to say, on the infinite, and let her Force stream in. Describing the opening, Sri Aurobindo says, "To be open is simply to be so turned to the Mother that her Force can work in you without anything refusing or obstructing her action. If the mind is shut up in its own ideas and refuses to allow her to bring in the Light and the Truth, if the vital clings to its desires and does not admit the true initiative and impulsions that the Mother's power brings, if the physical is shut up in its desire, habits and inertia and does not allow the Light and Force to enter in it and work, then one is not open."* Opening can be most easily done by a constant, loving remembrance of the Mother. Her Presence is always there with its infinite Power within us, around us and above us, waiting to be called for help and protection. It is only our faith and a confident call that are needed to make that Presence dynamically felt and effective.

But mere opening without surrender cannot avail much. The Mother's Force may come, but, finding our nature too rigid or recalcitrant and reluctant to accept its influence and impulsion, can only withdraw, leaving us to stumble and suffer in our cherished ignorance. A glad and unreserved surrender is demanded, not only in the inner and the more developed parts of our being, but in the whole being and nature, so that the Force in its action may meet with no obstruction anywhere. Most often we surrender our body and life and the emotions of the heart as far as it is possible for our personal effort to do it, but reserve to ourselves the ideas and principles of our mind. This reservation stands in the way of the Mother's working in us. It is preposterous to expect the divine Force to act according to our ignorant mental notions and conceptions; if it did, it would lead us no better than our mental reason. We have already elaborated the process of surrender in the chapters on "The Integral Surrender" and "The Three Stages of Surrender". Here we are concerned only with the surrender of the ego. A most helpful movement in this direction, and one that comes naturally by the opening of the heart to the Mother, is to replace "I" and "Mine" by "Thou" and "Thine". "Not I, but Thou, O Mother; not my pleasure and convenience, but Thy glory and greatness," should be the constant thought in the mind and the constant, consecrated feeling in the heart. Our being should be pre-occupied with the Divine as it is pre-occupied today with itself, with its petty egoistic self. "Let my thoughts be concentrated on Thee, my love flow uninterruptedly towards Thee, my body unweariedly and faithfully serve Thee", should be the silent unceasing prayer in the whole being. Nothing can be more effective than this constant seeking for the Divine everywhere and in all

* "Letters of Sri Aurobindo on the Mother."

things and all happenings. One should watch the movements of one's nature and see whether this seeking has awakened there or not, and open and pray to the Mother for a constancy and intensity in it. If the thought wanders, or the emotions twine round something else or somebody else, they have to be quietly but tenaciously called back and turned towards the Divine. And along with surrender must go an uncompromising movement of rejection of all egoistic habits, tendencies and insistences. As an opening without surrender is almost ineffectual, so a surrender without rejection may be thorough, it is essential that surrender should be detailed and exhaustive. As we have said before, the tentacles of the ego are spread everywhere in our nature, and unless each element of our complex nature, each movement, each vibration of its energy is carefully scrutinised and cured of its egoistic turn, a complete freedom from the ego is impossible. A detailed, dynamic surrender of the whole being is the best means of eliminating the ego, for it is only in action that the faculties and energies of our being come into full play, and all the habits and tendencies, even those which are hidden or suppressed in the subconscious, emerge into view and can be exposed to the Mother's transforming light. A passive life of ascetic spirituality, withdrawn from the world and its pouring impacts, considers discretion the better part of valour and lets the sleeping dogs lie. But victory does not lie that way; the ego persists in the nature-parts even while the soul thrills in the arms of the Infinite. Sri Aurobindo is categorical in his insistence on the divine fulfilment of man in life, and not in the heavens beyond or in the supracosmic Silence; and for that dynamic fulfilment what is of primary importance is an extirpation of the ego from every part of human nature. A quiet, unflinching opening to the Mother's Force supplemented by a surrender of the whole being and a ruthless detection and rejection of the ego will go a long way towards the realisation of that fulfilment. But more is needed.

Psychic Pressure and Control

The second means of release from the ego is the pressure and control of the psychic being or the soul. It is needless to say that the very push towards this release comes from the psychic. From the hidden centre of our being it rays out its light, so that the obscurity of our nature may be dissipated. All urge towards unity and harmony, light and love, beauty and bliss comes from the psychic and expresses itself first in the most developed part of our being, whether it is the mind or the heart or life, and then spreads out to the other parts. The aspiration for the Infinite and Eternal and the will to dedicate the whole being to His service rise like a

flame from the psychic and infuse themselves into the nature-parts. But all this is a veiled action and influence from behind, and is not effective enough for the liberation and perfection we seek in the Integral Yoga. The psychic has to come forward and overtly control the nature till it is totally offered to the Mother, it must exert its influence directly upon the languid and rebellious parts and compel them to surrender. Especially, without its powerful pressure, the ego will never think of renouncing its gratification in the finite and the fleeting—the cherished formations of its mind and the desires and interests of its life. If an indirect pressure of the psychic can induce the ego to give itself to others, to accommodate the interests of others to its own, even to sacrifice its own interests for the good of others,—this sacrifice too gives a secret satisfaction to the ego—a direct pressure and intervention is sure to shake the ego out of its personal satisfactions and turn it towards the Infinite. Love and devotion for the Divine and the will to offer itself to Him and serve Him will develop as a result of the increasing pressure of the soul. But it must not be supposed that the ego will disappear as soon as the psychic has come forward and put its redeeming pressure upon it. It is so firmly rooted and dominantly active in the nature that many other means than the psychic pressure have to be adopted for its final elimination. But the psychic pressure upon it to burn its boats and turn towards the Divine and the unity of existence is a potent and indispensable means.

But how to bring the psychic forward and put its pressure upon the ego? We shall deal with this question in a subsequent chapter; for the moment it is enough to say that a sincere opening to the Mother and a call upon her Grace to effect the psychic emergence along with a personal will and aspiration concentrated upon that end will be found to be of inestimable help.

Renunciation of Desire

The ego lives and thrives on desire and richly deserves the name of the desire-soul given by Sri Aurobindo. As it can be tamasic, rajasic or sattwic, so desire can also be physical, vital or mental, though all desires have their origin in the universal vital and from there make inroads into the different parts of our being. It is not difficult to detect the gross forms of desire—the hungers and lusts, the greed and avarice and the general craving for the objects of sense, but the subtle mental desires that come disguised as charity and benevolence and service or that are intent on the vindication of a pet principle or the realisation of an ethical or intellectual ideal even at the cost of a great sacrifice and suffering, have such a delusive air of sanctity about them that they command universal

respect and admiration, and one never suspects that what is so palpably humane and self-denying can yet have the canker of the self, the protean ego hiding in it. It is commonly held that the bad desires which darken or degrade the being or disturb its peace and tranquillity have to be renounced, and replaced by good ones, especially those for the service and well-being of others or for the advancement of social or humanitarian interests. Though it has an undeniable purifying effect, this substitution can only remove the grosser forms of the ego and put the subtler ones in their place. Any desire, good or bad, which rises from a separative consciousness, is at once an offspring and nourishment of the ego; and a seeker of spiritual freedom and divine union must take every care to cast it out as soon as he finds it stealing into him. The one object before his vision and consciousness must be the Divine, the Eternal and Infinite, and no finite object, however immense and important it may be,—family, society, country, humanity—must be allowed to intervene and obscure it. The sole, unremitting pre-occupation of his whole being, but a dynamic and not a static pre-occupation, must be an integral union with the Divine and an identification of his will with the Divine Will; and this he can never do so long as he cherishes a single desire in himself; for that one desire, ever so laudable or innocent in his eyes or in the eyes of men, is a pebble that can throw down the whole structure of his spiritual life. That one desire which flatters his ethical or aesthetic personality clouds his soul and stands in the way of its liberation. That one desire is a new lease given to the ego and a fresh link forged in the chain of his bondage.

The Gita is, therefore, perfectly right in insisting upon the slaying of all desires as a pre-condition to the state of Brahmishiti, a stable abiding in Brahman. Its insistence is categorical and uncompromising, for it knows that the persistence of desire is the persistence of the ego, and that the ego is the greatest hindrance to spiritual freedom. It prescribes self-knowledge as the preliminary step* and a detailed surrender of all action to the Divine in an increasing love and devotion on the calm and stable basis of that self-knowledge. Sri Aurobindo's teaching on this point coincides with that of the Gita, save for the utmost stress he lays on an absolute reliance on the Mother's supramental Force and the practice of quiet detachment and rejection to which he has given an original turn of considerable value.

"The first condition for getting rid of desire isto become conscious with the true consciousness; for then it becomes much easier to dismiss it than when one has to struggle with it as if it were a constituent part of oneself to be thrown out from the being. It is easier to cast off an

* Sankhya Yoga precedes Karma Yoga in the Gita

accretion than to excise what is felt as a parcel of our substance.

“When the psychic being is in front, then also to get rid of desire becomes easy; for the psychic being has in itself no desires, it has only aspirations and a seeking and love for the Divine and all things that are or tend towards the Divine. The constant prominence of the psychic being tends of itself to bring out the true consciousness and set right almost automatically the movements of the nature.”*

What the Gita calls self-knowledge Sri Aurobindo calls consciousness. But what does it really mean? In Sri Aurobindo's Yoga, to be conscious means to be aware of one's essential reality as distinct from one's phenomenal appearance. Our essential reality is a spiritual entity, made of love and bliss, and unidentifed with the terrestrial nature it puts on for its self-expression in the world; and because it is not identified with anything, it has no separative ego in it. When we live in the true consciousness, we live in unity and harmony and can clearly observe the divisions and discords of our lower nature, the myriad masks and ruses of the ego and its multiplying desires. The ego then appears incredibly ridiculous, and egoistic pride and satisfaction an insult to the infinite glory of our true Self. The eulogy and homage of the world fails to affect even the fringe of that consciousness. Let us take an example to illustrate the point. Take the case of a philosopher who is rising into fame and feels gratified by the praise and honours he receives from the public. He has an ideal of achievement before him, to which he tries more and more to approximate. In course of time, urged by some inner developments, he takes to Yoga and makes remarkable progress in it. Passing through some decisive experiences, he realises his true being, his infinite and immortal Self. How will he now receive the praise and honour which used to gratify him so much? Has he any ambition for philosophical laurels left in him? What if he became as great as or even greater than Aristotle or Plato? What is the highest glory and achievement of the human life by the side of the luminous infinity and eternity of his spiritual existence? Does he not now contain all, possess all, enjoy all in his illimitable Self—all that the world can give and more than all? Is not an Aristotelian or Platonic eminence but a phosphorescent bubble *vis-à-vis* his infinite self-existence and its unimaginable splendour? It is only when one looks down at ego from one's spiritual consciousness that it appears in its true colours—a petty tool and creation of the ignorant mind arrogating to itself the powers and qualities it receives from the universal Nature and pluming itself upon its trite ephemeral triumphs! Can the infinite Self exult over a finite and fugitive success? As well then might the sea plume itself

* “Bases of Yoga” by Sri Aurobindo

upon the swell and shimmer of a foam-crested wave or the sky upon the silver twinkle of a star! The true consciousness gives one the right perspective, the right sense of proportion, the right standard of values and the power of the right appraisal. Under its gaze the ego stands unmasked, abashed, shrivelled.

This does not mean that the spiritual man will not cultivate philosophy or poetry or any of the arts and take a genuine delight in his creations. Rather, his Yoga will enhance his creative talent and deepen his insight into the way it flowers in him. Only, he will know his talent to be not his, but God's, a gift to him for the work of the divine self-expression and he will not give it more than an instrumental importance. To him his personal greatness and the greatness of others are the same, so far as their source is concerned; he will feel as much joy in the achievements of others as in his own, for he will have lost the sense of separateness. All achievements he will acclaim as God's achievements and feel no attachment to any. To live in this unlimited consciousness is to be conscious and to be thus conscious is to be able to detect all the wiles and desires and disguises of the ego and direct the Mother's Force to dissipate them. It is only a secure poise in this consciousness that can give an immunity from the insidious attacks of the subtle desires of the ego.

Widening and Ascent of Consciousness

Another effective means of release from the ego is a progressive widening and ascent of consciousness. This can be more easily done if the inner centre has been discovered and realised. With a more or less stable experience of the psychic centre, and a poise in it, one can let one's consciousness sweep beyond the mind and enlarge into the cosmic vastness. If the knots of the ego have been frayed or loosened and the invasion of the desires quelled, a quiet and intense aspiration will act as a strong lever of ascent. The individual consciousness, breaking out of the ego-bounds, will soar and expand itself till it realises the Atman or the individual-universal Self or Vishwatman, the Cosmic Self. This widening may be felt in the beginning by the ego as a mortal wrench or a stunning and disintegrating shock. It is this shock, this dazed sense of self-loss that makes the ego associate mystery with all supraphysical experience. It is as if something was bursting out of it, submerging and surpassing it at the same time, and expanding on all sides. Gradually, careering past the ego, the individual consciousness learns to breathe freely in that large and limpid air and looks down upon its phenomenal form as a tiny knot of Matter, Life and Mind, as a minute point in the unvalled vastness of his immortal self-existence. In that high ether there is no ego—there is a

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clear and constant perception of the unity of existence; but down below in the nature-parts the ego may still drag on its precarious life, more by the momentum of the past than by any fresh impetus and initiative. This mechanical action to the ego is replaced by slow or swift stages by the Mother's Force descending from above and taking possession of the nature. There is the possibility, not infrequent, of the individual consciousness being pulled down from its lofty station and identified again with the active nature of the ego, but such lapses are usually short-lived and cannot be a permanent bar to the final liberation. After some alternations of ascent and fall, and the continuing working of the Mother's Force in the nature, a certain security is gained in the higher poise and a considerable clarity and transparency in the lower nature which preclude the frequency of the relapse and the false identification. The individual consciousness rises higher and higher, and each ascent to a new plane of consciousness is followed by a descent of the characteristic power of that plane, which effects, more puissantly than the previous powers, the purification of the nature and the elimination of the ego. The largeness and light of the upper air penetrate into the lower mechanism, and little by little the knots of the ego loosen or snap. There grows, as a consequence of the action of the higher Force, an incipient sense of liberation in the nature-parts and a more ready and efficient response to the demands of the Spirit. A greater and freer play of intuition in the mind, life and the physical being; a sensitive perception of and participation in the working of the universal Nature; an increasing impersonal serenity and flexibility, and a steadier drive of the spiritual force are some of the developing results of the widening and ascent of consciousness. But the complete elimination of the ego is yet a far cry.

What we have described above is a change brought about in the individual by his self-extension and ascent to the higher planes of the being and the descent of the force of those planes into him. But, though it is a considerable change, it is not a radical conversion; for the ego still persists in the nether regions of the Subconscient and influences the automatic movements, habits and tendencies of the active nature. Besides, even if one has succeeded in eliminating the ego-sense which attaches itself to the instruments of the individual nature, one has not yet got rid of the "*fundamental ego-sense*, supporting itself on the consciousness of the mental Purusha behind the play." Sri Aurobindo calls it the "sheer ego", an uncanny, elemental "I"-ness, bare, unsaddled and unpanoplied, but powerful enough to carry on the play of the separative Ignorance; and so long as "this fundamental ego-sense remains, there is no absolute release. It may be wider, purer, more flexible; release may be now much easier to attain and nearer to accomplishment, but still release has not been effected. We

have to go farther, get rid of this ego-sense also and back to the Purusha on whom it is supporting itself and of whom it is a shadow..."* For a complete elimination of the ego-sense and the sporadic recurrence of its reflex action in the Subconscious, one has then to rise into the Overmind, which is beyond the Higher Mind, Illumined Mind and the plane of Intuition, and bring down the Overmind gnosis into the Subconscious and the Inconscious. The Overmental widening of consciousness is a global universalisation and its perfection marks the snapping of all egoistic bonds and a considerable clearing of the nature of the separative sense. One begins to live and move and have one's being in a global unity. And yet some dissolving fragments or ghosts of the old egoistic habits and impulsions may be detected sometimes in some obscure nooks or hidden folds of the nature. The characteristic action of the Overmind being selective, though unitarian, it cannot integrate the entire being into a divinely dynamic unity. In order to effect a complete clearance of the vanishing traces of the ego, the individual must rise to the Supermind and the Mother's supramental Force descend into the nature and deal directly with them. The absolute release from the ego in the active nature and the Subconscious and the blotting out of all its vestigial action in the being can only be done by the Supermind with its supreme transforming Force. No other spiritual power is capable of this consummation.

It is important to note here—it has already been hinted at before that in the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo the liberation from the ego that is sought to be achieved, is not a liberation in trance or in an absorbed state of consciousness, immersed in the love and joy of the Divine, but a dynamic liberation invulnerably immune to the attack of the ego in any part of the being, even the most physical and superficial. It means a complete universalisation of the whole being and a transformation of the Subconscious and the Inconscious, so that the unitarian consciousness may be established everywhere and the dynamic personality have an unfettered play upon it as a permanent basis—an unprecedented triumph of the human soul, inevitable as an evolutionary perfection, but possible only by an ascent of the individual to the Supermind and the answering descent of the supramental Mahashakti into Matter.

What remains when the ego fades out of existence? The infinite and indestructible substance of which the ego was a convulsed shadow; the liberated being, delivered for ever from the nightmare of the dualities and discords of mortal life and restored to his universality and transcendence and his union with the Divine and with all existence, and fulfilling God's Will on earth through his transfigured individual nature.

* "The Synthesis of Yoga" by Sri Aurobindo.

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Realising God in himself and God in all and beyond all, himself in all and all in himself, *servam bhutani atmati, sarvabhuteshu chatmanan*—he lives and acts in the inalienable unity of existence and expresses that blissful unity in terms of a harmonious God-revealing diversity

The Psychic Will

Friend of the Self and yet self's enemy'
Thyself the antagonists in the civil strife,
Two faced God, courting mortality
To plant death's terror in the breast of life

He grieves who sees Thy Mask but not Thy Play:
One Will that shams the surge of clashing wills,
One Light, self-veiled, reversing night and day,
One saviour grace uplifting as it kills.

Now stir my parts with Thy integral Force,
An impulse leaps down in the warring breast
Bearing the strength and joy of its high source
Dark shapes go scurrying past the shining Guest.

My will now surges from its fountain-head,
All passions lie confounded, still and dead.

J N. CHUBB

Durga

(*After seeing a painting by Nandalal Bose*)

Across the gloom's pathless oceans of sleep
Throbs a vast blue pinnacle of deathless flame
Haloing the deity of measureless might,
The high goddess of thunder and of grace!
Her countless arms bear the weapons of force —
The white ruthless scimitar of lightning-speed
And titan-statured bow of godward will
To hurl a million shafts of quivering fire
And blazing poignant spears to rend the dark.
And here is the mace of pissance divine
And here the wheel of timeless ecstasy
To pierce and smite and raze to dust
The sombre citadel of somnolence
And the eyeless bull of death from the base .
But here too is the limitless sky-heart
Embracing the worlds in a raptured bliss:
Topless and unbarred is her mind—the peak,
Fathomless her soul—the priestess of the sun.
Spaceless, majestic and unborn She rides
The untamed lion of sapphire avalanche —
The warrior-queen of splendour and light —
A golden miracle on the face of time!

ROMEN

All In All

My Lord, now let me understand the truth:
You cannot toss and torture me
for ever thus, or choke me with glib shams,
smooth shams,—all hell's most pretty dalliance; look:
my wisdom quivers and my faith has come
right to the edge of the precipice,
and now my hands are weak, not so strong as before . . .
You cannot let me fall all down the depths
of that sheer pit of dark, You cannot leave
me all alone at last. I do not know
what I should do with this sharp pain of mine—
I think I waste it, I get all lost within
dim pools of thought, and strangled . . .
my heart has nothing more to say or swear,
except to trust Your word; my will can't will
a thing now, any more. Have You thus purposely
destroyed me all in all? . . . Purposely,
 that You may be,
 at last,
 my all in all?

THEMIS

Remembrance

Thy Love for us, O Lord!
Who can measure?
Thy countless acts of Grace,
Our worship's treasure!

O joy, the thrill of waiting
For a word from Thee—
A Godhead's wisdom-kiss
To set us free.

O Eyes of calm compassion
Looking on Time,
An Eternity's mastering gaze,
Austere, sublime.

How smiles Thy Rapture-touch
In our being's core,
Opening to inward sight
Our senses' door

Thou art not gone, O Lord!
For Thy Mother-Grace
Still lights our earthen lamp
With her haloed Face.

PRITHVI SINGH

In Adytum

Then after long lonely nights the soul's unease
Flows through dull desert days seeking a calm
That ever eludes, yet longing cannot cease.
So taunting, like the lost chord of a psalm,

A far off Voice is heard, haunting the soul
Along dark corridors of endless night—
Until, there comes a canorous control,
The vaguest song of a golden gleam of light,

Then suddenly Love stirs—intensity
Is born! and Light floods in the open door—
Reveals the holy fane of secrecy,
There Love resplendent stands upon the floor

Of this the inmost chamber, where the Fire
Flames on the altars where bright gods aspire

NORMAN DOWSETT

O Growing Consciousness . . .

O growing consciousness of sweet Divine,
And secret glow of slowly breaking Dawn!
Beyond the farthest end the Night has gone
And everything is bathed in bubbling wine

Of love and light And joy is flowing on
Released from fadeless lotus-feet of Thine,
Beloved, wrenching deep this heart of mine
In one vast ecstasy of union

May Heaven's Daughter shine eternally
With never-ending all-transmuting splendour —
May mind and life and body glow with tender
Radiance and rapture flowing vernally —

And may the Dawn herald the infinite Day
Of Life Divine, that would for ever stay'

RAJANIKANT MODY

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

Review by Ravindranath Khanna

A SCHEME FOR THE EDUCATION OF BENGAL

by Pranab Kumar Bhattacharya.

Publishers: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry. Price 3

The one hopeful sign in our present difficult times is the growing recognition, on the part of those who are shouldering the responsibility of safeguarding the future of the race, that mankind must develop to a higher cultural level and the realization that enduring peace reposes on moral and spiritual values and not on mere economic and political revolutions. This demands, as a corollary, a thorough overhauling of our system of education which is based on a very superficial concept of man. The formation of U.N.E.S.C.O. as an integral part of U.N.O. is an event of capital importance for it promises to deal with the problem of world-peace at its roots.

It would not be an exaggeration to say that the book under review is one of the epoch-making contributions to the building of the new age and, though originally written in response to a request from a group of social workers in Bengal, will be of help to larger organisations also, because the malady which, boa-like, holds Bengal in its coils seems to be ubiquitous in its operations.

The author Mr. Pranab Kumar Bhattacharya is the Director of Physical Instruction in Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, and combines in himself a lofty aspiration with a thorough practical knowledge of organizing physical training in the Ashram; the inmates of the Ashram range from children of 3 years to even septuagenarians and the training is adapted to the needs of all in such a manner that everybody takes part enthusiastically in physical exercises and athletics. He has also the rare privilege of working for years under the direct and constant guidance of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo.

The book is divided into 3 parts. In the first the author elaborates the scheme which deals in a most comprehensive manner with all the aspects of education: spiritual, mental, vital and the last but not least, physical.

Then there are two appendices. The first contains the Mother's articles dealing separately with the education of the physical, the vital and the mind and another most luminous article dealing with the problem of raising all the parts of our nature to their highest possible summit of perfection. There are also in this appendix Sri Aurobindo's articles laying down the right lines on which our education should be conducted as a nation, utilizing the benefits of the yogic researches of our ancient Rishis. The motto is, "The past is our foundation, the present our material, the future our aim and summit" (P. 51). The second appendix contains Sri Aurobindo's articles which he wrote for the *Bulletin of Physical Education* published from the Ashram wherein he has exhaustively dealt with the role that our physical body shall play in a divine life on earth and the unimaginable and limitless potentialities that it will unfold when its divinisation is complete.

The scheme traces the present miseries of Bengal to her cutting herself adrift from the spiritual ideal and sinking into the morass of dead rituals. The remedy obviously lies in the discovery of an ideal which stems from the spiritual truth of our being, i.e. the psychic centre which Sri Aurobindo calls in a poem

Flake of the world-fire, spark of divinity.

Mind, life and body do not constitute the whole of our being but represent only the instrumental part of our nature. The true self is behind them, organising them, impelling them always to discover and embody deeper and bigger realities. And as the Mother points out, they have to be made more supple and plastic to the touch of the Inner Artist so as to be moulded into whatsoever form of revealing Beauty and Light He wills. They have a great part to play as instruments of Divine Love, Knowledge, Power and Beauty. How deitly the Mother has crystallised the whole thing! She says, "The truth we seek is made of four major aspects: Love, Knowledge, Power and Beauty. These four attributes of the Truth will spontaneously express themselves in our being. The psychic will be the vehicle of true and pure love, the mind that of infallible Knowledge, the vital will manifest an invincible power and strength and the body will be the expression of a perfect beauty and perfect harmony" (P. 43). This is the way to integral development and fulfils the demand of our age which is not willing to impose atrophy on any part of our nature for the sake of any one-sided or lop-sided development.

The fundamental drawback of the system of education in the West is, as Sri Aurobindo points out, "that it defines man as a political, social and economic being and his education as a training that will fit him to be an efficient productive and well-disciplined member of the society and the state" (P. 45). Little wonder then that from time to time we witness

the horrors of the worst barbarism aided by all the destructiveness of which our Science has made us capable and we hear great philosophers calling Man 'a beast of prey'.

The scheme divides itself into four parts, viz., the education of the physical, vital, mental and psychic or spiritual. A batch of leaders who are 'honest sincere, free from any kind of prejudices, with a broad outlook, and an ever-progressive attitude' should form the nucleus of the organisation. They should organize demonstrations, hold festivals of Physical Education twice a year and educate the people through exhibitions and make them 'understand, appreciate and develop all kinds of arts, literature, poetry, music etc. so that their vital being gets trained in refinement and beauty', for, as the Mother says, "one who has developed a truly refined taste, will feel, because of this very refinement, incapable of acting in a crude, brutal or vulgar manner. This refinement, if it is sincere, will bring to the being a nobility and generosity which will spontaneously find expression in his manner of action and will keep him away from many base and perverse movements".

Physical training has been divided into four parts, viz.:

- (a) Corrective measures for the defective and deficient children.
- (b) Well-planned programme for normal children.
- (c) Organized competitions in different branches of physical education
- (d) Organized demonstrations of physical performances of the different branches of physical education.

I can say from my own experience as a College-lecturer that our young men have a feeling of repulsion for physical exercises and try all sorts of means to secure exemption from them and they fail to turn up despite every kind of pressure put on them from the Principals and even risk suspension. They have not yet been awakened to the joy of perfect health and its advantages in the struggle for existence. This scheme if given a material shape will surely evoke a better response because the demonstrations and festivals always give a fillip to the spectators in these directions. Even the book-worms will soon realise that their mental capacities are sure to rust if they do not maintain a supple and healthy body and that an unhealthy body constantly puts lead on the wheels of progress. A Bengali translation of the scheme is also given.

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother lay great stress that the potentialities and powers of our body, vital force and mind are tremendous and even inexhaustible if only we knew the secret of tapping them and the secret lies in harmonizing all of them by submitting them to the law of the psychic being, and not frittering their energies away by licentious modes of living. The chapters dealing with 'The Powers of Mind', 'The Moral Nature' and

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'The Training of the Senses' are a great contribution to modern psychology and open doors to endless vistas of new powers and faculties and also show how the methods of yogic discipline can apply to the solution of the problems facing the educationist. Every word bears the seal of the vast experience of the Master of Yoga. The Mother's articles are very simple and full of practical instruction for parents, teachers and students and have not only to be read and re-read but digested and assimilated.

Bengal is facing perhaps the greatest crisis in her entire history but it seems that the hand of grace has been stretched out to her. She has been shown the path which can steer her clear of all the difficulties and regain for her a high place among the cultural leaders of the world. All now depends on her choice.

The book is very reasonably priced and the paper and printing are excellent.

ERRATUM

In the footnote on page 7, read "seventy-fifth" instead of "seventy-seventh".

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